

New Hanover Township

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2040



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intro

New Hanover Township is a rapidly growing suburban municipality in western Montgomery County that has seen significant development over the past two decades, primarily in the construction of new housing subdivisions. This development has brought in new residents and new demands on township services and amenities. Historically, New Hanover has been predominantly rural, with many farms, woodland areas, and open rolling hills. Few major roadways traverse the township, contributing to its rural character and limited development. However, the recent development boom has led to growing community concerns around the changing community character, increasing traffic volumes, and loss of farmland, open space, and wildlife habitat. It is not only the amount of development, but also its rapid pace that causes the greatest concern among some residents. This rate of change needs to be managed in order to continue providing all residents and business owners with the high quality of life and community services for which the township is known.

While the future growth and development of the township is guided under the Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Planning Commission's 2015 Comprehensive Plan, the development of a more specific long-range plan is advantageous to the township to address hyper-local challenges and opportunities resulting from increased development, and offer tailored solutions to address emerging areas of interest including sustainability, equity, and health. This document is a township-specific comprehensive plan that serves as an addendum to the regional comprehensive plan. It provides more direct recommendations than the regional comprehensive plan and will play a stronger role in impacting the day-to-day operation of the township and the lives of its residents. While change is inevitable, the New Hanover Township Comprehensive Plan outlines the ways in which this change can be managed to best meet the needs of current and future residents.

The following plan represents a collaborative effort between township staff, the Planning Commission, the Montgomery County Planning Commission, and residents and business owners of New Hanover. Extensive research, outreach, engagement, and plan drafting was conducted over an 18-month period to create this document. The goals contained herein are representative of the values expressed by the community and the recommendations outline a plan for change management and provide a blueprint for action.

Comprehensive Plan?

A comprehensive plan is a long-range planning tool that enables municipalities to outline the community's wishes on how to guide future growth and development. It provides broad goals, specific strategies, and implementation recommendations that form the basis for future decision-making to achieve the community's vision for the future. The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) grants municipalities the ability to adopt comprehensive plans, and requires they be updated every 10 years. This reflects the need for planning to be continuously re-evaluated to adapt to changing demands within communities and amend or reaffirm community development objectives.

Past Planning Efforts

New Hanover Township last updated its comprehensive plan in 1998. Prior to that, the township's first comprehensive plan was adopted in 1969 and updated in 1985. As a member of the Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Planning Commission (PMRPC), New Hanover Township is not obligated to have a township-specific comprehensive plan, and has adopted the regional comprehensive plan. The first regional comprehensive plan was adopted in 2005 and the most recent plan in 2015. New Hanover Township has also adopted other specific planning documents, including the Open Space and Recreation Master Plan (2015) which identified properties for acquisition as future parks and open space resources as well as a bicycle and pedestrian trails master plan that outlined potential routes for future trail connections. As part of an update to the township's Act 209, a Land Use Assumptions Report was adopted in February 2019 that identifies where potential development may be located. This comprehensive plan builds off these past planning documents and summarizes their main findings in one cohesive document. While it is not the intent of this comprehensive plan to supersede these previous planning documents, one main objective of the plan is to incorporate key recommendations from past findings into the implementation process. This will create a cohesive whole that ensures the township's goals are accounted for and are assigned a corresponding priority level.

Relationship to the PMRPC Comprehensive Plan

New Hanover Township is a participating municipality in the Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Planning Commission (PMRPC). This is a multi-municipal regional planning agency formed in 2005 that represents one of the largest multi-municipal planning efforts within the state of Pennsylvania. Other participating municipalities in Montgomery County are Douglass Township, Lower Pottsgrove Township, Upper Pottsgrove Township, West Pottsgrove Township, Pottstown Borough, and East Coventry and North Coventry in Chester County. The purpose of a regional planning commission is to ensure coordinated growth and development in the region while retaining the unique historical, cultural, and natural amenities of the area. The intergovernmental agreement signed by all participating municipalities outlines the shared goals and objectives for the region: to balance growth management and to direct development and preservation to appropriate areas throughout the region.

To further define these shared goals and objectives, a comprehensive plan for the region was created. The first regional comprehensive plan was adopted in 2005 and an updated plan was adopted in 2015. As a member of a regional planning commission, New Hanover Township is not required to have its own comprehensive plan, but township staff and representatives felt it was necessary to complete a more tailored plan to address specific municipal concerns. The regional comprehensive plan is a great resource to better understand larger trends within the region but provides limited focused recommendations for any given municipality. The New Hanover comprehensive plan is generally consistent with the regional comprehensive plan and makes more specific recommendations for plans, policies, and programs for the township to follow or adopt to best address its unique needs.

Timeline of Events

Planning efforts for the comprehensive plan kicked off in April 2019 with a presentation to the New Hanover Township Planning Commission during its regularly scheduled monthly meeting. Members of the Planning Commission served as the steering committee for the plan process, and dedicated workshop time during monthly Planning Commission meetings was given to the comprehensive plan. All of these meetings were open to the public and numerous community members showed up to listen to the process and provide input. Each month covered a different topic area presented through background data reports, discussion questions, and presentation slides. Meeting minute notes were taken and approved by the Planning Commission. All materials prepared for the comprehensive plan discussions are available on the township's website for public review.

Community engagement was solicited in several different ways beyond attendance at the Planning Commission meetings. The first engagement method was a community survey that was launched in September 2019 and open through November 2019. The survey asked residents to respond to a number of topic areas to better understand the community's values and priorities, which included questions on traffic concerns, parks and open space, economic development, and housing and development. The survey was extensively advertised through multiple online and in-person channels, was distributed electronically through a link posted on the township website, and directly emailed to residents. Hard copies of the survey were



available at the township building, and distributed at public meetings. The survey received 277 responses which were summarized during a Planning Commission meeting.

A community workshop was held on November 13, 2019 to build off of the community survey and gather more detailed feedback from the public on their desires for the future of the township. Approximately 80 community residents attended the workshop and participated in an in-depth discussion about future growth, development, and investment in resources. The workshop dove into three topics in particular: Community Character, Circulation, and Parks and Open Space. Residents were asked to provide their opinions on each of the topic areas and had an opportunity to use maps and charts to illustrate their needs and wants as members of the community. The responses collected during the workshop were summarized at the December 2019 Planning Commission meeting.

What characteristics of New Hanover do you value the most?

“Rural Community

Open Space . . .

. . . Safety

Family-friendly . . .

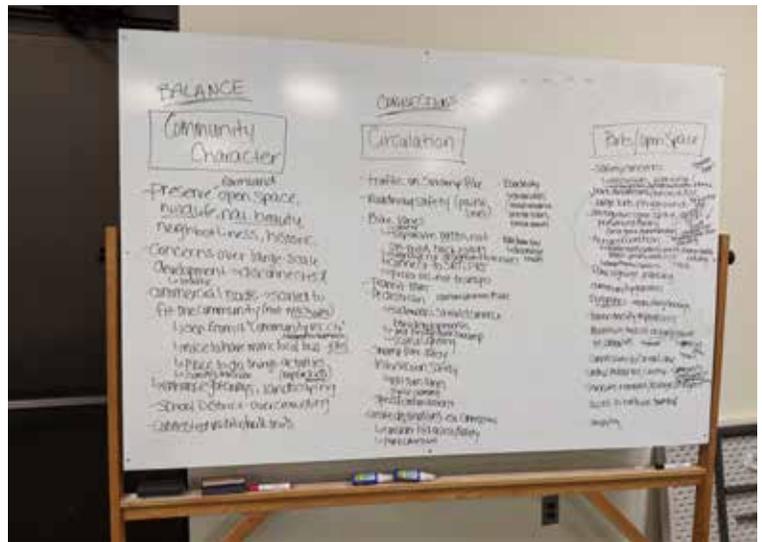
. . . Low taxes

Central location . . .

Small-town feel ”

Based on community feedback and coordination with the Planning Commission and other stakeholders, goals and implementation recommendations were developed. The goals in this document represent broader value-based statements of the community's intent for the future, while the specific implementation recommendations represent active strategies for the township to adopt, implement, or enforce to move policy toward the community's stated future vision. Each of these recommendations are ranked by priority and estimated timeline for completion. This creates a strong action plan for municipal staff to follow, and provides steps that have measurable results to track progress.

Prior to adopting the comprehensive plan, the draft was made available for public review. The Planning Commission reviewed the draft and recommended it to the Board of Supervisors on February 10, 2021. A public hearing was held on April 1, 2021. The Board of Supervisors reviewed the draft and formally adopted the plan, in accordance with Section 302 of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, on April 1, 2021.



Adoption, Implementation, and Beyond

The comprehensive plan shall serve as an advisory framework that will guide all decision-making by the Board of Supervisors, township administration, and other township commissions and citizen groups. The plan will not, however, invalidate or challenge actions made by the Board of Supervisors on the basis that such action is inconsistent with any provision within this plan. It is the intent of this plan to be a living document to be continually reviewed and re-assessed on a regular basis to ensure the recommendations provided still align with community desires. Annual reviews are recommended to ensure projects requiring capital inputs are integrated into the township’s operating budgets, and to identify upcoming grant programs that align with the plan’s recommendations. In addition to keeping the plan in the forefront of decision-making, annual reviews also provide an opportunity to keep the public informed as to the status of implementation, to review past accomplishments, report on measurable progress, and to identify priority projects for the next calendar or fiscal year.

The initial timeframe of this document projects out the township’s needs 20 years into the future, and is appropriately titled “New Hanover Township Comprehensive Plan 2040.” Policy changes can sometimes be slow to materialize, and so it is important to identify the building blocks that need to be put into place now in order to create the foundation to achieve the community’s vision for the future. This type of forward-thinking enables township staff and the governing body to consider how presently made decisions and actions will impact the township in the future through the use of the blueprint that is outlined in this plan’s implementation chart. This 20-year timeframe also enables enough time to have passed to be able to conduct a more thorough review of the plan’s successes and shortcomings after 10 years, which is when the township is required by the MPC to conduct an update to this plan¹. By adopting the comprehensive plan, the township is declaring that the goals identified herein are true representations of the community’s values and all decision-making should be conducted with these goals and values in mind.

How to read this plan

This plan is organized in a series of chapters that dive into specific topic areas as required by the PA MPC. Since so much of the built and natural environment cannot be understood in a vacuum, this plan takes into consideration the holistic dynamics of these elements to better outline cause and effects, and how that influences the recommended direction for future policy and plans. Throughout the chapters, special call-out boxes will specifically call attention to these dynamics and interrelationships to provide the reader with greater context behind a data set or recommended policy approach. It is the aim of this document to not only provide guidance and direction to the decision-makers in the township, but to also educate the public on the rationale behind the planning practice.

¹ As long as New Hanover Township is a member of the Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Planning Commission, the township-specific comprehensive plan may not have to meet this revision timeline as long as the regional comprehensive plan follows the timeline for updates. However, it is encouraged to treat this comprehensive plan as any other, and to maintain it in the manner prescribed by the MPC.

Each chapter will have a set of goals specific to its topic area, with a list of strategies and implementation steps.

RECOMMENDATIONS

... are value-based statements that identify the community's vision for itself, and provide a broad base against which any decision should be made.

STRATEGIES

... are specific action-items that can be implemented in order to achieve the stated goal, and represent plans, policies, or other measurable steps that should be undertaken by the township. These strategies are structured so that the township may be able to measure the progress made toward implementation and develop reports to the community as the plan is carried out over the next ten years.

All of the recommendations and strategies are grouped together in an easy-to-read implementation table found at the end of this document. This table provides priority levels assigned to each of the implementation strategies based on community input, identifies timelines, and specifies project partners, where applicable. This chart should be used by the township to easily identify next steps in implementation, and can serve as a useful tool for measuring progress.





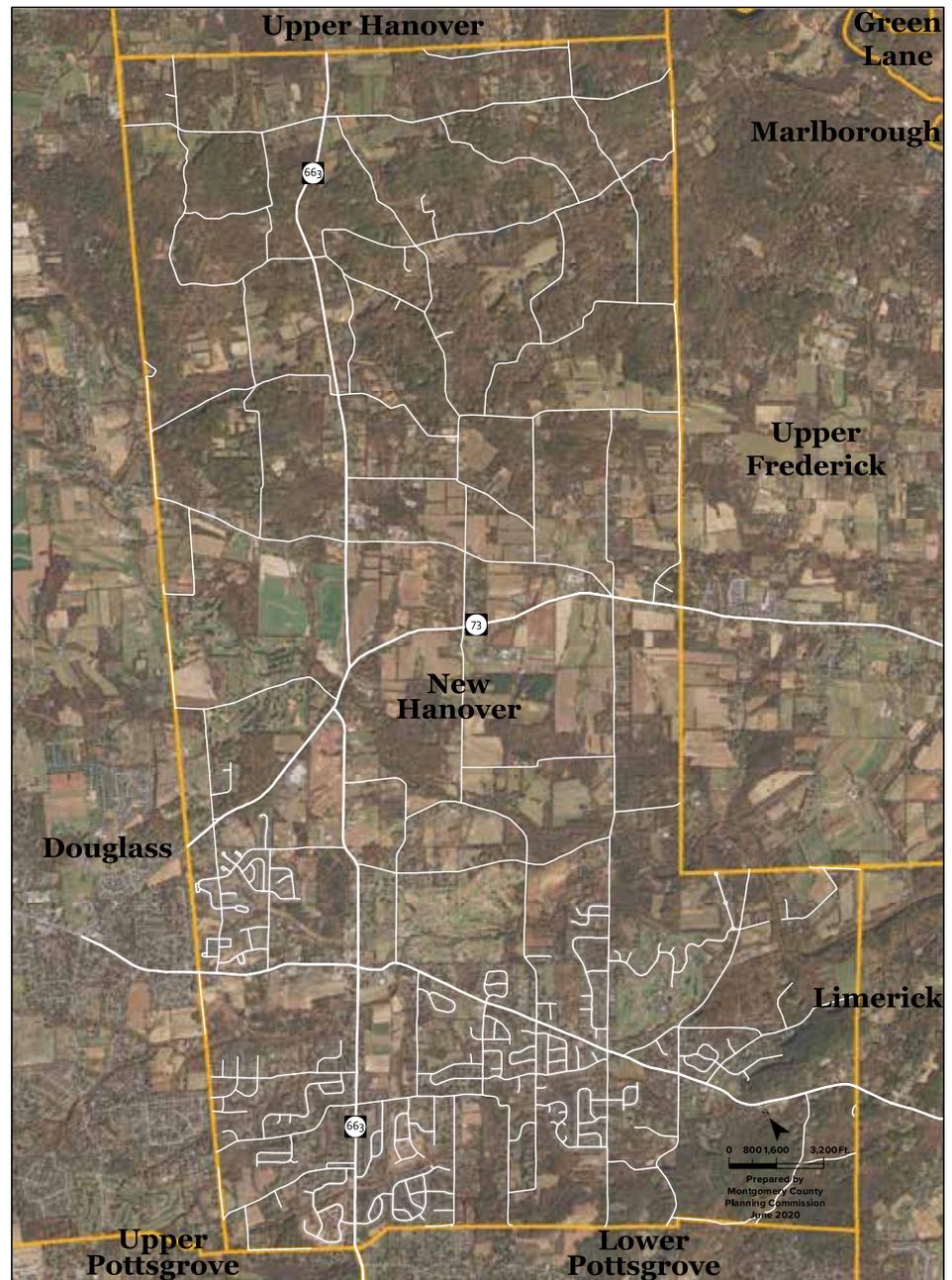
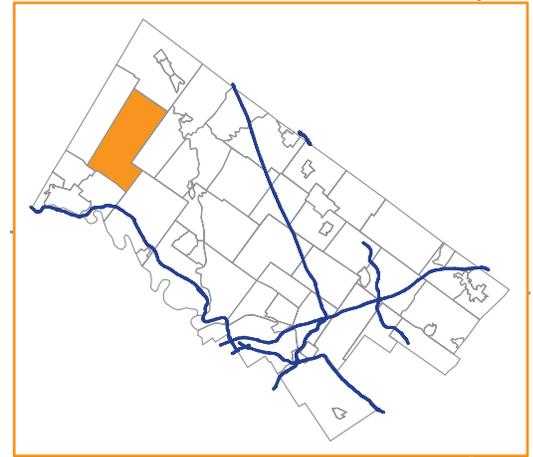
1

New Hanover Township is located in western Montgomery County, Pennsylvania within the greater Philadelphia metropolitan area. The 21.7 square-mile municipality is bordered by Lower Pottsgrove, Upper Pottsgrove, Douglass, Upper Hanover, Lower Frederick, and Limerick Townships. New Hanover is typically considered a “bedroom community” in that it has limited commercial activity within its borders, however, its location in western Montgomery County places it within commuting distance of many other regional centers of commerce. The closest of these is Pottstown, located just under six miles away from the center of the township. Other areas include King of Prussia and Philadelphia to the east, and Allentown and Reading to the north and west, respectively. There are few major roadways in New Hanover, but key connectivity points are located along PA Route 663 (North Charlotte Street/Layfield Road) which runs north/south through the township and connects residents to the Quakertown Interchange on the PA Turnpike Northeast extension to the north and to the Hanover Street Interchange on US Route 422/Pottstown Expressway to the south. A major east/west roadway is PA Route 73 (Big Road) which connects into Route 29 to the east and to Route 100 via Gilbertsville to the west.

Priority Areas

- ▶ Plan ahead for staffing, equipment, and technology needs in township departments and emergency services to accommodate the rising demand for services.
- ▶ Correct failures in on-lot sewer systems through monitoring, assessment, and educational outreach.
- ▶ Balance the provision of and upgrades to utility infrastructure with the need to protect natural resources and preserve the rural community character.

New Hanover Township benefits from a wealth of open space resources within its borders, including numerous public and private golf courses, parks, farmland, and forested areas, and is within close proximity to other nearby outdoor recreation areas such as Spring Mount and Green Lane Park and Reservoir. This natural landscape was attractive to early European settlers, many of whom emigrated from Germany in the 18th century to clear the land for farms and homesteads. Mining was also an early industry and copper mines were established in the early 1700s. The township was formally established in 1741 when the larger township of Hanover located in Philadelphia County was divided into the townships of New Hanover, Upper Hanover, Douglass, and Pottsgrove. It was not until 1784 that Montgomery County was established as a separate county. Much of New Hanover remained heavily rural through the early 20th century, and it wasn't until the 1980s that a move toward residential suburbanization gained strong momentum.



Government Structure

New Hanover Township is a second-class township and is governed by a five-person Board of Supervisors who are elected at large and serve six-year terms. Additional boards and committees serve the township's interests and programming and include the Planning Commission, the Environmental Advisory Board (EAB), and the Parks and Recreation Committee. Township staff is comprised of the manager, administrative assistant, a finance officer, a director of parks and recreation, public works, and a two-person zoning department. The current staffing is adequate to manage public needs and requests, although additional staff may be needed as the township's population grows in order to continue providing effective and responsive services to residents and businesses.



social media channels, which distribute information and alerts to the public. It is anticipated that with the continued rise in the population, the police force will need to double in size within the next twenty years. An increase in police personnel will also require additional office space, vehicles, and equipment storage. The budget for the police department is tied into the township's capital improvement plan, which allocates funding for new vehicles and technology needed to provide the community with the most up-to-date policing tools.

Ambulance service is provided by private companies, four of which operate in the region but none are located in New Hanover. The nearest hospital for emergency care is in Pottstown.

Public Services and Utilities

Police and Emergency Services

The New Hanover Township Police Department is housed in the main township administration building and is staffed by ten full-time police officers which includes the Chief of Police. Crime is low in New Hanover but the community has been impacted by the opioid epidemic which fuels some of the petty theft and other low-level crime. The top violation areas are traffic citations and speeding, which can be challenging to police because municipal police are unable to use radar detection in the state of Pennsylvania. The police engage in fostering community relationships and maintain an in-person and online presence by attending community events and through their website and

Fire

New Hanover Township, like many municipalities in the state, does not have a paid fire department and instead relies on a full-service volunteer fire company. The New Hanover Fire Company's primary responsibilities include mitigating and putting out active fires, but also includes responding to other emergency service request calls, providing training for volunteer members, and educating the public on fire safety and prevention. Prior to 2015, the township

was serviced by two volunteer fire companies: the Sassamansville Fire Company and the New Hanover Township Fire Company #1. The Sassamansville Fire Company was closed in 2014 and its fire equipment and volunteers were merged with the New Hanover Township Fire Company #1 to create the New Hanover Fire & Rescue Services, housed out of two station locations. The primary fire house is located on Swamp Pike at Romig Road and contains four garage bays. The north end substation is located off PA Route 663 near Little Road. The former Sassamansville fire house, located on Hoffmansville Road near Kulps Road, is now used as a social hall. In total, the Fire Company has about 77 active members of whom 54 are active firefighters with the remaining volunteers serving in an administrative capacity. Teens are able to volunteer for the fire department as early as 14 years old in the junior explorer program, and volunteer ages range all the way to members in their 70s and 80s. Those volunteers eligible for the chief and deputy chief roles must meet tenure and residency requirements.

The consolidation of companies allows New Hanover Fire to be more responsive to resident calls. The total coverage area for the fire company is 40 square miles which equates to approximately 140 road miles within



the service area. The fire company has mutual aid agreements with all of the surrounding fire companies in adjacent municipalities including Green Lane Limerick, Upper Frederick, and Douglass Townships; Gilbertsville is the primary mutual aid fire company. This mutual aid agreement means all residents in the township are within four miles of a fire station. The completion of the north end substation and coordinated efforts with the township's water service provider, Aqua America, has resulted in an increase in the capacity of the water system, in conjunction with the tanker trucks, to be able to improve the ISO (Insurance Service Organization) rating of the fire company, which impacts home insurance rates.

The New Hanover Fire Company has two engine trucks, one ladder truck, a heavy rescue vehicle, and two tankers. Truck apparatus are replaced every 15 to 20 years, with a purchasing schedule of about one major equipment upgrade every five years. Engine trucks are replaced every 15 years, and the next scheduled replacement purchase will occur around 2025. Ladder trucks are replaced every 20 years, with the most recent ladder truck being replaced in 2018. The Fire Company receives an annual financial contribution from the township, of which 30% is allocated toward capital reserves, but relies primarily on fundraising, solicitation, and grant awards to cover the majority of the operating capital, which includes the scheduled payments for new service equipment, training, and protection equipment.

Community outreach and education is a large part of the mission of the fire company. During fire prevention week, the fire company makes presentations at local elementary schools, day care

centers, and home school groups, and sponsors programs at the fire house. In addition, information is shared directly to residents through newsletters, as well as on the company's website and social media channels. Input from the fire marshal is collected concerning the location of new fire hydrants and apparatus accessibility on planned roadways during the land development process for new residential and non-

residential projects to ensure all new developments are adequately set up for fire response. The fire company is well-poised to continue providing high quality and responsive services to the community and has adopted new technologies to improve its performance, including phone apps that alert volunteers to incoming calls and provide tracking information to optimize response time and personnel dispatch.



Public Works

The Township Public Works Department provides maintenance, construction, and installation of township assets and infrastructure. Its primary responsibility is to maintain locally-owned roadways, bridges, and township parks, playgrounds, and open space areas. In addition, the department manages emergency

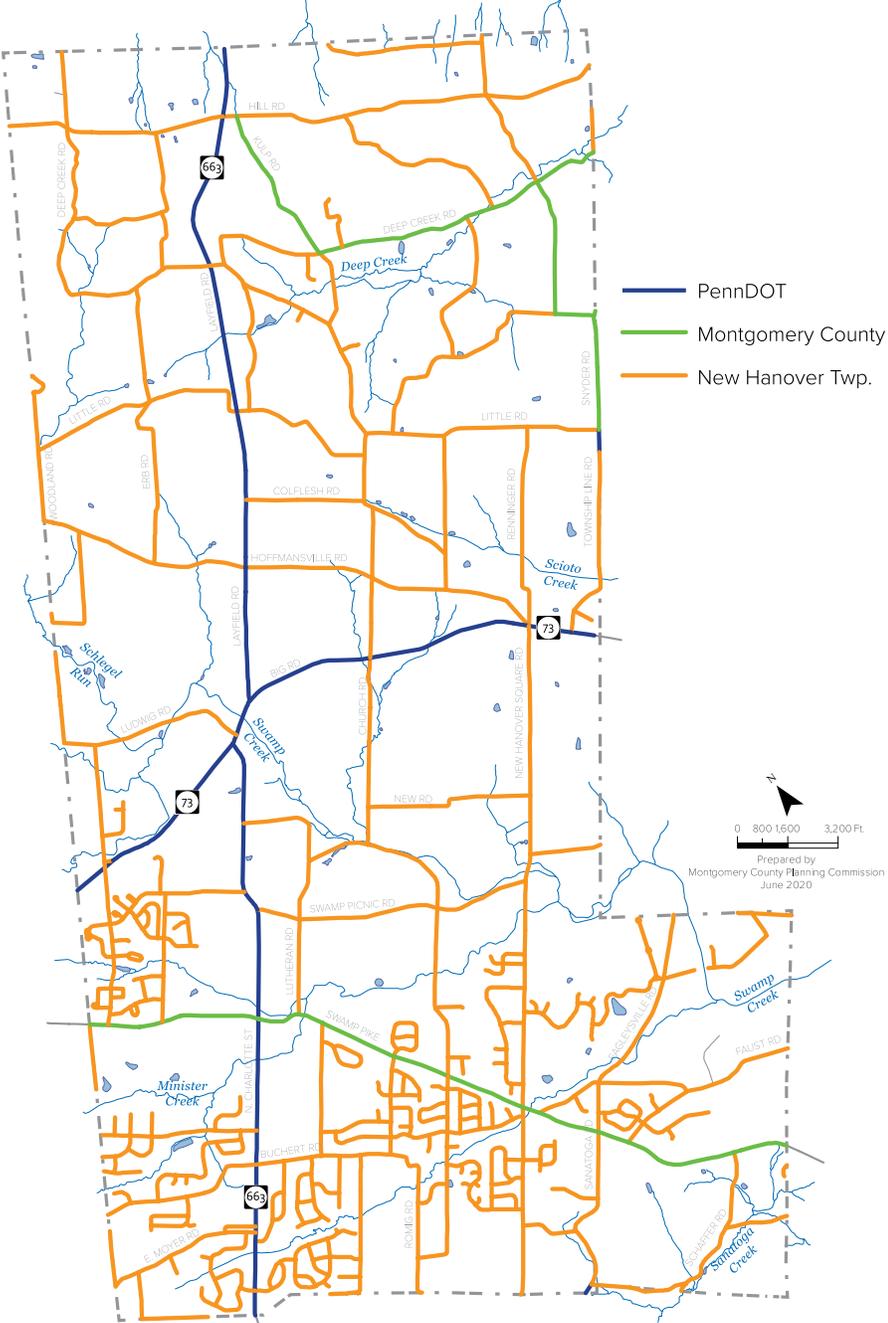
maintenance requests from residents and staff and responds to weather-related events caused by snow, flooding, or other natural disasters. The township’s website includes a maintenance request form for residents to fill out to report any problems, like potholes or downed trees. The department is staffed by a team of nine full-time employees and a vehicle fleet

comprised of maintenance trucks and heavy equipment housed in the public works building located behind the township administration building.

Public Works manages over 80 roadway miles owned by the township but is not responsible for maintaining roadways owned by Montgomery County and PennDOT. Roadways are treated in a variety of ways that have differing lifespans, and range from a top coat seal to full mill and overlay. Public Works maintains a ten-year plan of upcoming roadwork projects and is in the process of creating an interactive map for the public to learn about which roadways are scheduled for improvements. The Public Works Department is responsible for other roadway features including painting crosswalks and maintaining traffic signals, and undertakes tree trimming on an annual basis to clear vegetation within the roadway rights-of-way. In addition to regular maintenance and roadway upkeep, Public Works is responsible for emergency response to weather conditions and regularly salts or brines roadways in anticipation of snow or ice, plows roadways, and provides repairs to roadways damaged from excessive rain or flooding. Public Works is also responsible for maintaining the township’s parks and open space lands which includes mowing, mulching, weeding, trash removal, and upkeep of the playground equipment. A growing population has increased the usage of parks and open space, resulting in additional maintenance needs.

A larger population also increases the amount of traffic on the roadways, which may cause some roads to wear faster than originally anticipated in the roadway maintenance schedule.

MAP: 1 || Roadways



Concurrently, the number of roadway miles under the purview of Public Works has increased as the township has taken on some roads through dedication, although some new residential subdivisions contain roadways that are not dedicated to the township and so will remain privately owned and maintained. A roadway ownership map is available on the township's website that identifies which roadways are maintained by Public Works and which are maintained by other entities.

A newer duty assigned to the Public Works Department is the inspection of stormwater basins and stormwater outfalls throughout the township. Stormwater management is a recurring concern among residents, particularly as the rate of development continues and new outfalls and basins are being constructed to account for the reduction in pervious surfaces. Many older basins have been found to be deficient and require repairs or retrofitting to improve their functionality.

The Public Works department has already identified personnel, equipment, and facility shortfalls in meeting current maintenance demands. Additional departmental capacity needs to be created in order to adequately meet the needs of the township in the future. Aging roadways and a growing call for additional park amenities and new recreation trails will add additional burdens on the existing capacity of the department, necessitating an increase in personnel, funding, equipment, and storage. Large expenditures, such as a new salt shed and a new public works garage, will need to be appropriately planned for in both future capital improvement plans and in where they will be located. The existing location is

central to servicing the township which is beneficial. Some of the maintenance and upkeep duties are contracted to third-party companies, but costs can be better managed if township staff are able to serve in multiple capacities to conduct construction and maintenance projects in-house. Additional planning for increased use and adoption of technology will be critical to provide accurate and up-to-date information for both long-term and emergency responses by the Public Works staff. These tools can make the department more efficient and can provide the public with real-time data, which is especially important in the event of snow events or other emergencies. Staffing is challenging because of the breadth of skills, licensing, and qualifications required for the job.

Utilities

The location, use, and expansion of public utility services, particularly the provision of public sewer and water, will have a significant impact on the future development patterns in the township. The comprehensive plan from 1998 states that "public or off-site sewer and water services should be considered service resources with limited capacities." Upgrades to both the public sewer and water systems have been completed in the intervening decades to accommodate increased development, but the limitations remain. In order to provide the community with high-quality utility services, the township must strike a balance between the intensity of new development and the capacity of the systems.

New Hanover Township is served by both public sewer and water and by on-lot sewer and well water systems.

Water service is provided by Aqua America, which took over service from Superior Water in 2016. Sewer and wastewater treatment services are provided by the New Hanover Township Authority, which is a quasi-independent committee staffed by resident Board members appointed by the Commissioners. Electrical service is provided by Met-Ed, which is a subsidiary company of the state's largest energy provider, FirstEnergy. Gas service is provided by UGI Corporation. All utility companies in the state are regulated by the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (PUC), and all sewer systems and wastewater treatment plants are monitored by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP). Residents pay all usage fees and taxes directly to each service provider. Almost all new utilities are buried underground, but older developments have above-ground electrical lines. Above-ground utility poles can experience service interruptions from downed wires caused by wind, heavy snow, and falling tree branches.

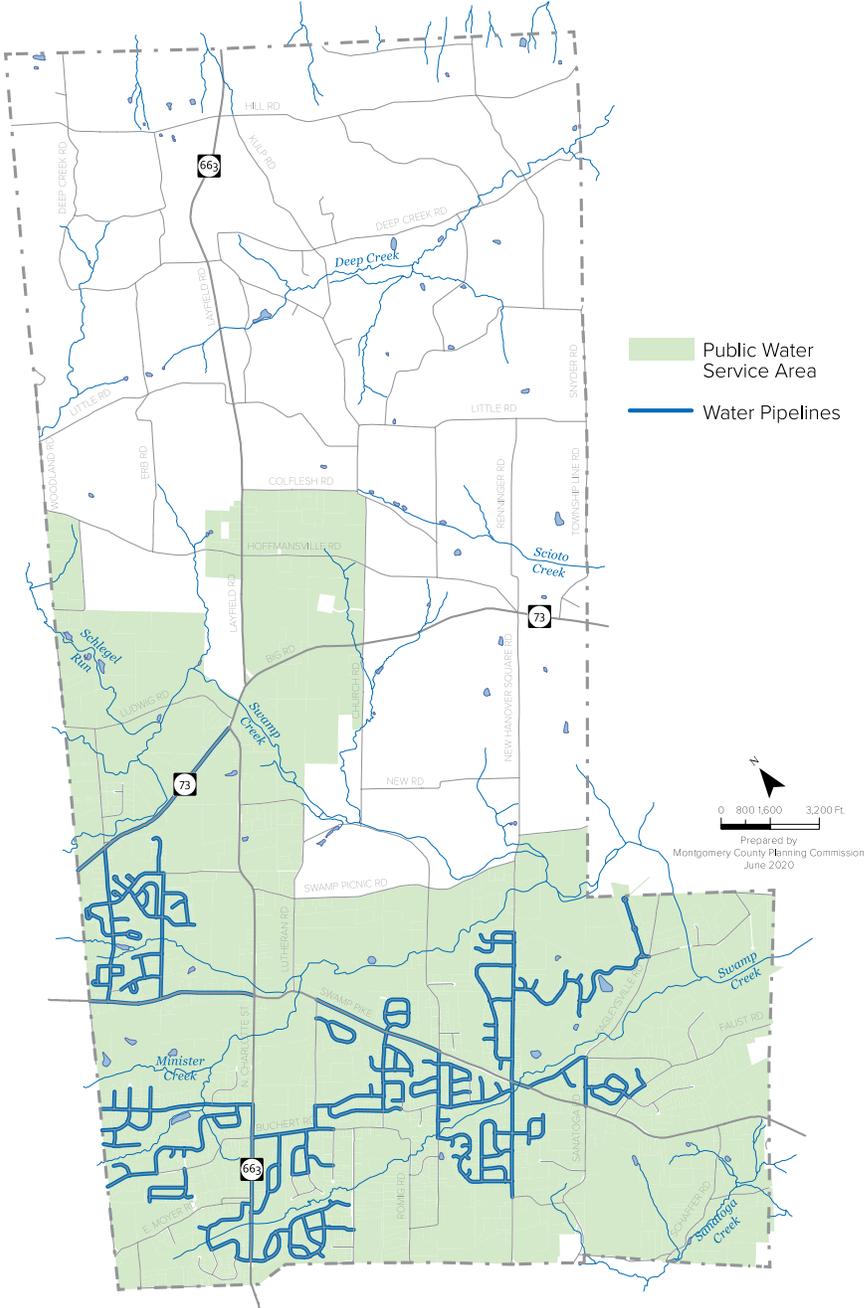
Due to the fragmented nature of utility ownership, coordinating maintenance is critical to balancing the needs of all service users. Because most utilities are buried under roadways, utility companies are required to close or partially close roadways to conduct maintenance and servicing of the infrastructure. Roadways are then cut out and either patched or milled and replaced once service work is completed. While it can be difficult to predict emergency repairs to underground infrastructure, utility companies operating in New Hanover Township do maintain a relationship with the administration to coordinate on scheduled maintenance that

coincides with the township’s roadway improvements plan. This helps avoid unnecessary road work or disturbance of a roadway surface that was recently treated. New Hanover has a twenty-year road plan that identifies which roads are scheduled for servicing, and is tied to the capital improvements plan. Utility companies should continue coordinating with the township on maintenance needs to organize repairs and maintenance concurrent with roadway servicing. To aid this coordination and provide easily accessible real-time information for residents and the township, maps should be created that overlay the age of underground infrastructure and scheduled maintenance needs of utility companies with the township’s road plan. These maps would minimize roadway disturbance and provide timely information for residents to be able to anticipate upcoming construction projects.

Water

Public water services are provided by a private utility company, Aqua America, which owns and operates approximately 5,924 miles of pipe mains, storage tanks, pumping stations, and wells that provide drinking water to 1.4 million residents across the state. Approximately 60% of the water service capacity in the township is dedicated for servicing fire suppression needs, with the remainder going toward domestic and commercial uses. Water infrastructure is not limited by a service boundary and its expansion is driven largely by new development. Developers typically pay to extend the water lines to new subdivisions which is overseen by the township and the PUC. The current infrastructure within New Hanover is comprised of three storage tanks, ten wells, and operates about

MAP: 2 || *Water Utility Service Area*



0.65 million gallons per day. Aqua America has sited additional locations where future utilities could be installed to increase capacity, and currently have an excess capacity that could service up to 3,000 new customers.

Because early development was predominantly located on larger lots with individual on-lot wells, the

installation and expansion of public water to many residential subdivisions came later to New Hanover Township than to other areas of Montgomery County. As a result, many of the water mains and other water infrastructure is relatively new. The oldest mains were installed in the 1980s, and have a lifespan of 50 to 80 years, which means there should be no major need to repair or replace mains within the next twenty years as a result of aging, unless they are damaged. The benefit of new infrastructure is that the materials used are more efficient when compared to some of the older water infrastructure systems which used clay pipes that develop cracks and leaks over time. The township's older mains and laterals are made of ductile iron while the newer mains are made of HDPE, which have a diameter of either 8" or 12" and provide better velocity than the iron material. The service provider flushes the mains twice per year to clear out debris and monitors the pipes regularly to check for leaks or other repair needs.

Township properties not connected to public water systems are serviced by on-lot wells. These pull directly from groundwater to supply household needs and require larger lot sizes than properties connected into public water systems. The PMRPC Comprehensive Plan recommends that water facility extensions should be discouraged in rural resource areas. Because Aqua America is not restricted in extending service within a designated area, it is incumbent upon the township to ensure that appropriate development mechanisms are in place to limit the expansion of public water systems in more ecologically sensitive areas of the township and in areas where larger lot sizes are preferred to maintain the rural community character. Additionally, the PMRPC Comprehensive Plan recommends that public water

connections should be required in all areas utilizing public sewer. On-lot wells draw up groundwater but unlike on-lot sewage disposal systems that allow water to infiltrate and replenish groundwater, public sewers convey wastewater to the treatment plant where it is eventually discharged into a stream. Most new developments with lots smaller than a half-acre are providing both public sewer and water already.

Sewer

New Hanover Township is served by a mix of individual on-lot disposal systems (OLDS) and public sewer. Areas in the southern half of the township are located within the sewer service area while the more rural portions of the township, primarily located north of Big Road, are serviced by individual on-lot septic systems. Sewage facilities in the state of Pennsylvania are guided by sewage plans required under the PA Sewage Facilities Act. These plans, referred to as Act 537 plans, are developed by each municipality or municipal region in the state to outline present and future sewage disposal needs and should be updated at least every five years. New Hanover's current Act 537 was most recently updated in 2003 and should be updated to reflect impacts from the amount of new development that has occurred in the township over the last 17 years. New Hanover Township has its own Sewer Authority which owns and operates the wastewater treatment plant and all sewer conveyances in the township. The New Hanover Township Sewer Authority is managed by the New Hanover Township Authority Board which is comprised of volunteer resident members appointed by the Board of Commissioners.

The New Hanover sewer system includes the wastewater treatment



development potential of the area within the Act 537 service boundary. Increased service demands will also require additional upgrades to service infrastructure. The current service level is around 3,200 EDUs which is less than half of the system's total capacity, and proposed land development plans currently under review by the township would require much of the remaining capacity. EDUs are purchased by a property owner or developer and run with the land, meaning that a new owner would acquire the EDUs if the property sold. The Authority does not repurchase unused EDUs if the final development ends up using fewer than were originally purchased. Based on proposed land development plans, additional upgrades to the New Hanover Square Road pump station would be required to manage the additional volume. An expansion in the service area boundary may stretch the capacity of the treatment plant and supporting infrastructure to a point where additional upgrades

would be necessary, which may be cost-prohibitive.

For areas of the township not connected to the public sewer system, properties are serviced by on-lot disposal systems. Larger lot sizes are required for on-lot systems, as they require sufficient area to serve as a leach field to filter out contaminants in the liquid discharged from septic tanks. Malfunctioning sewage disposal systems can pose a serious threat to public health and the environment if they discharge directly into groundwater because of the potential to pollute drinking water. Many areas of the township have poor soils with limited infiltration which can contribute to these on-lot systems to fail; however, some failures are attributable to lack of proper maintenance and a limited understanding of the service needs of this infrastructure.

In areas outside of the Act 537 boundary with on-lot failures, the township and the Authority may

want to consider connecting these properties or developments to the public sewer system as an exemption under a revised Act 537. However, an expansion of the sewer should not be undertaken as an incentive for growth that would allow new developments outside of the service boundary to connect into the public sewer, but to provide quality services to existing properties and to provide for the public health and safety. The township may also consider adopting an on-lot disposal system management program that would survey properties to identify areas of failure, make recommendations for connections into the public system, and provide maintenance assistance to property owners. These considerations should be included in the next update to the township's Act 537.

Some funding is available to assist private property owners with meeting the sewage goals of the township. The Act 13 Marcellus Legacy Fund is an annual grant program administered

by the PA Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED), which assists municipalities and local agencies in administering their Act 537 planning responsibilities. Individual property owners are eligible to receive low interest loans to assist in the repair of malfunctioning on-lot sewage disposal systems through the Pennsylvania Infrastructure Investment Authority (PENNVEST). Eligible low-income homeowners may receive funding for OLDS repair and replacement through the Single-Family Housing Repair Loans and Grants Program, also known as the Section 504 Home Repair Program, administered by the US Department of Agriculture Rural Development.

The new residential development expected in the township will continue to place additional strain on the capacity of the system to manage sewage flows. The current infrastructure has the ability to absorb this growth, but only up to a point, and will require continued maintenance to have it working in an optimal condition. Public sewer systems are most appropriate for smaller-lot developments,



such as those residential subdivisions found in much of the southern half of the township. However, the extension of these systems to larger properties that are more dispersed may create incentives to intensify land uses on those properties. Any update to the Act 537 Sewage Facilities Plan should endeavor to understand the relationship between permitted land uses and the location of public facilities, and make appropriate recommendations to manage the location of infrastructure to preserve the community character while still providing high-quality services to existing residents that protect ecologically sensitive areas and public health.

School District

Students living in New Hanover Township attend school in the Boyertown School District. This district covers a wide geographic range and provides public schooling for multiple municipalities in western Montgomery County and eastern Berks County. The district has one high school, two middle schools, and seven elementary schools. Two district schools are located within New Hanover Township: Boyertown Middle School East, located on PA Route 73/Big Road, between Middle Creek Road and North Charlotte Street, and New Hanover Elementary School, located on Hoffmansville Road, just west of the five-point intersection with New Hanover Square Road and PA Route 73/Big Road.

Due to the dispersed geography of the district, over 90% of the student body is bussed to school. A few residential subdivisions are located within one and a half miles from the schools located in the township, but there is limited pedestrian infrastructure available that would provide adequate pathways and sidewalks to enable students to safely walk to school. The population of the school district is also heavily imbalanced, where most of the schools are located in Berks County while the majority of the student population lives in Montgomery County.

It is predicted the population for the school district will continue to increase, and New Hanover Township is experiencing some of the fastest growth of any municipality serviced by the Boyertown School District. The vast majority of new housing in the township is single-family detached housing units, which yield the highest number of school-age children of any housing type¹. This figure is even greater for new construction units, of which there were approximately 839 built in the township between 2010 and 2018. Currently, some schools have additional capacity while others do not, but the main driver of capacity constraints are a result of the distribution of the population in relation to where schools are located. In order to reduce overcrowding in the elementary and middle schools located in Montgomery County, students are bussed to schools on the Berks County side. All students in the district are bussed to the high school in Boyertown Borough.



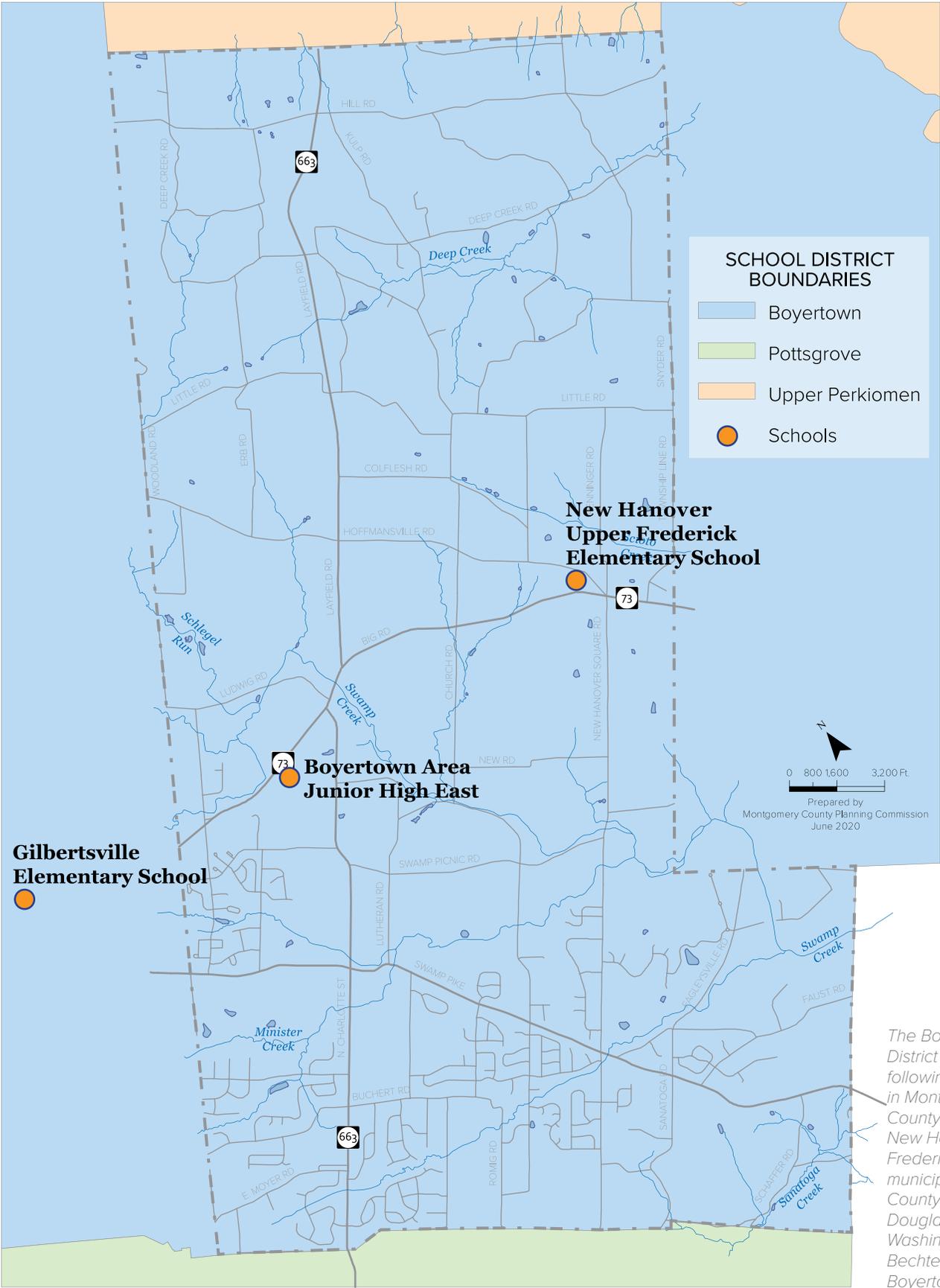
AVERAGE NUMBER OF SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN BY HOUSING UNIT TYPE

	<i>Single-Family Detached</i>	<i>Single-Family Attached</i>	<i>Multifamily</i>
School Age Children per Household in Existing Units	0.55	0.41	0.18
School Age Children per Household in New Units	0.93	0.21	0.06

Financial considerations also limit the school district’s ability to purchase land to build new schools and growing classroom sizes may diminish optimal schooling environments. Future residential development, especially new single-family detached dwelling units, will result in increased school population and challenge the school district’s ability to “right size” the distribution of students to the existing school locations. Funding shortages and an increased demand in school services resulting from an increased school population may result in an increase in school district taxes and a reduction in the ability of the district to provide robust extracurricular programs for students.

¹ Average Number of School Age Children by Housing Unit Type. Montgomery County Planning Commission.

MAP: 4 || *School Districts*



Recommendations and Strategies

Grow capacity of government services and staffing to meet the needs of an increased populace.

- ▶ Coordinate with the police department to increase staffing and invest in new technology, vehicles, and other services to improve responsiveness and safety.
- ▶ Invest in upgraded technology at the township building to improve administrative functioning.
- ▶ Expand staffing for public works and other township departments, as needed.
- ▶ Expand the capacity of the salt shed and public works garage. Invest in new road maintenance equipment, as needed.

Manage the expansion of utility infrastructure to align with future development goals.

- ▶ Update the Act 537 Plan, and establish a recurring timeline for revisions every five years.
- ▶ Establish on-lot disposal system management program to survey existing systems, identify failures, and provide resident education.
- ▶ Restrict expansion of sewer services outside of the existing sewer system boundary except for designated properties with failing on-lot systems.





2

New Hanover Township has seen a dramatic shift in recent decades, as changing land uses from agricultural production and open space areas to residential developments has contributed to a rapidly growing population. Provisions in the zoning code permit a range of residential development options from traditionally large half-acre or more properties to much smaller-lot subdivisions of less than a quarter-acre. New development using these “performance based” standards has introduced a greater diversity of housing types to the township, which is still predominantly single-family detached, but has also exacerbated concerns related to neighborhood character and design. With a rapid influx of new residents and continual construction of new homes, many long-term residents feel the township is changing too quickly and losing its rural appeal. The pace and scale of development has had significant implications for almost every aspect of life in the township, from the loss of open space, increasing traffic on area roadways, demands on school capacity and municipal services, and growing stormwater management concerns. Looking ahead at the next twenty years, New Hanover Township will need to respond to these changing pressures and strive toward striking a balance between necessary growth and development, integrity of natural resources and the ecosystem, and the protection of the community character.

Priority Areas

- ▶ Diversify housing options for a greater range of lifestyle needs, especially to accommodate an aging population and enable residents to “age in place”.
- ▶ Preserve the township’s rural community character through context-sensitive neighborhood design.
- ▶ Enhance community services and expand community resources to increase cultural and recreational opportunities for residents.

Population

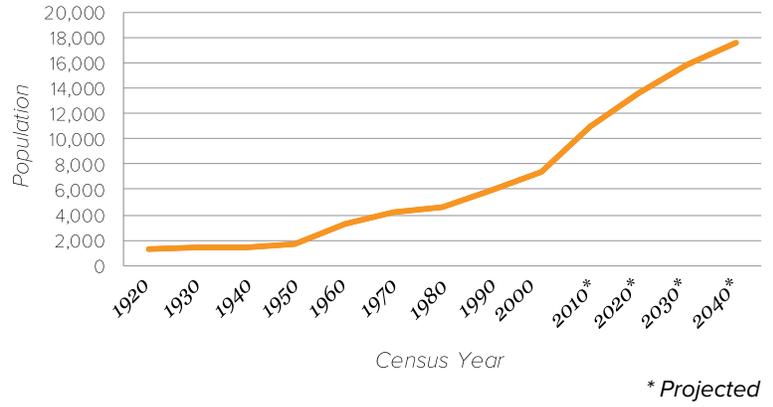
Population Growth

At the turn of the 20th century, the township’s population was very low, indicative of the rural character of the community. There was very little growth in the first few decades of the century, and the population stayed almost the same from 1900 through the end of the 1940s. After the initial wave of new housing development in the 1950s, New Hanover Township has had a steadily rising population but has seen a dramatic increase in population over the last fifteen years. Between 2000 and 2015, the population nearly doubled, jumping from 7,369 to 12,495. During this time, the township experienced a significant housing construction boom which enabled the population to grow as rapidly as it did.

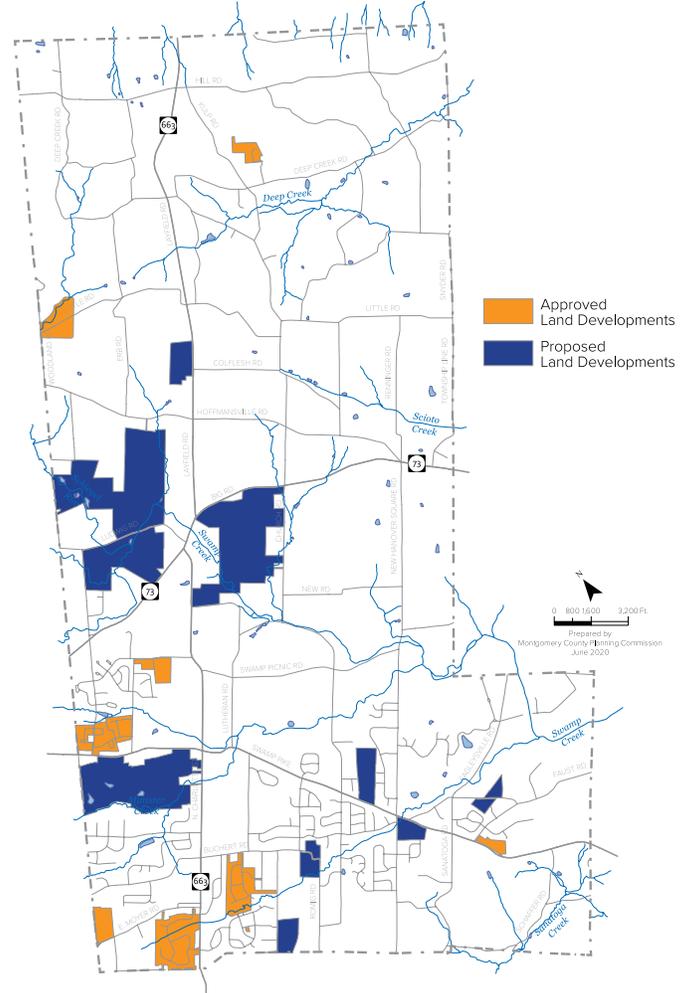
Population projections developed by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) anticipate a growth in the current population from current figures to 18,274 by 2045¹. This would result in an increase of approximately 5,821 new residents, representing a change of 46% over the next 30 years. Of all of the municipalities in the Pottstown Metropolitan Region, New Hanover Township is projected to have the highest levels of growth, both in terms of percent change as well as absolute change. The township is anticipated to attract twice as many new residents as neighboring Douglass Township and over twice as many new residents than any other municipality in the Pottstown Metropolitan Region.

Population growth is intricately linked with new housing development. The township’s Land Use Assumptions Report (LUAR), prepared in 2018 as part of the update to the Transportation Impact Fee Ordinance, forecasts housing construction in New Hanover will generate 2,077 new dwelling units by 2030. Should all these proposed and approved land developments be completed, they would house approximately 5,982 new residents. This would effectively house the anticipated number of new residents forecasted by the DVRPC population projections well before 2045. This projection assumes that all the proposed and approved residential land development plans are constructed by 2030. If this is the case, then any additional housing development beyond those already in the “development pipeline” could result in a population increase greater than what is currently projected.

Population, 1920 -2010



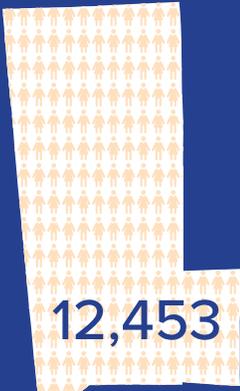
MAP: 5 || Residential Land Developments



¹ DVRPC Population Projections. <https://www.dvrpc.org/webmaps/PopForecast/>

Demographics

Total Residents



40 YEARS OLD

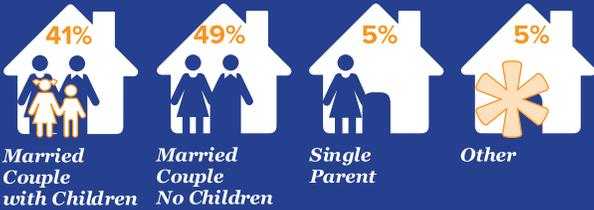
The median age of New Hanover Township residents, which is comparable to the county and surrounding municipalities.

Educational Attainment

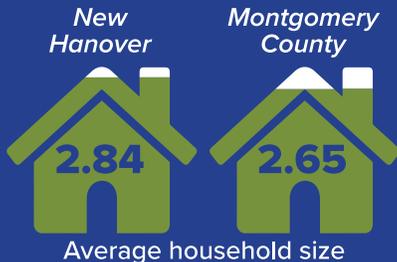


New Hanover Township residents hold Bachelor's degrees at a rate slightly higher than other municipalities within the PMRPC Region and comparable to the county as a whole, but the percentage of residents with graduate or professional degrees is less than most of the other municipalities within the PMRPC Region and more than half of the percentage of the county as a whole.

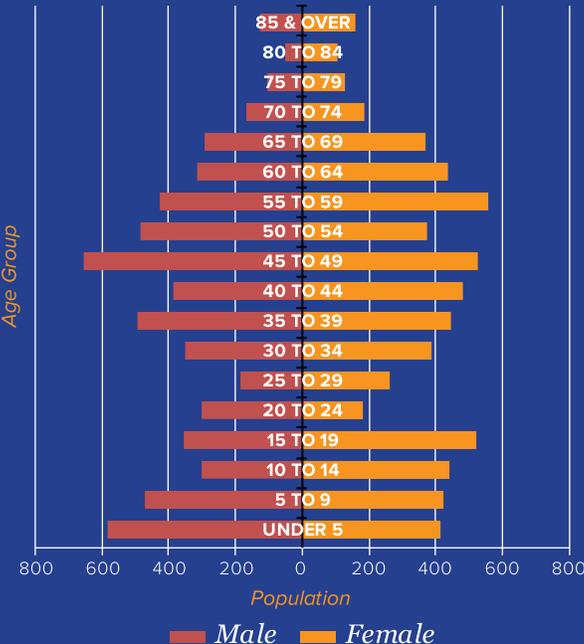
Family Household Types, 2010



4,385 households

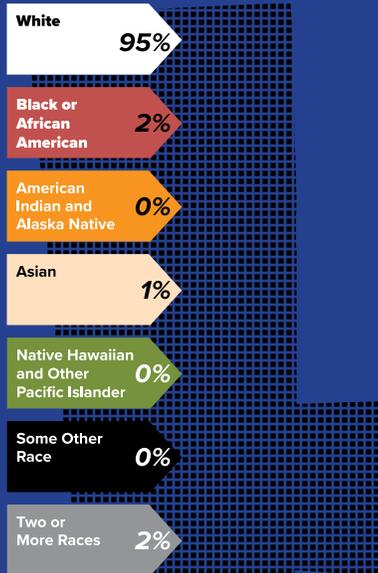


Age-Sex Pyramid



3.4% of the population identifies as Hispanic of any race

Population by Race



What Impacts the Growth of New Housing Development?

Residential land development is partially constrained by zoning, availability of public utilities, environmental limitations, and the capacity of the transportation network. Completion of new construction projects, especially for larger developments, must go through a rigorous land development approval process and receive certifications from a myriad of local and state approval agencies. Large developments consisting of mixed-uses or larger numbers of housing units are often phased, which prolongs the timeline until final completion. This process can take many years and can also be influenced by larger economic forces that can both spur and delay development.

The LUAR identified a total maximum buildout of 6,969 dwelling units if all eligible parcels of land within the township are developed with the maximum number of housing units possible given the zoning standards in place; the number of housing units forecasted by 2030 represents 30% of this remaining development capacity. It is unlikely, however, that the township will ever experience full development of all eligible parcels because of existing site conditions and continuing efforts to preserve existing farmland, woodlands, and other natural features. While it is likely all approved land development plans will be constructed by 2030, it is not anticipated that all of the proposed housing development projects will be completed in full by 2030 but may well be completed by 2045, and thus in line with DVRPC’s population projections.

Given the trending pattern of development, rate of population growth over the last few decades, and the opportunity for new housing development in the township, it is estimated New Hanover will continue to see increased population growth through 2040. It is unlikely though that the township will see significant residential development outside of the parcels already identified for development. Re-development of existing parcels can also contribute to the construction of new housing, which is often seen as the removal of an existing home(s) for the creation of multi-lot subdivisions, but it is also unlikely this will happen in substantial numbers as the primary driver of growth will be predominantly through greenfield development.



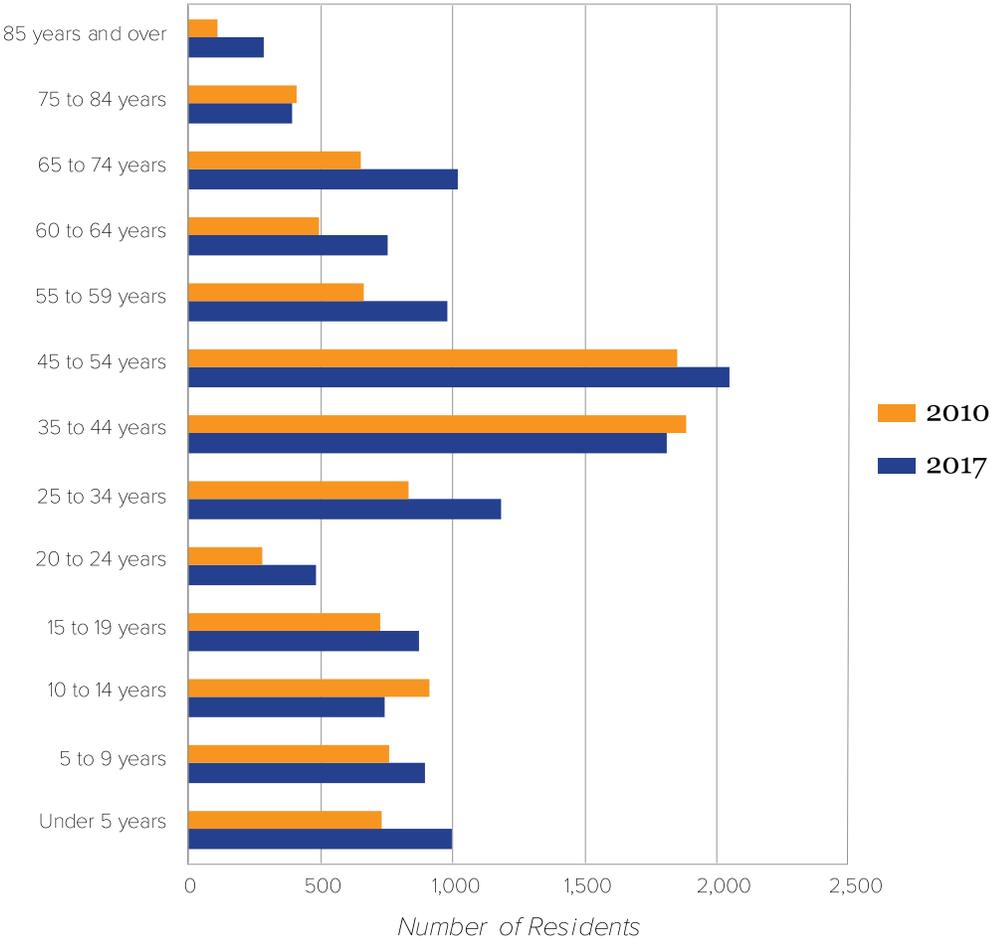
Population Growth by Age

Between 2010 and 2017, the township saw a population increase in every age category, with the most substantial growth in the number of children under 10 years old and strong population gains in residents aged 25 to 34 years old, and those over 45. From 2010 to 2017, the population grew in most age categories except for those 10-14 years old, 35-44 years old, and 75-84 years old.

The correlation between the growth in the number of residents aged 25 to 34 and the growth in the number of residents under 10 years old suggests that a greater share of new residents are families with elementary school-aged children or younger. This demographic is likely attracted to the township by the abundance of new construction single-family housing and the quality of the school district, among other reasons. These residents tend to place a higher use emphasis on community amenities such as parks and recreation areas, particularly playgrounds, recreational sports fields, and school district services. Families are also some of the main participants in parades, festivals, and other community gatherings and may view the provision of these amenities as valuable to their quality of life as a resident. The township organizes a few yearly events, but a growing family and youth population may suggest the need for additional events, activities, and amenities.

While the growth in the number of residents in almost all age categories has increased, the growth in the percentage of households with residents over 60 years old as well as the growth in the percentage of

Population Growth by Age Categories



householders over 65 years old who live alone indicates a growing aging population. This is also evident by the larger population gains within age categories of residents over the age of 55. This segment of the population is likely comprised of residents who have chosen to remain in their homes as they age and may also represent an increasing number of new residents who have chosen to move to New Hanover Township as empty-nesters and/or as a retirement location.

Aging in Place

Aging in place refers to the choice individuals make to remain in their homes as they grow older. Most do so because of the social and spatial connections they have forged: they like their homes, their communities, are close to friends and family, and are established with nearby medical practices. Plus, many homeowners rely on home equity as a source of financial savings after retirement. However, changing physical, financial, and other needs may mean staying in their current home is no longer feasible. This can be especially true in suburban neighborhoods where there is limited infrastructure to meet the needs of all residents but moving can mean the loss of established community connections. Increased social isolation in an unfamiliar place can have a detrimental impact on an individual’s physiological and psychological health. New Hanover should consider these key elements to create more diverse options to support an aging community, which not only is beneficial for older adults, but for residents of all ages.

Mobility

- ▶ Access to passive recreation like nature trails and bird watching provide crucial health benefits and enable residents to live active lifestyles.
- ▶ Sidewalks in neighborhoods provide a safe place for people to walk and connect homes to nearby destinations.

Housing

- ▶ Large single-family homes may be too large and require too much maintenance for some older adults. Diversifying housing choices that offer single-floor living, smaller sizes, or shared neighborhood amenities like clubhouses for social activities offer greater lifestyle opportunities and should be a permitted use throughout residential zoning districts.
- ▶ Regulatory and cost hurdles to modify existing living arrangements may limit resident’s options to age in place. Accommodations should be made to allow residents to easily add ADA ramps to the outside of homes, modify interior living areas, or make other changes to their homes to meet changing needs.
- ▶ Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), also known as In-Law Suites or “granny flats” are another housing option that allows the modification of an existing home or the construction or renovation of an accessory structure, like a garage, into a secondary dwelling unit. These smaller homes allow family members or a caregiver to live independently but close by, or can serve as an income-producing rental space to supplement the incomes of older residents, many of whom may be on a fixed income, to better enable them to afford to stay in their home.





Transportation

- ▶ Driving is a necessity in New Hanover because there are no public transportation options. For those who cannot or no longer wish to drive, there are limited transportation opportunities to access medical care, visit friends and family, or go shopping and run errands.
- ▶ Neighborhood-oriented commercial businesses incorporated into residential neighborhoods can create opportunities for non-drivers to access basic shopping needs by walking or riding a bike.

Future Population Needs

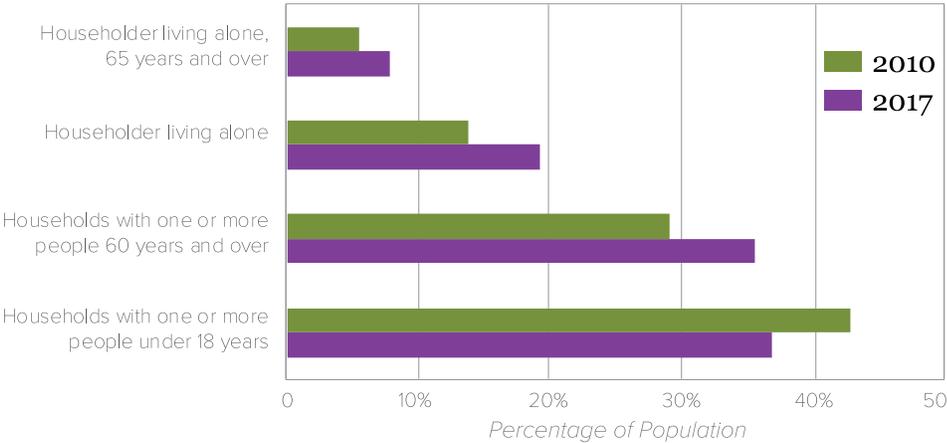
The rapid rise in population has significant implications for the character of the community and the demand on services, including utilities, roadways, schools, and commercial needs. The growing number of young families with school-aged children will continue to place increased demands on classroom space and bussing services from the Boyertown Area School District. The District is currently nearing capacity at some of its schools and faces a transportation issue as the majority of its student population comes from municipalities in Montgomery County while the majority of the schools are located in Berks County.

The growing percentage of the population over 65 tends to require a different set of services than other age groups. Lifestyle changes for the aging and elderly population brings about different needs than younger individuals and families, and can impact an individual’s level of mobility, housing needs, financial stability, and need for transportation options. There currently is no designated retirement community or assisted living facility within the township, and some residents may

have difficulty finding suitable housing types within New Hanover that provide more flexible living spaces for changing household needs. Continued and improved access to passive recreation amenities and community group activities will also be beneficial for this population group.

Rising populations in New Hanover and surrounding municipalities have created additional traffic on the roadways. With few opportunities for major roadway expansions or the creation of new roadway connections, the influx of new residents will place additional demands on the roadway network. Residents responded in the community survey that increased traffic was becoming more of a concern and contributed to feelings of diminishing quality of life in the township. There are currently no plans to expand public transportation options to New Hanover which means all residents must drive to all destinations. Limited commercial opportunities for shopping, entertainment, and employment opportunities for residents also expand the number of miles residents must drive.

Household Types, 2010-2017



Housing

New Hanover Township has long attracted residents because of the peaceful, rural community character and connection to open space. An accelerated pace of new housing development over the past 30 years has resulted in a higher concentration of suburban subdivisions in the central and southern portion of the township, while much of the northern half remains largely rural in character. Aerial imagery of New Hanover Square Road near Swamp Picnic Road is a good example of the range of levels of development intensity, from open space, to large lot residential, to smaller lot residential subdivisions. A main concern voiced by residents is that the rural character that initially attracted them to New Hanover is being lost too quickly as a result of the rapid pace of development. It is important the township achieve a balance between permitting new residential development and preserving the not just natural areas and open spaces but also the perception of openness and rural character within new residential neighborhoods to complement existing patterns of development.



In order to achieve this balance, the township must consistently evaluate the impact of zoning on where new housing developments are proposed. The PMRPC Comprehensive Plan states that “without effective growth management, much of this [housing] development will likely occur in the more rural areas of ...townships where there are large tracts of open land that are either farmed or otherwise undeveloped.” An outcome of the regional comprehensive plan was the designation of growth areas to target new development in geographies where public utilities and infrastructure exist or are planned in the future. A more detailed discussion of the impacts of growth and specific strategies the township may consider implementing in support of the defined growth areas can be found in the Future Land Use chapter of this plan.



Housing Types

Single-family detached dwelling units represent the largest share of housing within New Hanover Township and the second highest overall percent of total land area. There are almost no multifamily homes in the township, and multifamily housing represents the lowest percentage of any land use, for both residential land use and overall land use. Outside of single-family detached, all other residential housing types combined represent less than one percent of total land area of the entire township.

LAND USE TYPE	% TOTAL LAND AREA
Single-Family Detached	27.04%
Single-Family Attached	0.61%
Mobile Home	0.07%
Multifamily	0.05%

Of the total number of housing units, 89% of the housing stock in the township is comprised of single-family detached units, while about 10% of dwelling units are single-family attached. The remaining housing stock is primarily represented by mobile home units, and a very small percentage of housing units are represented by low-density multifamily; there are no structures that house more than four dwelling units. Single-family attached units comprised about a third of all new housing units constructed since 2010, and the majority of these new units are townhouses, although some new developments have also included the construction of new twin houses. The vast majority of housing units are owner-occupied, and only about 5.5% of all housing units are available as rentals.

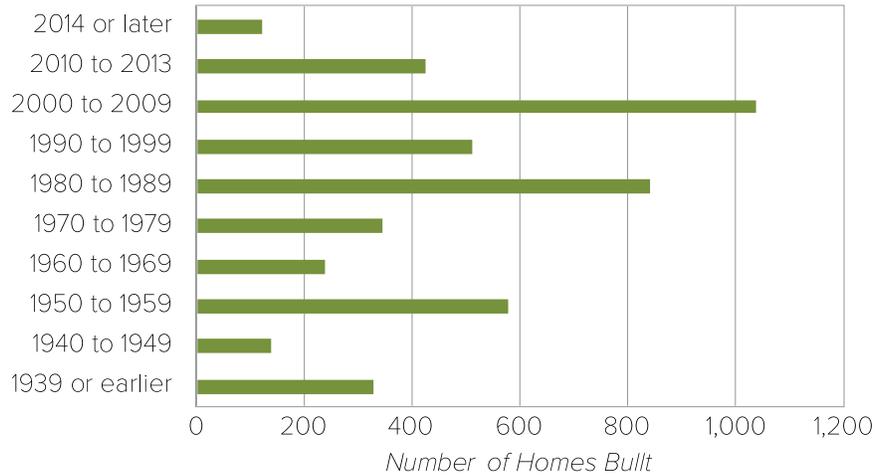


Housing Development

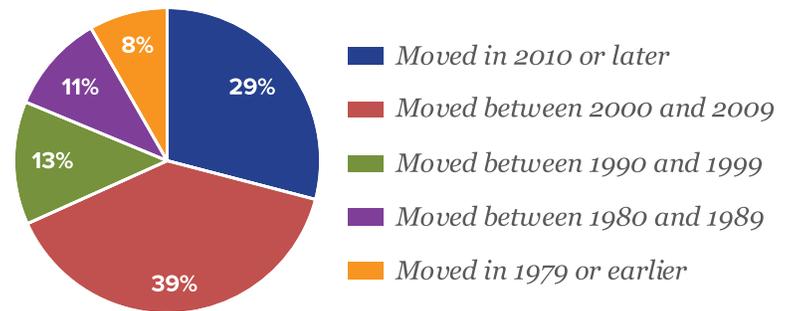
More than half of all homes in the township have been built over the last four decades. Sixty-six percent of all housing units within the township were constructed after 1980, and thirty-eight percent of homes have been built since 2000. Almost three-quarters of all residents have moved in since 2000, and almost a third of residents have moved in since 2010. The majority of these new residents are moving into the new construction homes. About 20% of residents have lived in the township since before 1990.

New homes have been constructed every year in the township even through the years characterized by the Great Recession. In every year since 2010, more single-family detached homes have been built than single-family attached homes. However, the share of single-family attached homes has been increasing, which reflects trends seen throughout the county as more townhouse communities are being built. No multifamily homes were built during this period.

Year of Housing Construction



Housing Tenure



RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION BY HOUSING TYPE, 2008-2019

Type	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Subtotal	Total
Single-Family Detached	86	60	100	46	46	46	82	74	44	36	65	75	760	1,108
Single-Family Attached	24	24	52	41	46	29	22	29	31	24	14	12	348	

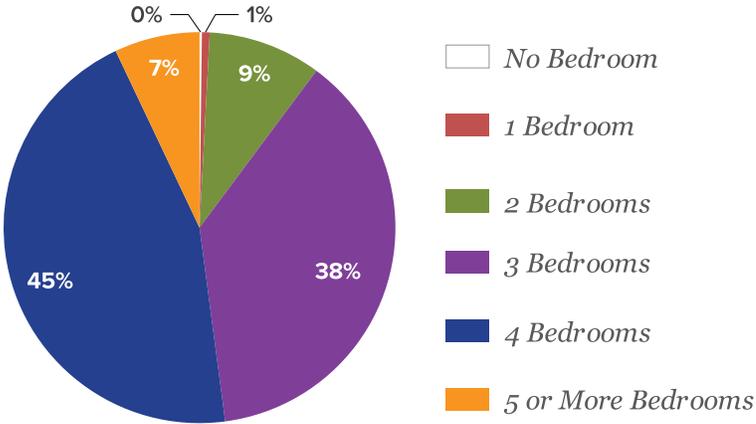




Many recent land development plans that have been built or approved over the past decade have utilized a “performance-based” standard permitted by the township’s zoning code, which allows for smaller lots in geographic areas served by public utilities. The goal behind these zoning standards is to, in part, conserve ecologically sensitive areas within developable tracts as well as to create developments more emblematic of early suburban development with homes closer together to encourage a shared neighborhood community. This trend toward smaller lot acreage is not exclusive to New Hanover. Across the county, median lot sizes of new single-family detached homes have decreased, while new homes have increased in the median size of living area by square foot for both detached and attached single-family homes. In the township, as elsewhere in Montgomery County, an increasing number of new homes are being built on lots smaller than a quarter acre, and an increasing percent of those homes

have four or more bedrooms. Homes with this bedroom mix now represents the largest share of housing stock which has implications for the types of residents seeking housing with those amenities. More bedrooms typically indicate larger, multi-floor homes and are attractive for families with school-aged children. The desire for additional bedrooms may also stem from a need for in-home office space as remote work becomes more commonplace, even prior to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Bedroom Mix in Housing Units



Fair Share Housing

Section 604.4 of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) requires each municipality in the state to provide zoning districts that allow *"...for residential housing of various dwelling types encompassing all basic forms of housing, including single-family and two-family dwellings, and a reasonable range of multiple family dwellings in various arrangements."* To determine if a municipality is meeting this housing requirement, a "fair share" analysis can be prepared that calculates the percentage of developable land, the amount of land zoned for multifamily development, and projected housing needs. Fair share housing requirements consider the provision of multifamily housing as a percentage of the total permitted area zoned for all residential use types in communities that are considered to be developing, and typically does not apply to communities that are already predominantly built-out.

As a member municipality of the Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Planning Commission, New Hanover and the other municipal members are permitted to spread this fair share requirement over the region as a whole. This beneficial agreement allows higher density and multifamily housing to be located in areas where it is more practical, such as Pottstown, to enable more rural townships like New Hanover to maintain their community character and limit development pressures in rural resource conservation areas. As part of its agreement with the PMRPC to meet its fair share housing commitments, New Hanover Township has committed to providing at least 750 acres toward its fair share requirement and permitting mobile home parks as residential land use. Based on current zoning, the township has provided well in excess of this minimum acreage requirement for residential uses.

Housing Price

The median sales price in 2019 for all housing units sold was \$340,000; for single-family detached homes, the median sales price was \$356,020 and for single-family attached the median sales price was \$252,000¹. These housing prices are comparable with the median sales price for the same housing types across the county as a whole. Since 2010, housing values have increased, and the percentage of homes valued between \$300,000 to \$499,999 has increased by 10% to over half of all homes. It is likely increasing home values are a result of the increase in the number of new construction homes, as well as the increasing desirability of residency in the township. The rising value of homes is beneficial for property owners when it comes to resale value, but a rising percentage of homes with increased value and sales prices may limit the ability of potential residents from finding housing in their price range, and may make remaining in a home more difficult for aging residents and those on fixed incomes if property taxes increase.

Future Housing Needs

It is important the township consider the needs of all demographic groups and continue to connect with residents to understand what services and amenities they are seeking. Population trends indicate an increasing percentage of the total population is nearing or past retirement age, and that more householders are living alone. On the opposite end of the age spectrum, the township is also seeing an increase in the number of school-aged children and residents between the ages of 25 and 34, which indicates young families are moving into the township.

Each of these population groups may place unequal pressures on municipal services and the school district, and build unique demands for other goods and services to meet their needs. Regardless of age or family status, all residents can benefit from safe roads, access to recreation areas, open spaces, and quality housing choices.

Over the next twenty years, a large percentage of the population currently between 35 to 54 years old will be aging into the 55 and older categories, and potentially place a huge demand for senior-oriented amenities, services, and housing types. Those residents who are currently under the age of 15 will be in their 20s and 30s and may be looking for a starter home for themselves. Despite trends showing a growing percentage of householders living alone and a growing population of residents who do not have children under 18 living with them, the majority of new housing construction is singularly focused on housing units with 3 or more bedrooms. While the township’s fair share requirement suggests that other municipalities in the region are able to provide an adequate number of multifamily homes which tend to have 2 or fewer bedrooms, there may also be a need to provide a greater mix of alternative housing types to accommodate a greater range of household types within the township who may seek smaller homes with fewer bedrooms.

Given the homogeneity of housing sizes and rising housing prices, it may not be feasible for many first-time home buyers to find a house within their size and price range. Limited rental opportunities may also restrict potential residents from choosing to live in New Hanover. While the majority of community survey respondents replied that they felt there was adequate housing in the township, many residents also expressed

concern that there were limited options for when they reached retirement age, as there are few housing choices for single-story living, and no active adult communities or retirement homes within the township. Residents also reported concern the rapid pace of development and the resulting neighborhood designs is detrimental to the community aesthetic they desired when they made the decision to move to New Hanover.



Community Character

For much of its history, New Hanover embodied the rural land traditions established by the first European settlers of the area. Forested areas were cleared for agriculture and small villages popped up along the early pikes that provided transportation connections to the markets in Philadelphia. These rural and low-density land use patterns remained well into the 20th century, as suburban development crept westward across the county, and north from Pottstown. However, by the 1950s, growing demand for suburban housing brought new development to New Hanover that has not abated since. The lands south of Swamp Pike have been more suitable for development and are almost fully built-out with residential subdivisions or preserved as open space. Development pressures have continued north of Swamp Pike, but due in part to zoning and the limitations of natural features like soils, slopes, forests, and waterways, development is less intense north of Hoffmansville Road and as a result, the areas has retained more of its rural character.

Based on the community survey results, residents overwhelmingly reported their most desired qualities of the township were its open spaces, natural environments, rural setting, small town feel, and the sense of peace and safety they feel. Other top-mentioned qualities were low taxes, the school district, and affordability. It's no surprise then that residents also reported the sense that increasing housing development was detracting from the reasons that attracted them to the township in the first place, and that increasing congestion on the roads and loss of open space was a significant concern.

Community Events

The township operates a number of annual events open for residents and visitors. These family-friendly events are a great way to bring residents together and build on the sense of community. The Fall Frolic, held at Hickory Park, is perhaps the largest and most well-known event. The Fire Department also hosts annual events. Many of the township recreational fields are used by youth sports organizations which host their own events. Some community members expressed a desire to see more township-sponsored events and activities, including more programming for seniors and youth.



When asked what influenced residents decisions to live in the township . . .

60% said it was the cost of housing

46% said it was the proximity to open spaces and natural features

45% said it was the desirability of the rural community

Library Services

New Hanover Township is served by the Montgomery County – Norristown Public Library (MC-NPL), which is a member library belonging to the Montgomery County Library and Information Network Consortium (MCLINC). No physical library is located in the township but the MC-NPL offers mobile library services to residents via a “Bookmobile” that stops at the township administration building. Additional library services include outreach programs tailored for retirement communities, assisted living facilities, Head Start, preschool, and daycare programs throughout the county. Nearby brick and mortar libraries belonging to the MC-NPL Branch are located in Red Hill, Schwenksville, and Royersford. New Hanover residents also have access to the Pottstown Regional Public Library, another public library member of the MCLINC.

Religious Institutions

New Hanover Township is home to many places of worship, some of which are housed in historic buildings dating from the 19th century. Attendance and participation in religious services has seen a decline in places all over the country and Montgomery County has seen the closure of a number of churches and other institutional buildings. While it is not anticipated any of the religious institutions in New Hanover are at risk of closure within the next decade, the church structures themselves are community landmarks which should be preserved in the event they cease to operate as places of worship. To preserve the buildings, the township should consider permitting an adaptive reuse approach to allow these structures to be retrofitted and used for other functions. Good examples throughout the county include reuse into housing, co-working space, or community events centers.



Historic Resources

There are numerous examples of older and historic properties and buildings throughout New Hanover, predominantly representative of nineteenth century architecture and building styles. These buildings and properties add a great deal of character and are representative of the history and evolution of the township. Many structures have been removed to accommodate new development. Those that remain are mainly owned by private property owners and are not protected against alterations or demolition. The township may wish to consider adopting regulations that would provide stronger protections for these older and historic structures. Options could include incorporating key structures existing on properties proposed for new developments into the overall site design and using them to create a focal point for the subdivision. Other avenues could be adopting a new ordinance, either through the zoning ordinance, or through the Historic District Act (Act 167). These regulatory tools would enable the township to identify contributing properties through a resource inventory and establish criteria to guide how these properties are maintained and preserved. Beyond physical structures, other key features like viewsheds, vistas, and other natural features can be incorporated



into preservation guidelines if they meet designated criteria. Protection of these resources would be beneficial in preserving and enhancing critical community features that contribute to the overall community character.



Health

Land use and community design should enable all residents to live active, healthy lifestyles, and options for site design amenities should be provided to allow residents to make choices in support of positive health outcomes. Environmental health is also an important factor in human health, and efforts need to be taken to continue preserving and protecting the township’s natural features, air quality, and waterways.

Walkability and Recreation

One critical way to support a healthy and active lifestyle is to increase the amount of time spend on light to moderate exercise. The American Heart Association and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends individuals spend at least 150 minutes of physical activity per week. Improvements to walkability and multi-use trail networks will enable and encourage more residents to achieve these recommended levels of movement in a safe and accessible way. Some older residential neighborhoods do not have sidewalks, and many newer communities with sidewalks have limited connections to adjacent developments or other nearby points of interest. A number of residents reported in the community survey they would like to see more walking and biking trails in particular. Recommendations for trail connections are discussed in more depth in later chapters, but overall, the township should continue requiring full and complete sidewalk networks in new developments that connect into adjacent developments through sidewalks and trails along roadways, and off-road trails linking developments together and to other community destinations like parks. Some newer residential developments incorporate playground areas within them, which provides an easily accessible park amenity internal to a site and can serve as a place for neighbors to gather.



Agriculture and Food Policy

New Hanover contains a greater share of agricultural land uses than most other townships in the county. Many farms are preserved to varying degrees through the county's farmland preservation program, or through other tax incentive programs. Many of the farms in New Hanover are equine-based or grow cash crops and animal feed. Additional recommendations relating to agriculture are discussed in later chapters, but a key takeaway is that farmland preservation is a critical component to maintain the township's rural community character, economic base, and open space.

In addition to food grown on area farms, residents in the township's suburban neighborhoods may also be interested in growing food on their properties. In some cases, conflicts

can arise, especially on smaller lots, when residents desire to raise bees or chickens. Landscape standards and property maintenance ordinances can be limiting on growing vegetable and fruit gardens, especially in front lawns where HOA restrictions and ordinances can discourage or outright prohibit them because of restrictions on fencing height and other maintenance concerns. It is important for the township to consider regulatory language enables residents to be able to explore hobby gardening and on-lot food production. Montgomery County's guidebook, *Suburban Homestead: A Primer on Best Management Practices*, provides guidance for municipalities on regulating these activities.



Responsiveness and Resiliency

As the population continues to grow, the government of New Hanover Township will need to adapt and grow its ability to continue providing a high level of service to residents. In recent years, changing weather patterns have resulted in severe storms and flooding, which have caused significant property damage, disruption to the transportation network and damage to roadways, and even tragically in the loss of life. In addition to weather-related emergencies, other local and regional disasters may arise that stresses the ability of the municipality to protect the public health, safety, and welfare. The township should consider adopting a hazard mitigation plan to articulate how they will administer an Immediate and coordinated response in an emergency situation as well as outline proactive and ongoing maintenance of infrastructure to ensure it is able to withstand increased use, severe storms, or other stressors. Additionally, it is important the township have policies in place that will enable efficient and timely dissemination of information and resources, deployment of critical care, and other necessary services to the public.



Recommendations and Strategies

Support Aging in Place policies through infrastructure, amenities, and zoning.

- ▶ Enhance sidewalk connectivity within and between residential developments and community destination points.
- ▶ Expand passive recreation opportunities including walking trails at township parks.
- ▶ Require walking trails in residential neighborhoods as part of open space requirements, where feasible.
- ▶ Create standards for age-restricted or age-targeted housing developments that include suitable recreation and/or commercial amenities for residents that do not require access to an automobile.
- ▶ Create development incentives for residential zoning districts that includes single-floor living housing options.
- ▶ Amend zoning to allow age-restricted housing in any residential zoning district.

Protect the township’s rural suburban community character.

- ▶ Amend open space requirements in residential developments to increase the amount of required open space and modify open space design standards to create more functional open space amenities within neighborhoods.
- ▶ Decrease permitted housing density in new residential developments within the areas identified as medium to low density residential in the future land use map.
- ▶ Amend the performance standards for higher density housing land uses in the township’s zoning ordinance to better align future development with limitations in the availability for compatibility with soil typology, hydrology, and traffic impacts.

Increase access to healthy food options for township residents.

- ▶ Encourage residential food production vis-a-vis community gardening or “edible landscapes” for larger residential developments.

Protect and preserve the township’s historic resources.

- ▶ Evaluate the means through which buildings, vistas, and other historic resources can be cataloged and protected.
- ▶ Adopt the appropriate preservation or historic district ordinance to achieve the goals of protecting key structures, vistas, and other identified resources.
- ▶ Create an inventory of historic and contributing properties to identify all contributing resources, whether publicly or privately held.
- ▶ Provide property owners with best practices and information on how to maintain architectural integrity of older and historic homes.





3

New Hanover Township benefits from many intact natural features that have made it attractive to residents for hundreds of years. Geologic features that underlay the township have long determined how water flows under and over ground and contribute to the topography and contours that create the slopes, hills, and valleys that define the landscape. Steep slopes are found in conjunction with more heavily forested areas while lower elevation areas are used primarily for housing development and agricultural uses. Intact forest patches provide essential habitat for native flora and fauna, and serve as natural filters that improve air and water quality for the region. However, increasing development pressures have resulted in the loss of some open space areas and tree canopy cover. Almost all streams in the township are currently considered unimpaired, except for the main branch of Swamp Creek. Relatively poor soil drainage in the region resulting from heavy clay soils is further impeded by increasing development that results in additional impervious cover. Stormwater runoff, combined with the already constrained ability of the land to infiltrate and recharge ground water, can increase the amount of sediments being washed into waterways and reducing water quality. Land management and conservation of key natural areas will be critical to ensure the township’s natural features remain part of a healthy and functional ecological system.

Priority Areas

- ▶ Preserve sensitive natural features such as woodlands and waterways to protect ecological functions and wildlife habitat.
- ▶ Apply stormwater management best practices to reduce runoff and maximize infiltration.
- ▶ Protect township waterways to ensure clean drinking water and limit stream impairment.
- ▶ Adopt a culture of environmental stewardship to enhance sustainable practices.

Geology

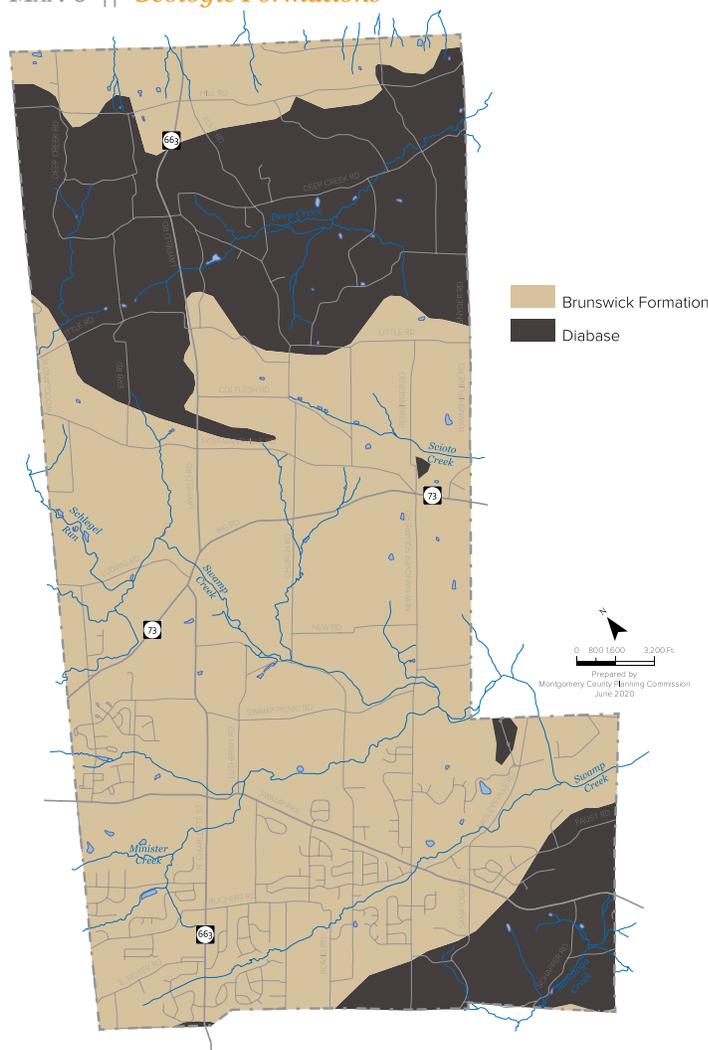
The region’s underlying geology forms the basis for all the natural systems present in the township. Bedrock formations are the foundation that contribute to a region’s topography, soil types, and quantity and quality of groundwater. New Hanover sits on top of the Brunswick Formation, the bedrock of which is largely comprised of sedimentary stone. The Brunswick formation is characterized by shale, mudstone, and siltstone, and its topography is characterized by rolling hills. It is a relatively porous formation considered to be a reliable source of small to moderate quantities of groundwater, but can have highly variable yields and is more vulnerable to drought conditions. The major bed in the Brunswick Formation is Mudstone which covers the majority of the township’s land area. Bands of diabase, an igneous rock type, found in the northern end and southeast corner of the township make up the remaining geologic formations.

Mudstone is made up of fine-grained clay particles that were deposited in large bodies of calm water. Today, that same clay-based soil contributes to the low water infiltration rate characteristic throughout western Montgomery County. The diabase ridges in the northern and southeastern ends of the township are part of a larger band that wraps around western Montgomery County through multiple townships. Diabase is resistant to erosion, weathering, water infiltration, and groundwater movement. Areas within this formation are often steeply sloped and wooded, with numerous surface rocks and boulders. As a result, wells can have low yields and excavation can be difficult, making large-scale development on lands

within this formation less desirable. The [2017 Montgomery County Hazard Mitigation Plan](#) identified New Hanover Township as having experienced a disruption in water supply during drought conditions which impacted both residential homeowners and agricultural operations that rely on groundwater sources for irrigation. These areas may be key for conservation efforts to ensure adequate groundwater supply. Many wooded and agricultural areas are located on properties within the diabase formation, and it is critical that land use patterns continue to preserve these areas as undeveloped.



MAP: 6 || *Geologic Formations*



Soils

Soils are created by the weathering of underlying bedrock and deposits of organic materials. Different soil characteristics stemming from the foundational makeup of the geologic formations can be classified based on their features. Soil types include agricultural soils, soils of statewide importance, hydric soils, and alluvial soils. These soil features, along with the topography of a site, greatly influence the types of land uses that are most suitable for individual properties and regions. Because the central portion of the township is underlain by Mudstone beds, the soils are heavy in clay.

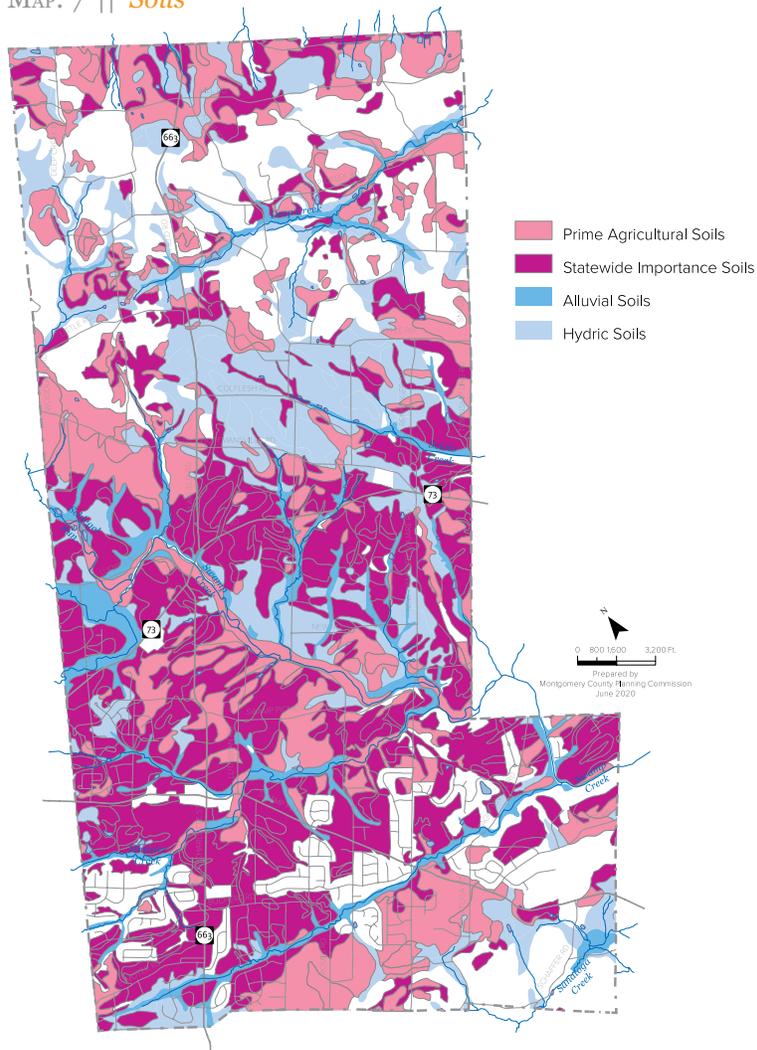
Agricultural soils are those that have high agricultural value for their characteristics, including deep, well-drained and mildly sloped soils. Prime agricultural soils are those that can support high yields of crops with little management. Agricultural soils of statewide significance are those that can support crop cultivation but that require careful management. More of New Hanover's agricultural soils are those designated as soils of statewide significance, meaning they need careful management over the long-term to retain agriculture productivity. The limited presence of agricultural soils of any kind in the northern and southern end of the township correlate with the location of the bands of diabase which is less well-suited to agricultural use because it tends to be steeper, rockier, and better for woodlands.

Hydric soils are those that are periodically wet. They tend to have poor drainage characteristics because they are typically saturated. Hydric soils include wetland areas although not all hydric soils are located in wetland areas. Certain hydric soils exposed to periodic

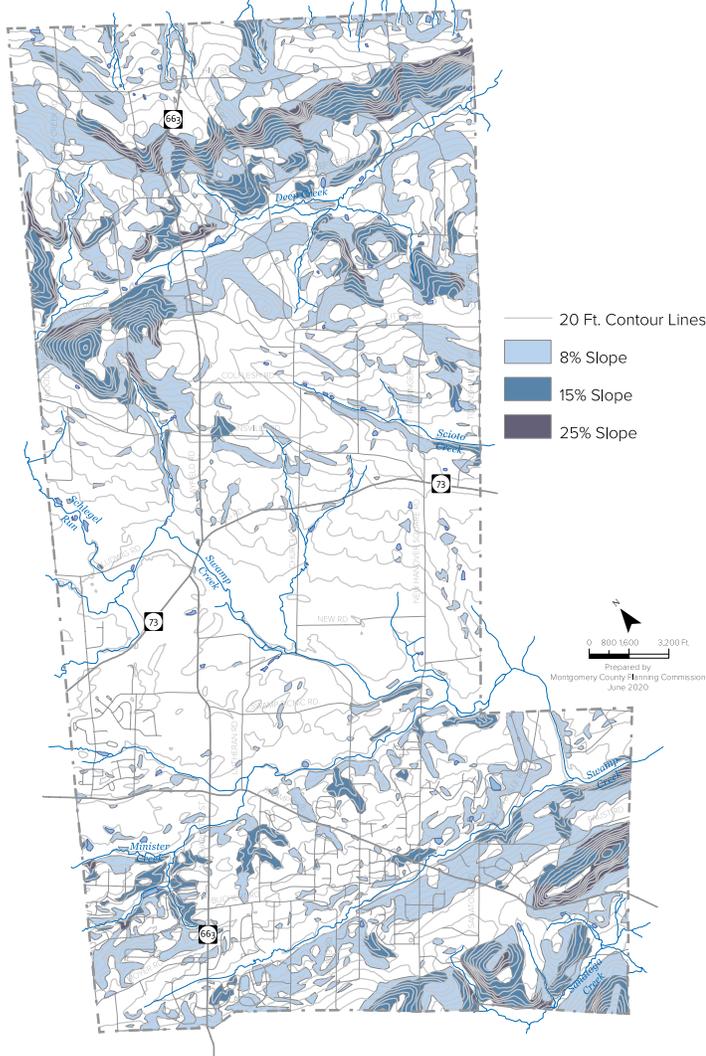
water saturation and other hydrologic conditions have the propensity to create new wetland areas. Alluvial soils are those that have been deposited by flowing water and are often located in floodplain areas. These soil types are generally some of the least suitable soils for development in part due to their function as aquifer recharge areas and high water table. Much of the rest of the soils within the township are classified as Group C or Group D soils (from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service classifications) meaning they have a relatively low to very low infiltration rate and consist of fine textured soils or soils with a layer that impedes percolation, such as

the clay-heavy soils present in the township. This soil characteristic means a soil with limited infiltration capacity will be further impeded by increasing impervious surfaces and standard stormwater management controls may not be suitable to capture and infiltrate large flows of water. Property owners in the township already experience periodic flooding over their properties and in their homes during storm events, and in some cases, roadways can be flooded, causing damage to property and threatening public safety. It is likely the township can expect continued property damage resulting from poor drainage and failing stormwater control systems.

MAP: 7 || Soils



MAP: 8 || *Topography and Steep Slopes*



Topography

New Hanover is characterized by rolling hills through much of the central portion of the township and increasingly steeper slopes toward the northern and southern ends. Major ridgelines with slopes in excess of 25% are present along the diabase regions in the north and southeast areas of the township. These areas, referred to as “steep slopes” also correlate with the regions in the township that have the most forest cover. Vegetation aids slope stabilization in numerous ways: trees, shrubs, and groundcover can reduce erosion by providing root strength and reducing soil water content. As a result, areas of steep slopes are more sensitive to development because clearing tree cover and grading slopes may destabilize them and exacerbate the risk of erosion. Debris and soils washed away from disturbed areas can result in subsequent stream sedimentation which impairs water quality.



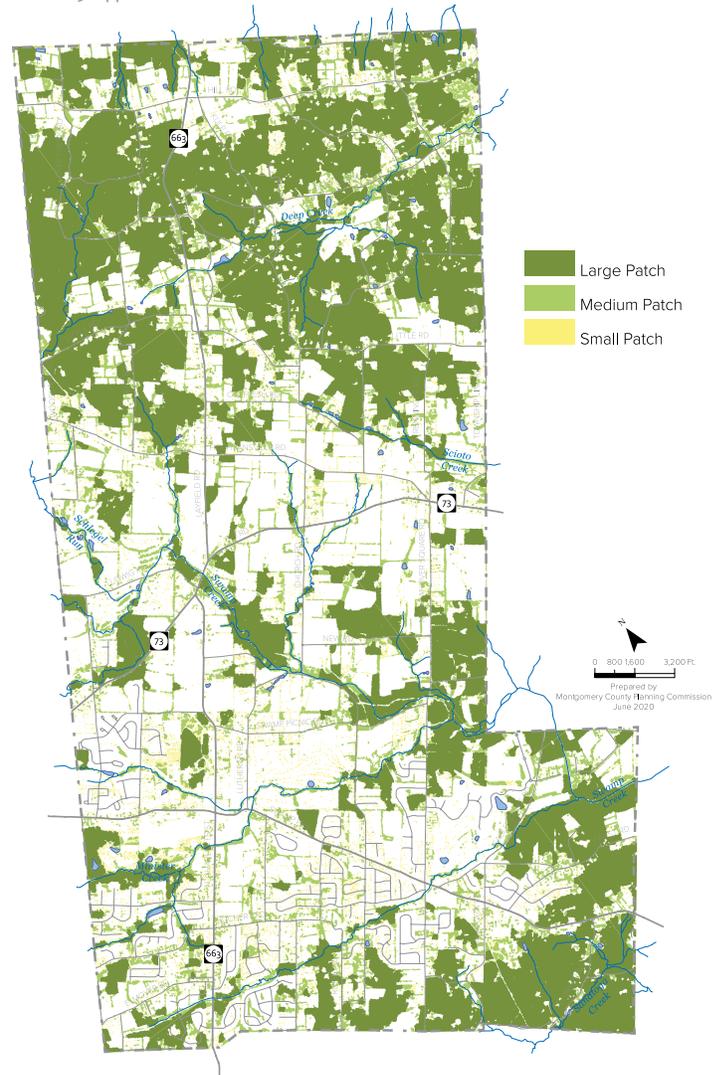
Canopy Cover

New Hanover Township has some of the most extensive intact tree canopy cover of all municipalities in the Pottstown Metropolitan Region. Woodland areas serve a diverse range of incredibly important ecological functions including preventing soil erosion, filtering surface waters, and providing habitat for local species. They are also beautiful and provide a bounty of rich color through the changing seasons, and are well-suited to recreation activities.

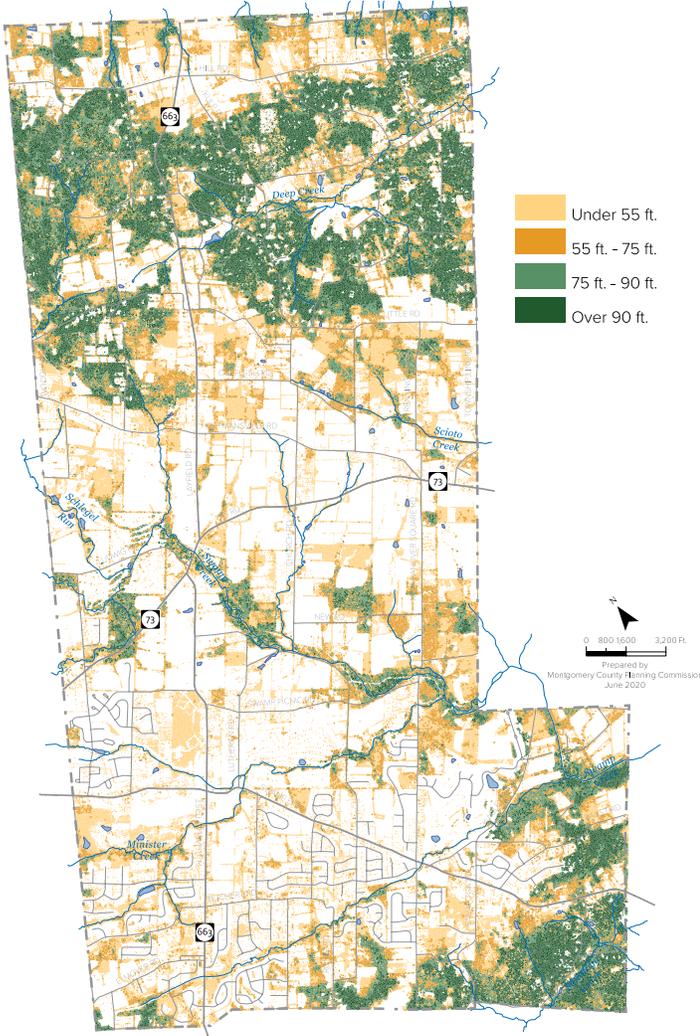
Woodland areas are the most beneficial when they remain as intact and contiguous forest stands. Smaller, fragmented forest patches do not provide the same kind of ecological functions and habitat refuge as larger forest patches, and can become magnets for invasive species that compete for resources with native species. Large woodlands support both edge and interior habitat. Edge habitat comprises around the first 50 feet of a woodland followed by interior habitats. These areas have lower light, cooler temperatures, and a unique humidity and moisture balance that create unique habitat required by some bird and amphibian species. Removal of portions of woodland areas affects the entire ecosystem by introducing more light and wind that can cause warming and drying, resulting in lowered soil moisture and relative humidity.

The region's forested areas have been cleared for hundreds of years to accommodate expansion of residential settlement and agricultural purposes and this trend continues today. The township should ensure that contiguous wooded areas are preserved across adjacent properties as development occurs to maximize

MAP: 9 || *Forest Patch*



MAP: 10 || *Tree Canopy*



areas of intact forests, particularly along riparian corridors.

Some of the areas with the largest intact forest patches also house the tallest canopy trees, presumably because undisturbed forest areas have older, and therefore larger, trees. The largest forest patches are found primarily north of Little Road and in the less-developed area bounded by New Hanover Square Road and Swamp Pike. These areas have been least impacted by development and older forests have remained relatively untouched. In areas with greater agricultural and residential land uses, the forest cover is much more fragmented with shorter canopy trees, indicating they are likely younger trees.



Sites of Significance

The Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Planning Commission Comprehensive Plan identified the following four sites in the township as either “Sites of Statewide Significance” or “Sites of Local Significance”. These sites contain plant and/or animal species of concern (meaning rare, threatened, or endangered), high quality natural habitats, and significant geologic features. These sites were ranked in term of importance based on their need for protection and preservation; Statewide sites received a ranking from 1 to 5 with 1 being most important while Local sites were ranked high to low based on the need for protection and preservation. These areas should continue to be protected and managed using best practices to ensure their continued ecological vibrancy and intactness and additional methods for more permanent preservation of these sites may be appropriate to pursue. The township may wish to consider coordinating with the property owners of these sites to create a maintenance plan to monitor preservation efforts.

► Deep Creek Marsh

A good quality population (over 1,000 plants) of sedge of special concern was found in the wet meadows and marshland along Deep Creek. Change in hydrology or water quality would be detrimental to the habitat and since the sedge needs open habitat, succession of a woody plant community could eventually crowd out the species. *Site of Statewide Significance, Ranking: 2*

► Henning Road Woods

This site is within the Deep Creek drainage basin and contains a well-developed mixed-hardwood forest community on steep slopes strewn with diabase boulder. At least 13 species of trees, including red maple, oaks, ash, beech, hickory, flowering dogwood, sassafras, and pawpaw are found on the site. The site also contains a well-defined shrub strata and diverse herb layer and includes a section of younger forest that serves as a buffer to the older hardwood section. *Site of Local Significance, High Priority*

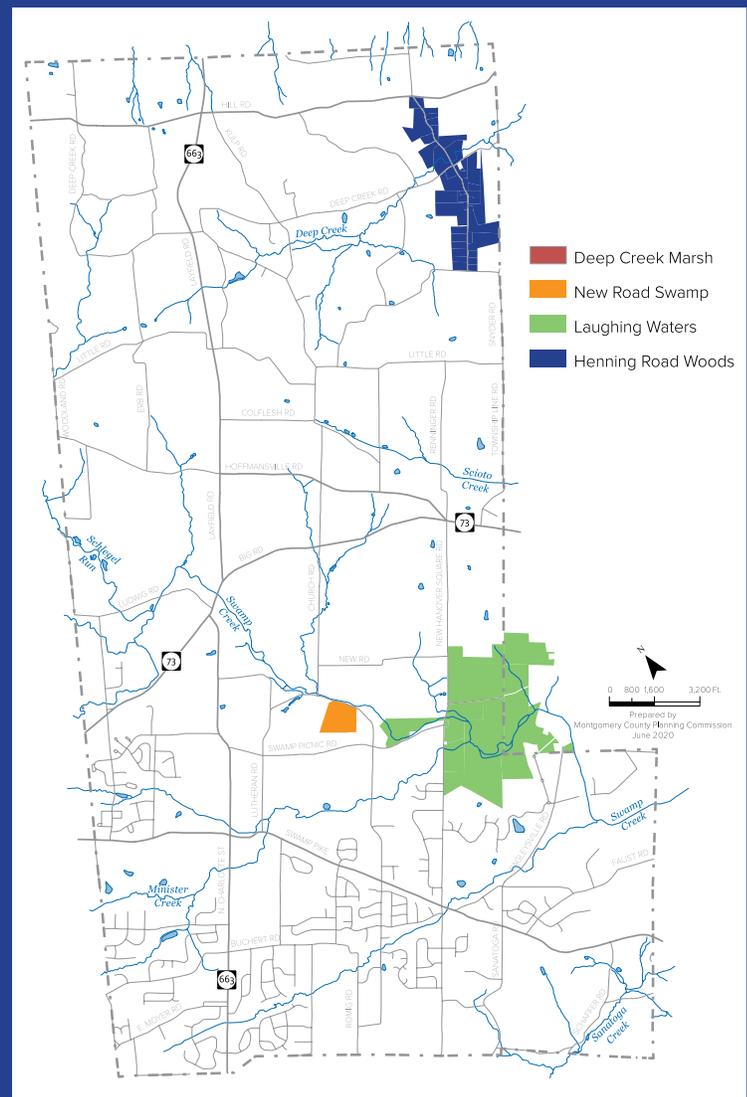
► New Road Swamp

Located north of New Hanover Square Road, this site is a locally significant example of a floodplain forest community. It provides habitat for pin oak, elm, white ash, and red maple, with a well-developed shrub and herb layer, including spicebush, viburnum, sedges, false nettle, violets, and Jack-in-the-pulpit. The site also provides good breeding habitat for a variety of amphibian species. Maintaining the forest canopy will help prevent the spread of weedy species and maintain the integrity of the community as a whole. *Site of Local Significance, High Priority*

► Laughing Waters Hemlocks

This site includes older growth hemlocks on steep slopes along Swamp Creek within Laughing Waters Girl Scout Camp. Severe erosion from heavy foot traffic is a threat to the longevity of the hemlock. Additional trail maintenance and rerouting of the high use trails could help to protect this natural area. The site also includes a young but healthy hardwood forest of sugar maple, shagbark hickory and ash. *Site of Local Significance, Medium Priority*

MAP: 11 || *Sites of Significance*



Water Resource Management

Maintaining healthy waterways is a critical element to preserving and protecting the region's natural ecological functions, safeguarding healthy habitats for local species, and ensuring residents have continued access to safe drinking water. Development activities like forest clearing, installation of wells and utility systems, and increased impervious cover create disruptions to the movement of water. Increased water runoff, both in volume and rate, can worsen erosion and sedimentation and lead to impaired streams and water quality. Streams and waterways in New Hanover Township are currently unimpaired except for the main branch of Swamp Creek. Once designated as impaired, restoration of stream water quality can be challenging and costly. Efforts to mitigate conditions that would lead to stream impairment should be pursued as the first measure of defense to prevent any other township streams from becoming degraded. Existing soil characteristics create challenging conditions for water infiltration even before additional development, which makes water resource management an essential component for consideration as development continues over the next twenty years and beyond.



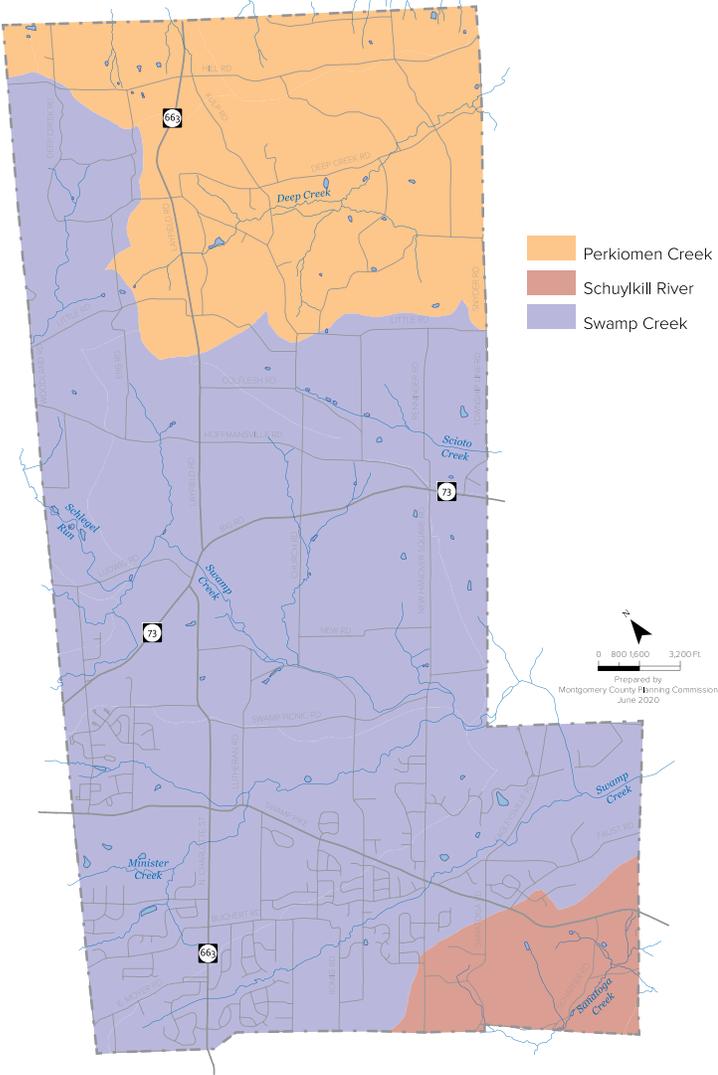
Watersheds and Stormwater

Watersheds represent the land area in a region whose surface and underground waters drain into a common water body. New Hanover is located primarily within the Perkiomen Creek Watershed, which includes the Swamp Creek Watershed and its tributaries. A portion of the lower southeast corner of the township is located within the Schuylkill River Watershed. Each of the main watersheds contain smaller drainage basin areas which relate to the ways in which water moves through the landscape at a more hyper-local level.



New Hanover Township is a participating municipality in the Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy. This organization aids municipalities in meeting the educational requirements of the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4). Stormwater is managed by Act 167 Stormwater Management Plans which outline existing characteristics, anticipated stormwater impacts from future development, and stormwater control standards. Best management practices (BMPs) are provided as part of implementation recommendations to control and treat stormwater. Standards and criteria for stormwater management outlined in the Act 167 are incorporated into the township’s stormwater management ordinance.

MAP: 12 || *Watersheds*



PA Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Program

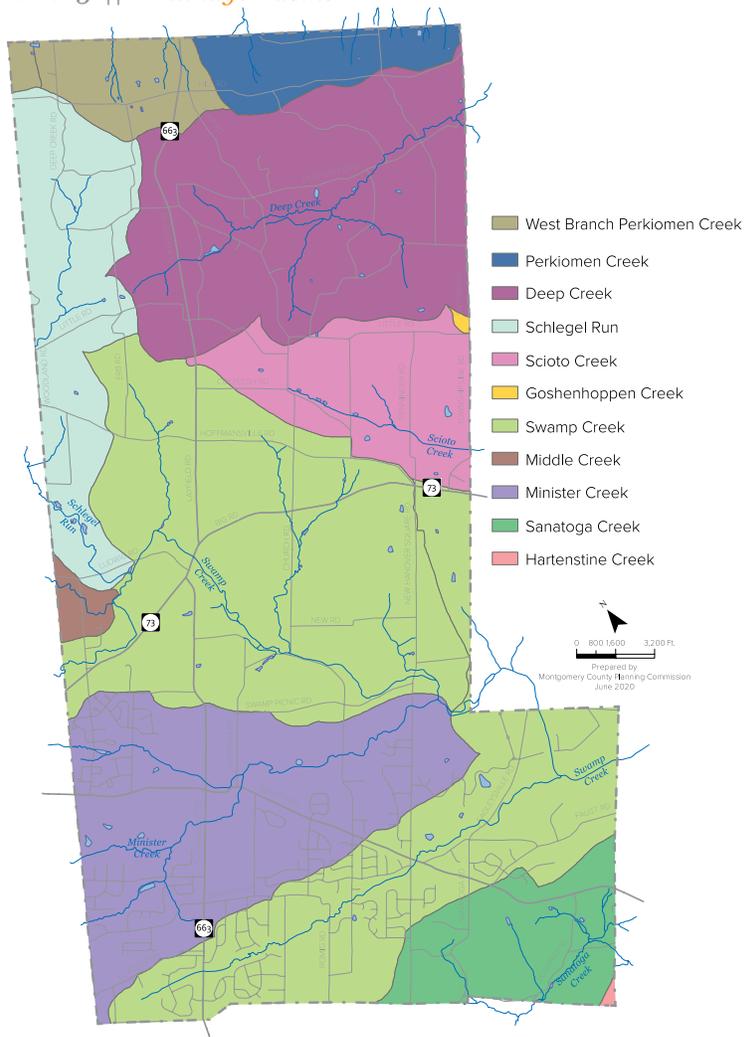
Stormwater runoff refers to rainwater that falls on impervious surfaces and is not infiltrated into the ground through natural or mechanical means. It is often captured in storm sewers that then discharge into local streams, or sheets overland until it enters a waterway or is eventually infiltrated. Municipalities in the state must obtain National Pollutant Discharge Elimination (NPDES) permits for discharges of stormwater from their municipal separate storm sewer systems (MS4s). These come with target requirements to achieve within the 5-year permit timelines, and municipalities are required to administer the minimum control measures, which include:

- ▶ Public education and outreach
- ▶ Public participation and involvement
- ▶ Illicit discharge detection and elimination
- ▶ Construction site runoff control
- ▶ Post-construction runoff control
- ▶ Pollution prevention

New Hanover Township is not required by the PA DEP to have an individual permit but still must meet monitoring and testing requirements of storm sewer outfalls. It is important that the township continue to manage its infrastructure to maintain the area's water quality and ensure streams do not become impaired. To aid in this effort, the township has partnered with the Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy to provide educational materials to residents on best management practices they can take on their own properties to aid in managing stormwater runoff.

The Swamp Creek Act 167 recommends a 50% reduction of the release rate for the entire watershed, meaning stormwater flows should be captured and infiltrated, or released more slowly back into the system to reduce surges that exacerbate sedimentation and erosion. Due to the poor infiltration rates of soils in the township, unique and innovative solutions will need to be developed to best manage stormwater runoff if these target goals are to be met. Older stormwater basins can be retrofitted to increase capacity, and naturalization efforts that incorporate more vegetation to capture additional stormwater can help improve basin functionality and aesthetics.

MAP: 13 || *Drainage Basins*

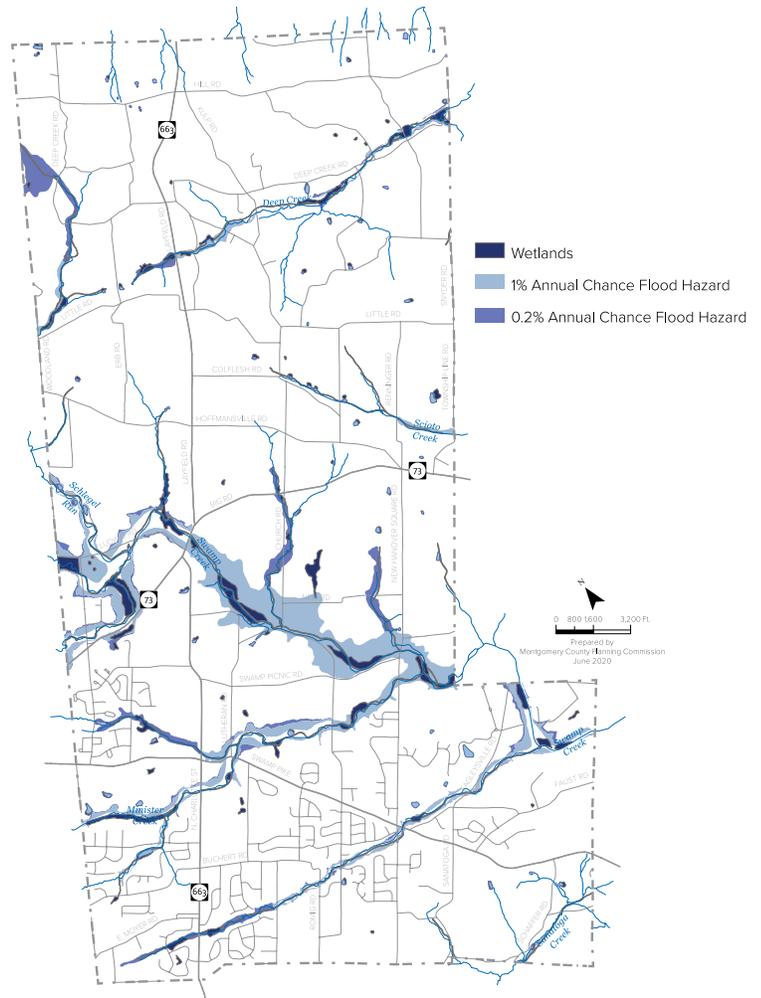


Floodplain and Wetlands

Areas of the township that are within the FEMA designated floodplain are primarily located along the Swamp Creek and a majority of the bodies of water have designated wetlands surrounding them. The floodplain is designated as a 100-year floodplain, or a 1% annual chance of flood. Properties located within the designated floodplain area are eligible for federal flood insurance. The increasing frequency and strength of storms may cause these properties to experience more flood effects than anticipated, especially because the region has poor infiltration and increasing development. Localized flooding occurs at least once a year in the Minister Creek, impacting residential properties and key roadways including New Hanover Square Road and Church Road. Flooding along the Swamp Creek also occurs regularly and impacts portions of Colonial Road and Fagleysville Road.

While a designation within the 100-year floodplain is the most widely used marker for risk assessment, it is important the township consider areas within its 500-year floodplain as well. This designation indicates a 0.2% annual chance of flooding. However, due to climate change and the lack of updated floodplain maps for inland communities, it is recommended the township also include the 500-year floodplain when considering areas of risk to better understand the full potential impact of flooding in the community.

MAP: 14 || Floodplains and Wetlands



Water Quality

The main branch of Swamp Creek is identified as impaired as a result of “urban runoff”. This is the portion of the creek that runs from Douglass Township near Middle Creek Road and PA Route 73/Big Road, through Hickory Valley Golf Club. All other waterways in the township are currently considered unimpaired. It is much more challenging to mitigate impaired streams than to prevent a stream from becoming impaired, and the township should pursue all efforts to actively manage and maintain unimpaired status for all area waterways.

Riparian Corridor Protection

Riparian corridors are a key landscape that contribute to maintaining and improving water quality. Woodlands surrounding creeks, streams, and other water bodies stabilize stream banks to reduce erosion and sedimentation, store and filter stormwater runoff, and provide shading and habitat protection for terrestrial and aquatic wildlife. The township has adopted a zoning overlay district that identifies areas within the Riparian Corridor Conservation District and provides regulatory requirements for buffers to limit development within certain limits of the waterway. This is an important step in protecting these sensitive areas from disturbance, but only applies to properties slated for new development. Additional steps could include providing educational opportunities to property owners whose lands contain riparian corridors on best management practices that would reduce disturbances to these areas and improve streambank stabilization through targeted planting of trees, grasses, and other vegetation.





Environmental Stewardship

New Hanover Township has many existing protections in place to preserve sensitive ecological functions and natural features. There are, however, a number of policies, regulations, and general practices the township could consider implementing to improve environmental outcomes at both the municipal level and within individual households. Coordinated efforts between the township and property owners are needed to ensure natural features are protected to the greatest extent possible, and that areas that are developed are done so in a manner that is complementary to conservation goals outlined in this and other documents. On an individual level, implementing ways to reduce one's environmental impact, or ecological footprint, is increasingly important to many people, and the township is well-positioned to provide policy directives and educational pathways to enable residents to pursue these lifestyle choices.

Township Ordinances

Regulatory language in township ordinances already exists and is designed to protect natural features such as steep slopes and riparian corridors, and designate methods for stormwater management. These ordinances work to reduce the risk of negative impacts on the natural environment resulting from development. Ordinance language can be further tailored to incentivize certain types of preferred development, such as cluster developments to preserve contiguous areas of woodland, and the transition to clean and renewable energy. The township should periodically review these ordinances to ensure they provide the most appropriate level of protection for natural features and function of ecological systems.

► **Floodplain Management Ordinance**

Regulates properties and uses permitted within the floodplain conservation district. Typically, any use that is not open space, forestry, or agricultural in nature is prohibited within the floodplain, including the construction of new structures, placement of fill, removal of vegetation, parking or areas of vehicular traffic, and stormwater basins.

standards should be periodically reviewed to align with current best practices for design and species selection and should encourage native plantings and naturalized design treatments for stormwater management to the greatest extent possible.

► **Stormwater Management Ordinance**

Regulates the design, placement, and performance of stormwater management features.

► **Natural Resource Protection Standards**

These standards apply to specific areas within the township and include:

► **Landscaping Ordinance**

Identifies recommended plant species and outlines protections for tree protection and replacement during the land development process. The ordinance also defines standards for street trees, buffers, and parking lot landscaping. These

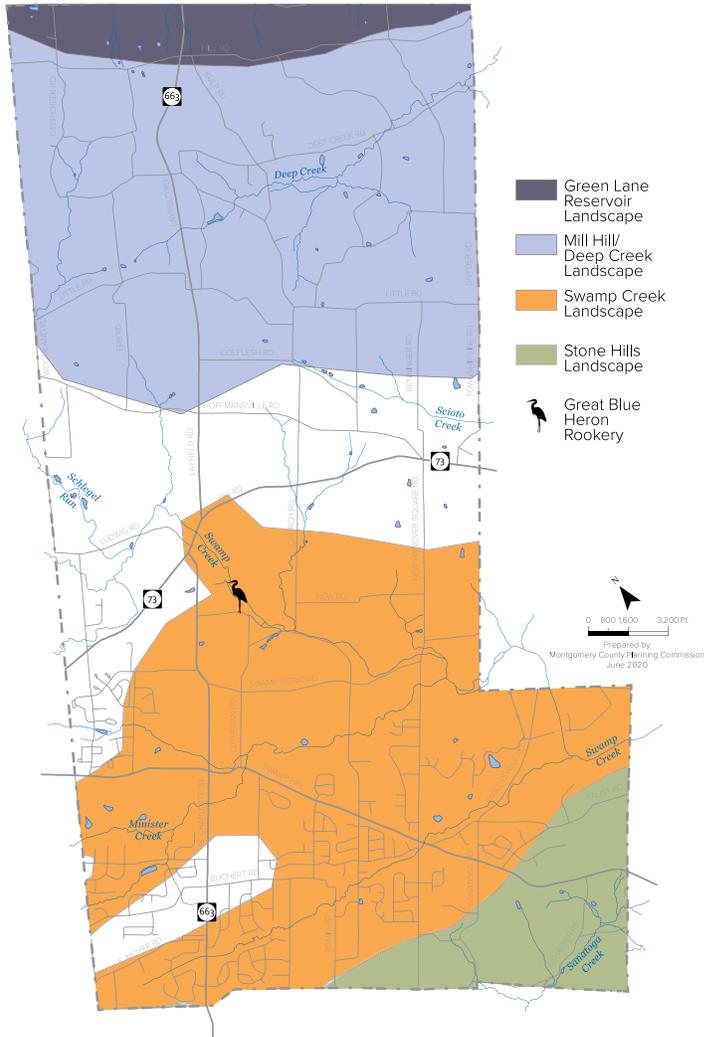
- ◊ Riparian Corridor Conservation District
- ◊ Stormwater management
- ◊ Floodplain regulations
- ◊ Sedimentation and Erosion Control
- ◊ Steep slopes
- ◊ Tree protection standards

Landscape Conservation

Montgomery County and its consultants surveyed and documented the natural areas within the county as part of the 2007 Natural Areas Inventory (NAI) Update. Lands in New Hanover Township fall within multiple conservation landscapes: the Swamp Creek Conservation Landscape, the Mill Hill/Deep Creek Conservation Landscape, and the Stone Hill Conservation Landscape. These areas contain critical landscapes supporting a diverse and vibrant mix of animal and plant species. Many animals, especially birds, either live full-time or migrate to these habitats for breeding purposes, and continued preservation of these landscapes helps to ensure the survival of these species as well. Common threats to these landscapes include the loss of habitat due to development, oversized deer populations, and presence of invasive species. Lands within these designated areas are both publicly and privately owned, which requires cooperation between all stakeholders to implement a coordinated effort to achieve conservation goals.



MAP: 15 || *Conservation Landscapes*



SWAMP CREEK CONSERVATION LANDSCAPE	MILL HILL/DEEP CREEK CONSERVATION LANDSCAPE	STONE HILL CONSERVATION LANDSCAPE
<p><i>Includes much of the central and southern half of the township.</i></p>	<p><i>Includes much of the northern third of the township.</i></p>	<p><i>Includes a small portion of the lower southeast corner of the township.</i></p>
<p>Presence of a Great Blue Heron rookery present in the floodplain of Swamp Creek. The Great Blue Heron is a Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program-listed species. This rookery is the only sizeable heron rookery in the county, and one of the largest in southeastern PA.</p>	<p>Within this landscape area are the specific township-identified sites of Henning Road Woods and the Deep Creek Marsh.</p>	<p>The Stone Hill Landscape is adjacent to the Swamp Creek Landscape and is characterized by contiguous forest cover, including large intact forest interior habitats. Forest interiors provide preferred habitats for many plant and animal species, including migratory birds.</p>
<p>At least 74 other bird species have been confirmed or are believed to use areas within the Swamp Creek Landscape area as breeding grounds, representing a critical habitat for long-term species success.</p>	<p>The NAI Update makes maintenance recommendations for the township-owned Pleasant Run Park to reduce mowing to encourage the growth of wet meadow plants to facilitate naturalized meadow growth and discourage Canadian geese.</p>	<p>The township-owned forested land on Schaffer Road is surrounded by other forested lands and could serve as the nucleus of another protected area of contiguous forest.</p>
<p>Numerous reptile and amphibian species also call this area home, and include salamanders, frogs, turtles, and snakes.</p>	<p>Henning Road Woods is privately owned and contains woodlands, agricultural lands, and a small wet meadow. Historic timber harvests and over browsing by deer have opened the woods to colonization by non-native invasive species.</p>	
<p>Deer overpopulation damages forest succession patterns due to over-browsing. Hemlock seedlings and saplings represent one of the few available food sources to deer in the winter and are unable to establish and mature when overgrazed.</p>	<p>Strong recommendations are given to target large forested parcels for preservation or protection to create a connected network of sites within this landscape area, and to take active measures to reduce invasive species.</p>	

Energy Usage

Buildings are one of the main sources of energy use, and there are currently limited options for energy providers in the region. LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification is an industry standard in providing more energy-efficient building design options, but it is generally more applicable to larger buildings used for commercial or light industrial uses and impractical for smaller residential dwellings. Homeowners have the option to purchase energy-efficient appliances for their home, which is an effective means to reduce energy consumption, but some homeowners may be seeking alternative energy supplies altogether. Advancements in technology is making these alternative energies more efficient to install on individual homes and more property owners may turn to these systems to offset their energy consumption. However, not all locations are appropriate for some alternative energy technologies, and not all properties are suitable for some infrastructure, like wind turbines on smaller residential lots. Solar energy is likely the most efficient and suitable form of renewable energy for the majority of properties in the township. The installation of renewable energy infrastructure on individual homes and properties is partly regulated by building design standards, but can raise public safety and nuisance concerns with nearby neighbors. The township should consider adopting ordinances regulating renewable energy, such as solar, geothermal, and wind in order to provide stronger guidance and safety protocols for property owners seeking to install these systems.

Best Design Practices

While there are limited commercial sites currently operating in the township, new commercial development should be encouraged to implement best practices in design to enhance environmental sustainability and resiliency. Parking lots are often overlooked as opportunities for greening, wildlife habitats, and stormwater management, but can be designed for a range of functionality beyond storing cars. The township should consider adopting best practices recommended by Montgomery County Planning Commission's design guidebook, [Sustainable Green Parking Lots](#).

Other efforts to naturalize man-made structures should be pursued to improve the form and function of infrastructure like stormwater basins. Additional vegetation provides shade, habitat, and improves aesthetics, contributing to the overall scenic feel and community character.



Food Production

Increasing interest in small-scale food production on individual residential properties, reminiscent of the Victory Gardens of the 1940s, has been growing as a hobby, form of recreation, and means of food supply augmentation. New Hanover Township has a history of being an agrarian community, and township policies should support residential gardening efforts. The Montgomery County Planning Commission’s publication, [Suburban Homestead: A Primer on Best Management and Practices](#), provides useful regulatory recommendations to appropriately regulate not just gardening, but other food production practices like bee keeping and the keeping of chickens on residential properties. Township residents have also expressed interest in the provision of small plot farming or community gardening opportunities within newly built developments, particularly for those with smaller lot sizes.

Most new residential developments have had their original topsoils removed and replaced. Residents should stay away from cultivation on soils that were replaced with amended soils that were installed to meet the development’s stormwater management requirements, as compaction from gardening activities could reduce the function of those soils. Otherwise, gardening could serve to improve soils through the continued use of compost and other soil-building activities. Since most developments post-date the common use of lead paints, residents likely do not have to worry about heavy metals or other contaminants in their soil.

Edible landscapes could also be considered on township-owned properties which could include fruit and nut trees and edible perennial plants and flowers. These landscapes provide a unique opportunity for food production and serve as an educational experience for residents.

Waste and Recycling

Household trash and recycling in New Hanover is collected by private haulers contracted by individual household customers. There are a number of companies that operate in the township, each operating on a different collection schedule. Some newer residential developments managed by Homeowner Associations coordinate hauling contracts on behalf of all residents in the subdivision, but others leave it up to individual households to manage their own trash collection schedule. This results in multiple companies driving through neighborhoods throughout the week, which contributes to additional vehicle emissions linked to air quality and places additional wear and tear on local roadways. However, many residents prefer to manage their own contracts with a waste hauler. By signing up for individual service, residents have greater choice in a collection schedule and cost that best suits their household



needs. While there are benefits to continuing individual waste hauling contracts, increasing suburbanization throughout the township may mean that a municipally-operated or a municipal-wide collection system may be more feasible and economic at a future date. Because development density drops significantly in some parts of the township, specific zones could be created to better tailor service to those areas that would benefit the most from a coordinated hauler agreement while still allowing more rural areas of the township to maintain an independent agreement with a hauler. The township should periodically conduct a cost-benefit analysis to determine if a unified or partially unified waste hauling contract would bring more benefits to residents, or if the current system provides the best value to households.

Single-stream recycling is collected curbside by the same waste haulers that collect household waste. The township is eligible for grants based on its recycling rate, calculated based on the percentage of recycled material collected by weight compared to household waste material collected by weight. In addition to commingled recycling, such as glass, plastics, and paper and cardboard, the township is eligible to calculate the rate of yard and leaf waste toward its recycle rate. However, there is no municipally-organized recycling program to collect yard and leaf waste. Residents may put organic waste materials in the regular household trash or drop off yard and leaf waste at a commercial composting facility located within the township, but that material is not counted toward the recycling rate.

Many residential lots within the township have larger yards where residents are better able to compost organic materials on-lot, but the increasing number of residential subdivisions developed with lots of a

Recycling Grant Programs

The Pennsylvania DEP offers numerous grant programs designed to offset the costs of operating recycling programs and to encourage increased recycling rates throughout the Commonwealth.

PA Act 101, Section 904 Recycling Performance Grant Program offers grants to municipalities with recycling programs based on the total tonnage of recycled materials and rate of recycling. All eligible recycled materials from residential, commercial, and institutional uses can be counted toward the grant award. Proper documentation of collected materials improves grant award outcomes, so detailed and accurate reporting of all recyclables collected by all waste haulers operating in the Township is necessary.

PA Act 101, Section 902 Recycling Program Development and Implementation Grant reimburses counties and municipalities 90% of eligible recycling program development and implementation expenses, such as educational programs, curbside recycling bins, and leaf and yard waste processing equipment like leaf vacuums and shredders.

quarter acre or less may necessitate the provision of a leaf and/or yard waste collection program because residents are less able to compost that material on their properties. Leaf litter in particular can contribute to degradation of stormwater infrastructure, as leaf and other vegetative material can be washed into storm sewer systems, cause clogs, and contribute to sedimentation of area waterways. By establishing a more robust leaf and yard waste collection, particularly for those properties where on-lot composting may be more limited, the township can increase the rate of eligible materials diverted away from the waste stream, which contributes to increasing the township's rate of recycling and represents a more sustainable practice that reduces the volume and cost of waste shipped to landfills.

Kitchen waste represents another form of organic waste material that can be composted instead of landfilled. Household kitchen waste can represent up to 40% of solid waste by weight, which includes food scraps and spoiled food. This waste material releases methane gas as it decomposes in landfills, but when composted property can create a great soil amendment for gardens and yards. Residents have the option of using small-scale compost bins on their properties, and some commercial composters provide a subscription service for the collection of household kitchen waste. Larger institutions like schools, offices, and hospitals are suitable for on-lot mechanical composters like anaerobic digesters. The township may also want to consider establishing a kitchen compost collection program to further divert compostable material away from the waste stream.

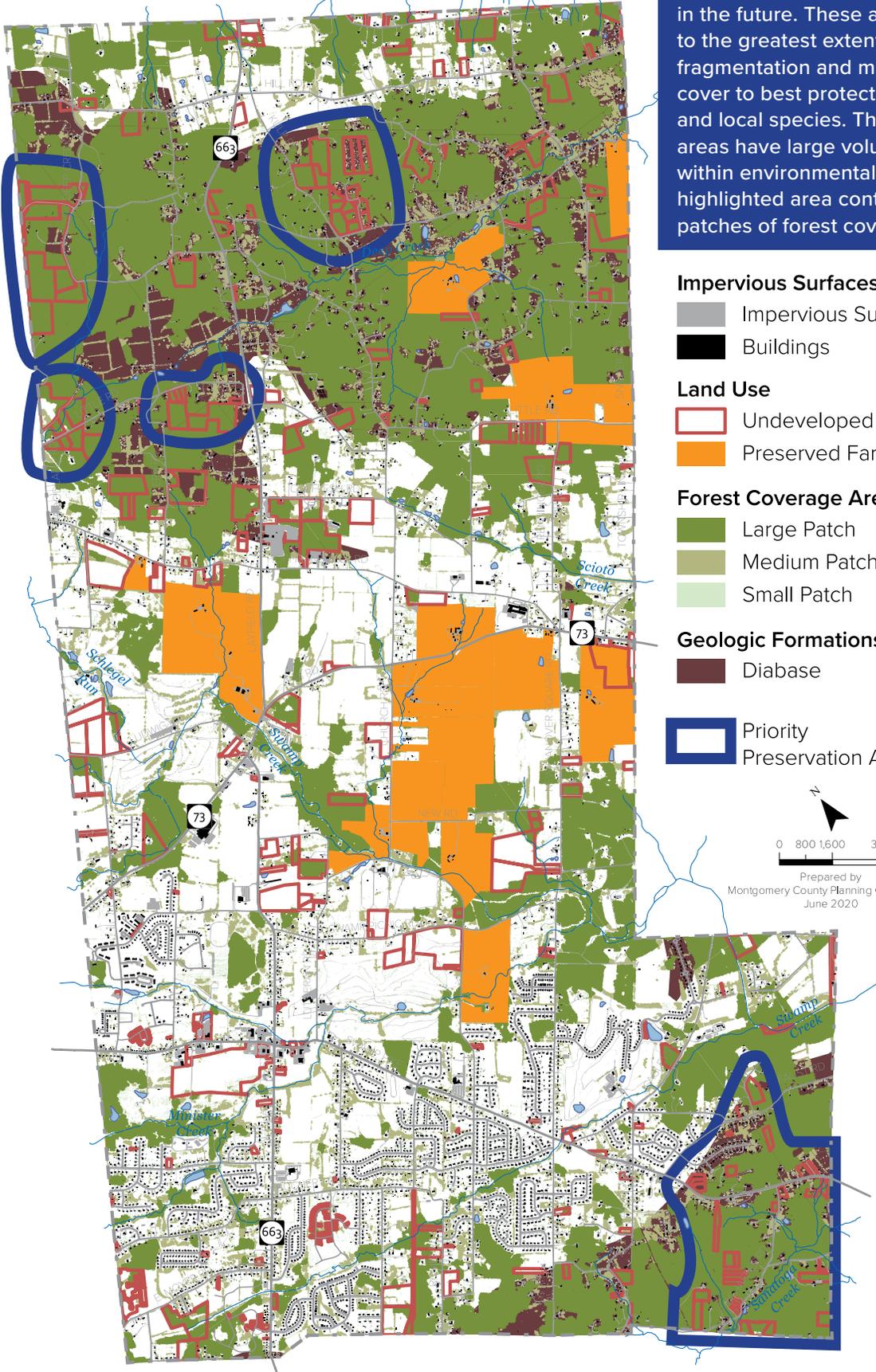
Preservation Targets

Many of the natural processes and landscapes in New Hanover have remained protected because of the limited scope of development experienced over the past two hundred years. However, increasing rates of new housing development and other pressures on the landscape can have detrimental consequences on the flow of groundwater and surface waters, stream health, tree canopy cover, native species habitat, and other natural features. Proper management of these natural elements is critical to maintaining the ecological health of lands and species within the township and the region, as well as continued access to clean and accessible drinking water. Conservation of sensitive areas, such as those that are on steep slopes or are within riparian corridors, should be prioritized, as should those that provide key habitats for native species.



MAP: 16 || *Natural Features Preservation*

Based on an analysis of natural features and existing land uses, it is likely that these areas may experience the greatest development pressures in the future. These areas should be preserved to the greatest extent possible to reduce habitat fragmentation and maintain a contiguous forest cover to best protect the township's waterways and local species. The priority preservation areas have large volumes of undeveloped land within environmentally sensitive locations. Each highlighted area contains steep slopes, large patches of forest coverage, and nearby waterways.



Impervious Surfaces

- Impervious Surfaces
- Buildings

Land Use

- Undeveloped Land
- Preserved Farmland

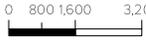
Forest Coverage Areas

- Large Patch
- Medium Patch
- Small Patch

Geologic Formations

- Diabase

- Priority Preservation Areas


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 Prepared by
 Montgomery County Planning Commission
 June 2020

Recommendations and Strategies

Protect township waterways to preserve streams as unimpaired, maintain clean drinking water, and support wildlife habitats.

- ▶ Enhance the standards for the riparian buffer conservation district to create stronger buffer requirements surrounding riparian areas and wetlands.
- ▶ Implement mitigation measures to meet the township’s MS4 standards.
- ▶ Institute a yearly leaf collection for all developments of fifteen homes or more to reduce the amount of leaf litter that could be washed into sewer systems and waterways.

Improve stormwater management across the township.

- ▶ Identify failing stormwater systems and enact measures to rectify the failures.
- ▶ Update township ordinances to require naturalization of stormwater basins.
- ▶ Provide a township-supported rain barrel program to provide education and materials to residents about proper installation and use.
- ▶ Adopt green parking lot design standards.
- ▶ Publish educational materials geared toward modification of residential properties to support improved on-lot stormwater control.

Adopt policies to encourage sustainability practices at the household and municipal level.

- ▶ Prepare a stewardship plan to establish and outline specific goals for protection of natural resources.
- ▶ Adopt renewable energy ordinances to regulate proper installation of renewable infrastructure to protect public safety and property.
- ▶ Pilot an organics compost collection system township-wide to increase diversion of household waste from landfills.
- ▶ Publish educational materials to inform residents of township sustainability efforts and best practices for at-home implementation of sustainability initiatives.

Preserve natural features and champion protection of environmentally sensitive properties.

- ▶ Create a maintenance plan to monitor preservation efforts at sites designed as Sites of Statewide Significance.
- ▶ Outline preservation techniques for properties identified in the Natural Features Preservation Map to be accomplished through updates to zoning ordinances, subdivision and land development ordinances, or other regulatory tools.
- ▶ Acquire properties that contain identified sensitive natural features in accordance with the Open Space Acquisition Map.
- ▶ Periodically review ordinances managing natural resources and update with best management practices as needed.

Protect wildlife habitat in open space areas.

- ▶ Identify locations of native wildlife habitats and threats to those habitats.
- ▶ Preserve contiguous natural areas to reduce habitat fragmentation.
- ▶ Provide educational resources to residents about the importance and recommended treatment of wildlife in a suburban setting.
- ▶ Update the landscape ordinance and required planting schedule to strengthen the incorporation of native plant species in landscaped areas.





4

New Hanover Township has a diverse range of parks and open space areas that provide numerous recreation opportunities to residents and serve as ecological habitat to the local flora and fauna. The township is home to 1,200 acres of preserved farmland, and another 1,000 acres in public and private open space and parkland. These areas are important to maintain in perpetuity for their benefits to the community. Future consideration should be given to enhance existing amenities, and potentially acquire new lands to expand preservation opportunities and meet the recreation needs of residents. The category of parks and open space includes both publicly and privately owned areas. Agricultural areas are included in this discussion because they represent lands that are minimally developed, are often adjacent to other agricultural and open space properties that help to safeguard important ecological functions, and can themselves contain many sensitive natural features such as riparian corridors. As the township's population grows, it is expected there will be a greater demand for recreational services. Access to recreation is a key component of a healthy lifestyle, and provision of a range of amenities for residents to enjoy will enable more people to stay active and engage in diverse outdoor activities.

Priority Areas

- ▶ Preserve open space and agricultural lands to maintain the township's rural community character and protect sensitive natural features.
- ▶ Establish trail linkages between parks and areas of concentrated housing development to better connect residents to recreational areas.
- ▶ Develop a more diverse range of passive and active recreational opportunities to enable residents to maintain healthy, active lifestyles.

Township Parks

Over 300 acres of parks and open space provide active and passive recreation for township residents. The parks and open space areas vary in size and in range of amenities, as well as in means of access and visibility. Some parks and open space areas also serve to protect key ecological features, such as the wetlands, riparian corridors, and woodlands in Pleasant Run Park. Frequently utilized township parks, like the New Hanover Township Community Park and Hickory Park, are more well-known to community members and serve as the location for many annually held community events. These two parks also have more infrastructure to accommodate active recreation, such as playgrounds, basketball courts, pavilions, and a swimming pool. Other parks serve more specific functions, like the recreation fields at Windlestrae Park which house athletic fields used by youth sporting organizations for team games. Many of the smaller parks have few amenities and are not used in any formal sense for organized community activities. These parks tend to have less infrastructure for active recreation but allow for passive recreation such as trail walking and benches for quiet enjoyment. Access to the parks varies; some parks, like Hickory Run, Swamp Creek Park, and NHT Community Park have significant parking with clear signage, while others have limited parking and signage. Most open space areas also have limited access and signage; Parestis Open Space, for example, has no signage and no connections via walking trail or parking area to facilitate public access or use. Limited access to open space areas can be desirable if the primary purpose of the open space is to provide protections for sensitive environmental features on those sites more so than to provide active recreation amenities for residents.

The majority of parks are open and available to the public free of admission, but some of the park facilities are available to rent by the public. These include the picnic pavilions at Hickory Park and NHT Community Park, and indoor and outdoor recreation rooms and kitchen facilities are available to rent at the NHT Community Park and the New Hanover Recreation Center, respectively. Seasonal memberships and daily passes are available for purchase to use the outdoor pool at Hickory Park, which is also open to non-township residents.

Township-owned parks and open space areas are maintained by the Department of Public Works, which provides general services like mowing, trash removal, and other maintenance and upkeep efforts. The township's Parks and Recreation Department is supported by a volunteer-staffed Recreation Board which meets monthly and serves as an advisory group to the governing body. The department is also responsible for organizing, advertising, and managing community events held at township parks. Popular annual

events include the Food Truck Festival and the Fall Frolic, held at Hickory Park.

The ability of the Public Works Department to provide continued maintenance is determined by the capacity of the staff and equipment. New park infrastructure and any newly acquired open space land would place an additional burden on the ability of the staff to provide adequate services and upkeep. Some of the park equipment and playgrounds are secluded and are subjected to occasional vandalism, which also places extra maintenance responsibility on the Public Works staff. As the township continues to enhance its parks, trails, and open space areas, additional staff and equipment will be needed to provide the high-quality security and services expected by residents. Municipal funds for parks and open space acquisition come from the open space tax and from recreation fees paid by developers during the land development process. PA Act 115 of 2013 expands the use of municipal open space funds for additional purposes, including maintenance.



Park Classification

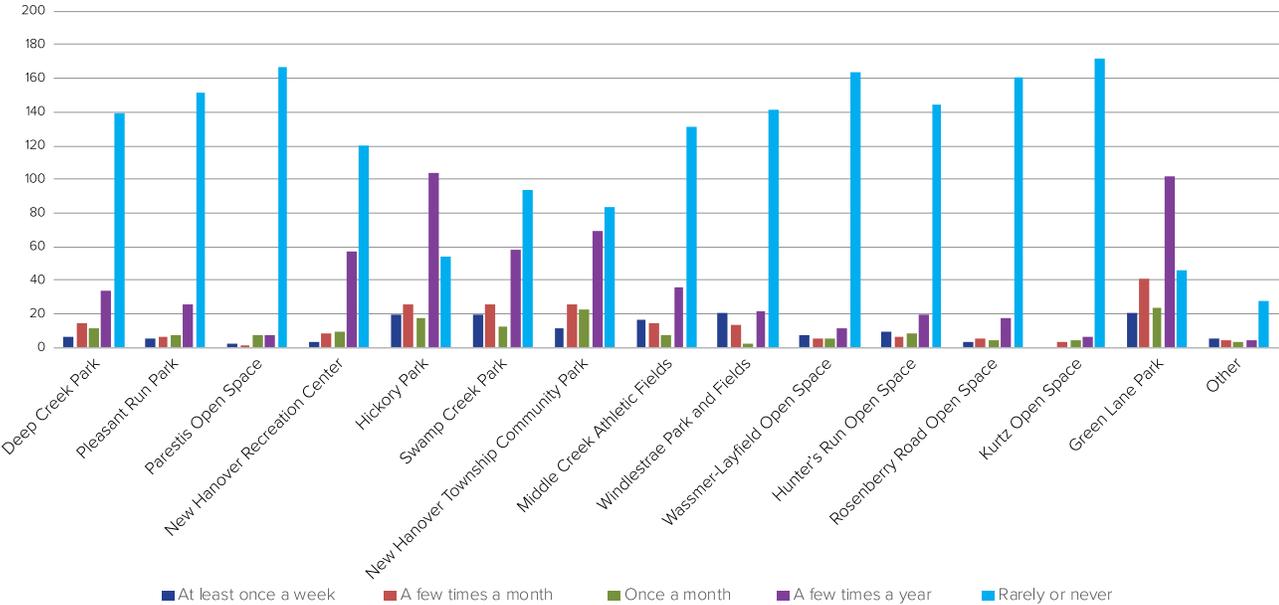
Parks are classified as either “Community Park” or “Neighborhood Park” in accordance with the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) classifications. These categories are based on the size of a park, the uses it offers, and the relative service area of each park. Community parks are typically larger in size with areas suited for intense recreation facilities such as athletic complexes and swimming pools. Larger park size is not necessarily indicative of the value that park brings to the community, and each park should be evaluated on the level of service it provides to residents to determine if the park is well functioning or if improvements are necessary. Some of the smaller neighborhood parks are only accessible from within a residential development, and may be incorrectly perceived as a private park only intended for the use of residents of that development. Functionally, though, these parks tend to only serve the immediate neighborhood.

Some parks are dog-friendly, but not all are suitable for dog use, particularly parks used for athletic fields. Survey respondents from the comprehensive

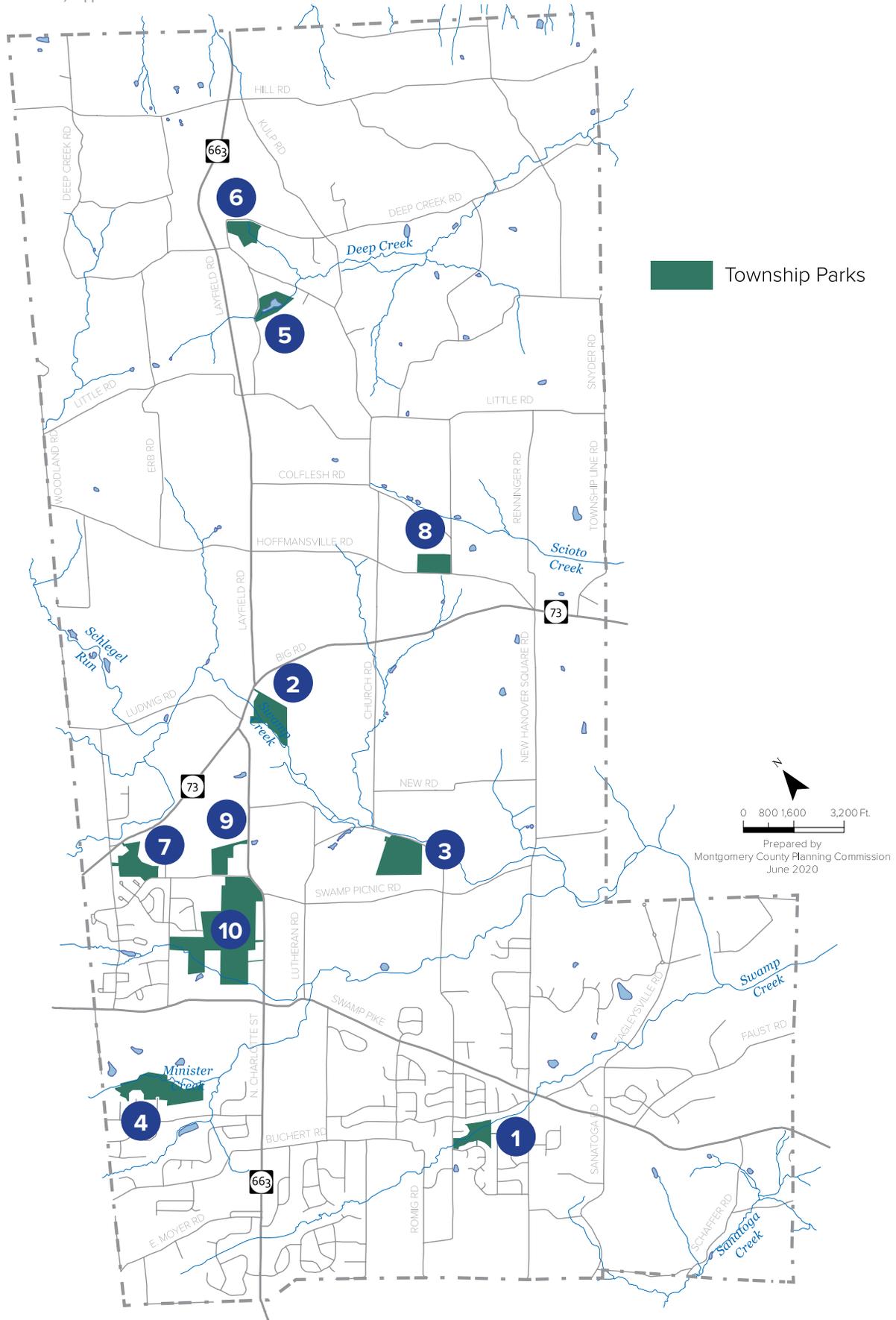


plan community survey reported visiting NHT Community Park and Hickory Park the most frequently. However, the most visited park was reported to be Green Lane Park, which is located outside of the township. Residents indicated Green Lane Park was preferable to many township parks because of the range of activities and amenities that park offers. The 2015 [Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan](#) provides additional levels of detail on the specific features and amenities of each of the parks listed on the next page.

NHT Community Survey: Frequency of Park Visitation



MAP: 17 || Parks



TOWNSHIP PARKS				
<i>Park Name</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Park Size</i>	<i>Amenities Offered</i>	<i>Photo</i>
1 Briar Ridge Park	Magnolia Drive, north of Sycamore Lane	Neighborhood Park	Small playground	
2 Hickory Park	2140 Big Road	Community Park 20.65 acres	Swimming pool, concession stand, pavilion rentals, grills, playground, volleyball, fishing, and barrel ball	
3 Swamp Creek Park	3179 Reifsnnyder Road	Community Park 32.62 acres	Model airplane flying, walking trail, historical school house, small playground, and dog friendly	
4 New Hanover Township Community Park	2766 Gail Drive	Community Park 29.23 acres	Barn rental, baseball/softball field, basketball court, frisbee golf, hockey court, walking trail, pavilion rental, picnic tables, grills, and playground	
5 Pleasant Run Park	600 Schultz Road	Neighborhood Park 11.13 acres	Fishing pond and park benches	
6 Deep Creek Park	Deep Creek Road, north of Schultz Road	Neighborhood Park 10.83 acres	Trails, bird watching, and picnic tables	
7 Windlestrae Park and Fields	132 Chalet Road	Community Park 26.53 acres	Multipurpose recreational fields and playground	
8 New Hanover Recreation Center	2373 Hoffmansville Road	Community Park 12.05 acres	Indoor gymnasium, kitchen, conference room, and classrooms	
9 Middle Creek Athletic Fields	Dotterer Road, west of North Charlotte Street	Neighborhood Park 10.64 acres	Baseball fields and picnic tables	
10 Layfield Park/ Wassmer Athletic Fields	North of Swamp Pike, between Dotterer Road and North Charlotte Street	Community Park 93.35 acres	Multipurpose recreational fields and meadow/open space	

Recreational Organizations

Numerous organizations operate recreational activities within the township that provide organized activities. Some groups, like those that operate youth sports organizations, rent out the municipally-owned recreation fields. Because many of these organizations collect fees from players, they are able to provide financial assistance to contribute toward the maintenance of the fields, and in some cases these organizations enter into an agreement with the township to take primary responsibility over maintenance and field improvements, which can include mowing, scoreboards, lighting, and parking areas. The primary organizations providing youth sports recreation opportunities are the Pine Forge Athletic Association, Boyertown Soccer Club, and the Boyertown Optimist Club. Enrollment in these organizations is not limited to New Hanover residents only, nor are the fields in the township the only locations where teams operate. These athletic organizations have agreements to use fields across multiple municipalities to accommodate the demand for youth team sports. Fields used for organized team sports are open for public use when not being used for organized practices and games.

The Girl Scouts of Eastern Pennsylvania owns Camp Laughing Waters, a 500-acre wooded resident camp site containing numerous activities for private use of the GSA. This camp is not open to the public but represents a critical component in the larger open space network of the region and contains many natural resources important to protect. Efforts are currently underway that would result in a conservation easement to preserve the entire camp. This easement includes a future trail alignment for the West County Trail, part of the proposed County Trail Network.



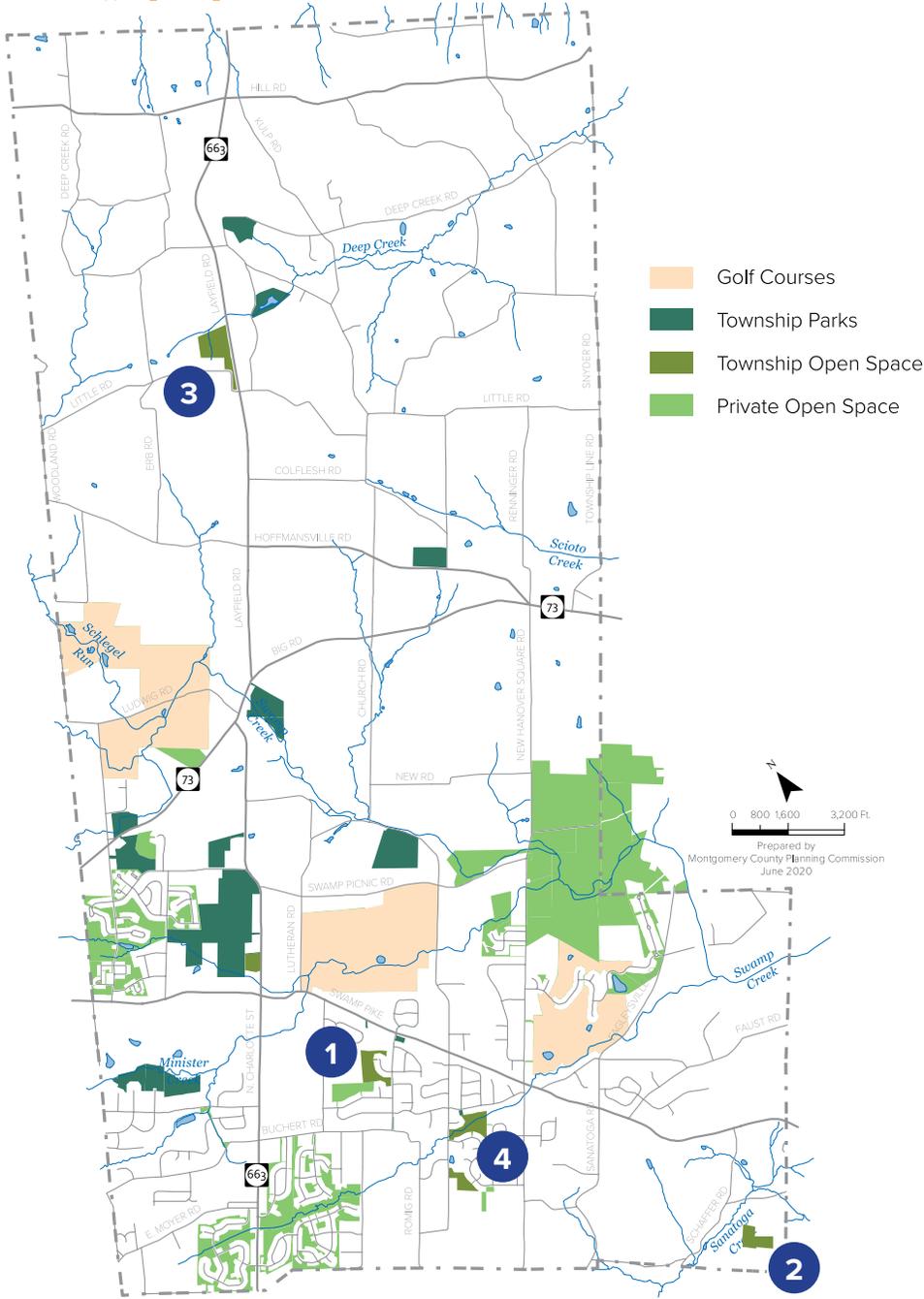
Open Space

Open space is catalogued as a separate land use category than parks. One key distinction between the two uses is that open space is generally land that is not intensively developed for any specific purpose and is largely left in a natural state. Open space is categorized as either public open space or private open space. Public open space includes those lands owned by the township. The largest private open spaces in the township are the three privately-owned golf courses: Gilbertsville Golf Course, Hickory Valley Golf Course, and Bella Vista Golf Course. Private open space also includes areas in residential developments not dedicated to the township, often maintained by homeowners associations. This land is preserved as part of ordinance-required open space, shared community space, or areas used for stormwater management facilities. While not captured by the land use category of open space per se, institutionally-owned open space, such as the recreation fields owned by the Boyertown School District also contribute to the availability of open space and recreation land in the township.

Preservation of open space is important to safeguard the natural ecological functions within the township, such as watercourses, forested lands, and plant and animal habitats. New Hanover Township has significant undeveloped lands containing intact natural resources and these lands should be targeted for preservation to advance environmental protection goals. Open space preservation should be a higher priority than acquisition of lands for new parks or recreation.



MAP: 18 || *Open Space*



TOWNSHIP-OWNED OPEN SPACE			
<i>Open Space Amenity</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Park Size</i>	<i>Amenities Offered</i>
1 Hunter's Run Open Space	Fairbrook Drive	20.95 acres	Small playground and meadow
2 Kurtz Road Open Space	Pruss Hill Road/ Kurtz Road	8.97 acres	Woodland
3 Parestis Open Space	2023 Little Road	18.04 acres	Woodland, meadow, and riparian area
4 Rosenberry Road Open Space	Rosenberry Road	17.53 acres	Small playground and woodland



*86% of survey respondents reported it was **important** or **extremely important**, to preserve open space to*

“maintain the rural character of the township”

and to

“protect valuable natural resources, such as waterways and woodlands”

— 2015 Recreation, Parks, and Open Space Master Plan Public Survey



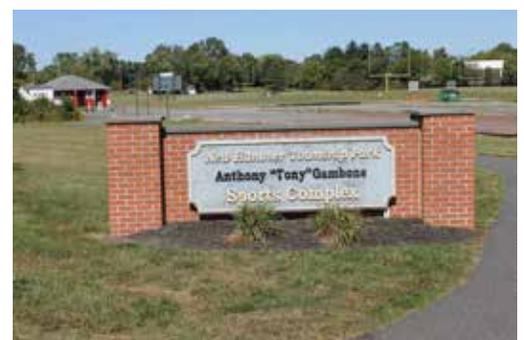
Park Plans

New Hanover Township completed the Open Space and Recreation Master Plan in 2015, which created a comprehensive listing of all parks, features, and established specific park-level goals as well as township-wide goals for recreation and open space. The top five priorities outlined in that plan were:

- **First Priority:** Upgrade existing facilities to be ADA compliant.
- **Second Priority:** Create multi-modal connectivity to parks and open space resources, and incorporate comments from the EAB and the Recreation Committee into the land development process.
- **Third Priority:** Construct trail sections to provide linear green links throughout the township.
- **Fourth Priority:** New land acquisition and construction of undeveloped parks.
- **Fifth Priority:** Install additional active recreation amenities.

Other main takeaways identified in the plan were to establish uniform signage for all parks and consideration for the creation of a “unified central park feature.” Most, though not all, parks do have uniform signs that look like the one at Pleasant Run Park. This helps create a uniform visual identification of township-owned parks. Few open space areas have any such signage. The plan also explains how the larger and more well-used parks of Hickory Park and NHT Community Park are somewhat detached from the main residential areas with limited trail connections, and how a “central park” could provide a multi-use benefit to the community.

A Master Plan Public Survey was conducted as part of the plan development process that explored resident’s desires for and use of recreation activities. Respondents indicated interest in hiking/walking on trails and nature walks, exercise and fitness, cycling, swimming, indoor recreation and organized fitness classes, fishing, and water sports. One of the main reasons why residents said they did not participate in recreation activities, in addition to time limitations, was that they felt a lack of information on park events and amenities. In terms of type of desired facilities, respondents reported that parks were the most important, followed by after school activities, outdoor swimming pool, sports field complex, and indoor recreation center. Over half of respondents noted the township was limited in providing enough indoor ice hockey/ice skating rinks, miniature golf courses, running tracks, bike paths, walking paths, dog parks, locations for water sports, nature preserves, game courts, and locations for outdoor concerts and performances. Overall, 36% of respondents reported that the parks and recreation activities in the township met below their expectations, with only 5% reporting the activities exceeded their expectations, indicating room for improvement in providing robust and diverse offerings for recreational opportunities.



Park and Open Space Acquisition Plan

A component of the 2015 Open Space and Recreation Master Plan was an updated Acquisition Plan, previously revised in 2009, that identifies specific parcels to be prioritized for acquisition by the township for either recreation or open space. The goal of acquisition is to protect the identified land areas from intensive development, and does not always have to be accomplished by a municipal purchase of the land, but can be done through easements or the purchase of development rights. Open space funds generated from the open space tax and development fees can be used toward out-of-pocket expenses, or leveraged to pursue grant funding. State and County funding streams can be pursued by the township to offset municipal spending.

Prioritization for acquisition outlined in the 2015 plan recommended sites

with significantly sized open fields as the top priority to meet growing demands for field sports, primarily driven by organized youth sports. The second and third prioritizations were environmentally sensitive lands, and other lands that meet township goals for location near resident populations, respectively. The Acquisition Map identifies several properties, some of which share a boundary with existing open space or park assets. When considering open space acquisition targets, the township should focus on creating contiguous areas of protected land because it provides greater ecological benefits than separated, fragmented open spaces, preserves greater landscape diversity, and also may allow the installation of more robust passive recreation opportunities, such as longer walking trails. Acquisition of open space adjacent to agricultural areas is another smart strategy to provide a low-intensity

use buffer between residential or commercial uses and active agricultural operations to limit perceived negative reactions stemming from agricultural noise and odor emissions, in addition to ecological considerations.

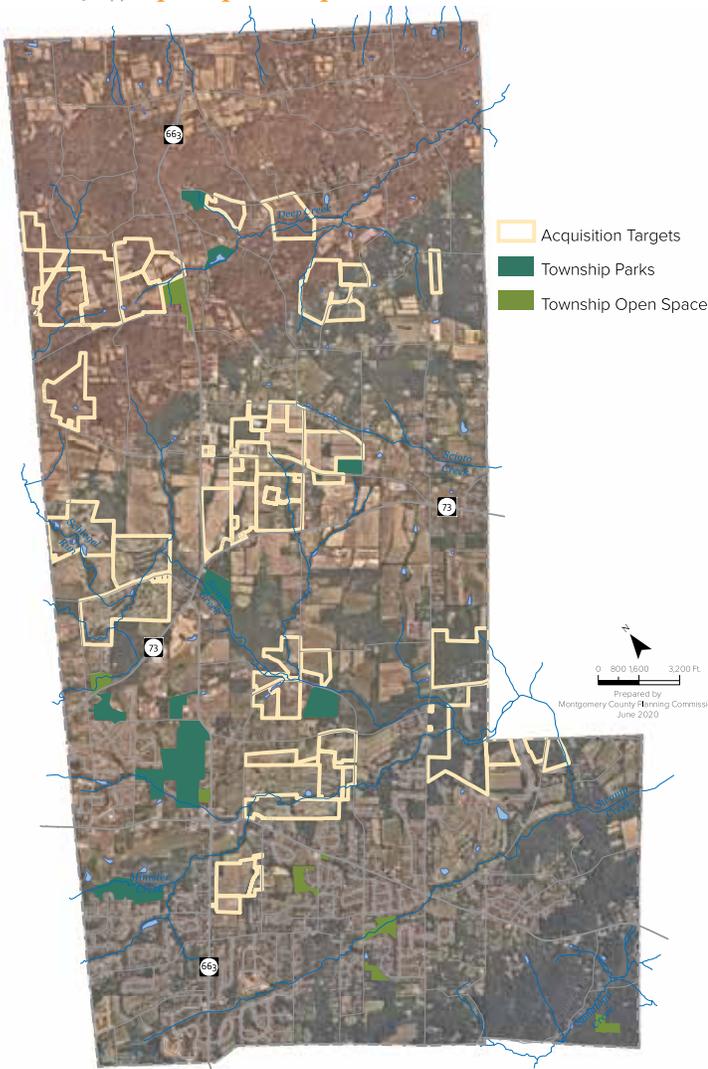
Some of the golf courses have been identified as open space targets. The township has three operating golf courses, and it is not clear if there will be adequate demand to support all three courses indefinitely. The relatively flat and clear land within the public water service boundary and, in the case of Gilbertsville Golf Course, in the sewer service boundary, is ideal for conversion into housing developments. These courses offer a visual break from the density of existing housing developments, and their presence helps contribute to the rural character and sense of open space in the township. In the event of a course closure or other opportunity



for acquisition, the township should consider opportunities for conservation easements, real estate purchase, or other preservation means to maintain these large tracts as open space or conversion into some other recreation asset for the community.

Township Supervisors approved the purchase of a conservation easement over a portion of the Hickory Valley Golf Course in late 2020, which was one of the targeted open space acquisition targets. The township also purchased a conservation easement to preserve the Suloman Dairy Farm on Leidy Road in 2019. The township should continue leveraging its ability to fund these conservation acquisitions.

MAP: 19 || *Open Space Acquisition*



The PMRPC Comprehensive Plan does not include municipal-level recommendations for acquisition of open space areas, nor does it offer municipal-specific open space and recreation goals for New Hanover Township because New Hanover opted out of participating in PMRPC’s parks and recreation component. New Hanover has other existing planning documents with municipal-level recreation goals, as noted herein. Six of the eight member municipalities in the regional planning commission, with the help and support of the Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation (PAHWF) and the Schuylkill River Greenway Association, contribute toward the “circuit rider” position. This is a DVRPC grant-funded staff position housed within the PAHWF focused on the development of recreation facilities and open space preservation. The staff person responsible for the circuit rider program works to secure and administer other agency grants to pursue the region’s goals for parks, trails, and open space established in the PMRPC Comprehensive Plan. Because New Hanover does not contribute toward this position, the responsibility for grant management and parks planning falls to township staff and consultants.

Trails

There are approximately 18 miles of trails within New Hanover Township. Few of these trail miles meet a “hiking trail” standard; existing trails are almost exclusively paved pathways along roadways. The most contiguous trails are the paved walking trails in Swamp Creek Park and NHT Community Park. As new housing developments have been completed, shorter and more informal trail segments have been created to link developments to one another, which provides a more connected pedestrian experience. Some sidewalks within developments contribute toward the trail network, while inter-neighborhood trails along roadways are provided by 8 foot wide multi-use side path. These side paths are located outside of vehicular travel lanes and separated by a buffer area, which provides increased safety and comfort for trail users. The wider widths better accommodate a mix of pedestrians and bicyclists. If side paths are not installed during the land development process because they are deemed to be impractical or in a low priority area, the township can instead collect fees to go toward building a path in other more high priority areas.

There is not a strong network of built trails throughout New Hanover. The township adopted a [Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan](#), most recently updated in 2015. In it, existing and proposed trails are outlined to show how a coordinated and connected trail network can provide on-road and off-road linkages between parks, open space, and residential areas, as well as other key community destinations like schools and commercial areas. Trails are likely to be more heavily used by those seeking recreation and an opportunity to connect with nature, but may also be used by residents as an off-road transportation alternative. To facilitate a more functional trail network, trails should be designed for multiple users: designs should include widths of at least 8 – 10 feet and paved with an all-weather material to best accommodate both pedestrians and bicycles. Developing a well-connected trail network throughout the township would allow for some residents to access parks and other community destinations without the need to drive, which encourages active and healthy lifestyles.

One of the key findings that came out of the comprehensive plan community engagement sessions, earlier echoed as one of the priority recommendations from the 2015 Open Space and Recreation Master Plan, was to create more trail connections between parks and between residential areas and parks. The township should continue to pursue funding and preliminary engineering studies to finalize and eventually install desired trail sections as outlined in this plan. Once open, residents should be made aware that these recreation opportunities are available through proper advertising and wayfinding signage. Preliminary work has already begun on these projects to develop this trail network:

- Trail alignment along Dotterer Road to connect the Windlestrae Park to the Middle Creek Athletic Fields.
- Completion of the Wassmer-Layfield Trail connecting the Township Administration Building with Dotterer Road.



Future Recreation Needs

The 2015 Open Space and Recreation Master Plan provides detailed implementation steps to improve and expand the township's parks and open space resources. This document is a useful tool to guide decision making for programs, policies, and capital investments. Recommendations below are based largely off previous work as well as updated community feedback garnered through the comprehensive plan community engagement process.

The community was largely consistent in their desire to maintain the rural character of the township, and there is strong support for the further protection of open space resources and interest in developing passive forms of recreation, like walking trails. While some community members supported the development of new parks and additional active recreation features in parks, most reported they have a greater interest in seeing well-maintaining existing resources rather than an interest in seeing the development of new parks. The proximity of other parks and playgrounds, like Green Lane Park to the north and the Manderach Playground at the Limerick Community Park in Limerick Township appear to be well used by township residents because of the range of amenities they offer.

Green Lane Park is uniquely attractive for the water activities it can offer. New Hanover does have some opportunities to better develop access to water sports and water recreation, including a boat ramp in Hickory Park to serve as a launch for canoeing and kayaking on Swamp Creek. The PMRPC Comprehensive Plan encourages municipalities in the region to foster tourism through recreation. The development of water sports in the New Hanover Township could serve as an asset to diversify recreation opportunities for residents while also contributing toward economic development goals.

Growing housing development and an increasing number of children in the township may warrant the construction of a large park similar to the one at Limerick Community Park to provide playground recreation closer to many residents. It is unlikely that development of a large playground park may be feasible within the next decade, but consideration should be given to this option based on the pace of continued housing development anticipated over the next ten to fifteen years. All new playground equipment should be designed to provide a safe and stimulating play experience for children. Diverse play equipment should be geared toward a range of ages, and provide shade, seating, and ADA accessibility. Other specific desired park amenities identified by the community include a dog park, bike trails, indoor or outdoor swimming pools, picnic and pavilion areas, wildlife viewing/birdwatching, mini golf, fishing, and basketball courts. Residents also expressed a desire for additional programming in community parks and better communication about available recreation opportunities.

With an anticipated increase in the school-aged population, demand for recreational fields is expected to increase for youth team sports. Past community discussions have considered the need or desire to develop a field sports complex that could host regional tournaments. However, the township does not have



the supportive infrastructure like hotels, restaurants, and other complimentary retail businesses to accommodate tournaments, and an influx of visitors would bring increased traffic on the roadway network. At this time, it is not recommended for the township to pursue development of a sports complex because current facilities, while nearing capacity, are adequate and there is limited community support for additional fields. In order to maximize the utility of existing fields to meet the increase in demand, the township should evaluate its agreements with the recreational organizations whose teams use the fields the most to determine the most suitable and sustainable management strategy. Management of use schedules and facility maintenance will play a critical role in ensuring these public play fields can accommodate all future users.

The closure of the Boyertown Area YMCA, formerly located at the intersection of Dotterer Road and North Charlotte Street, represents a loss of indoor facility space for youth and adult recreation programming, as well as other wellness services offered by the YMCA. The property was purchased by the United Methodist Church and the buildings and grounds are no longer in use as an active recreation space. The community voiced strong support for adult group fitness classes, previously offered by the Y. Residents have the option of traveling to the Upper Perkiomen Valley YMCA in Pennsburg, but the distance and cost of a membership may be prohibitive to some residents. The township could consider providing additional fitness class opportunities closer to residents such as incorporating seasonal outdoor group fitness classes like yoga, Zumba, and Tai Chi as a value-added service to bring more programmed activities to township parks and fill this missing recreation gap for residents.

Future capital expenditure should focus on acquisition of open space as outlined in the 2015 Acquisition Plan to maintain ecologically sensitive areas of the township. Improvements should also be made to the range of offerings and events at existing parks to better provide for the recreation needs of residents. Priority should be given to acquire open space resources that are contiguous to other protected open spaces or preserved farmland. Desire for passive recreation opportunities like dog parks and walking trails lend themselves to lower capital costs and maintenance demands than other high-intensity recreation facilities. These types of activities are also more suitable to locate in open space areas, provided there is adequate parking and connectivity for residents to be able to access them easily.

Overall, the importance of maintenance and collaboration to connect public parks and open space resources cannot be understated. The township should prioritize building access to recreation amenities through the construction of trails that connect residential districts to parks and increase connections between parks to provide the greatest immediate benefit. Based on input from community residents, township staff, and previous plan recommendations, if investment is placed toward substantially improving existing township owned space, the creation of a “central park” (as recommended by the 2015 Open Space and Recreation Master Plan) at the Wassmer Layfield open space might be a great opportunity to develop a robust community park that can provide extensive trails, field sports, and other amenities. The open space area has a mix of existing sports fields and wooded areas with potential for new walking trails, playground feature, and other attractions. Its proximity to many new and proposed housing developments, including Town Center, and its connection to the Township Administration Building makes it ideal to host community events and develop recreation opportunities close to a concentration of residents. For all other public areas, improved wayfinding signage, timely announcements and updates, enhancement of programmed activities, and easily accessible information would help boost the visibility and usage of the township parks and open space areas.

Initial community response to COVID-19 across Montgomery County has shown a huge demand for outdoor recreation amenities. On some county-owned trails, usage increased by 100% - 200% during the first six months of the pandemic, demonstrating how valuable trail amenities are to residents, and how critical developing a well connected and robust trail network is. There is a clear need to provide adequate services that enable residents to recreate safely, and to provide diverse ways residents can recreate beyond high-use trails or in community parks, but also close to home in their own neighborhoods.

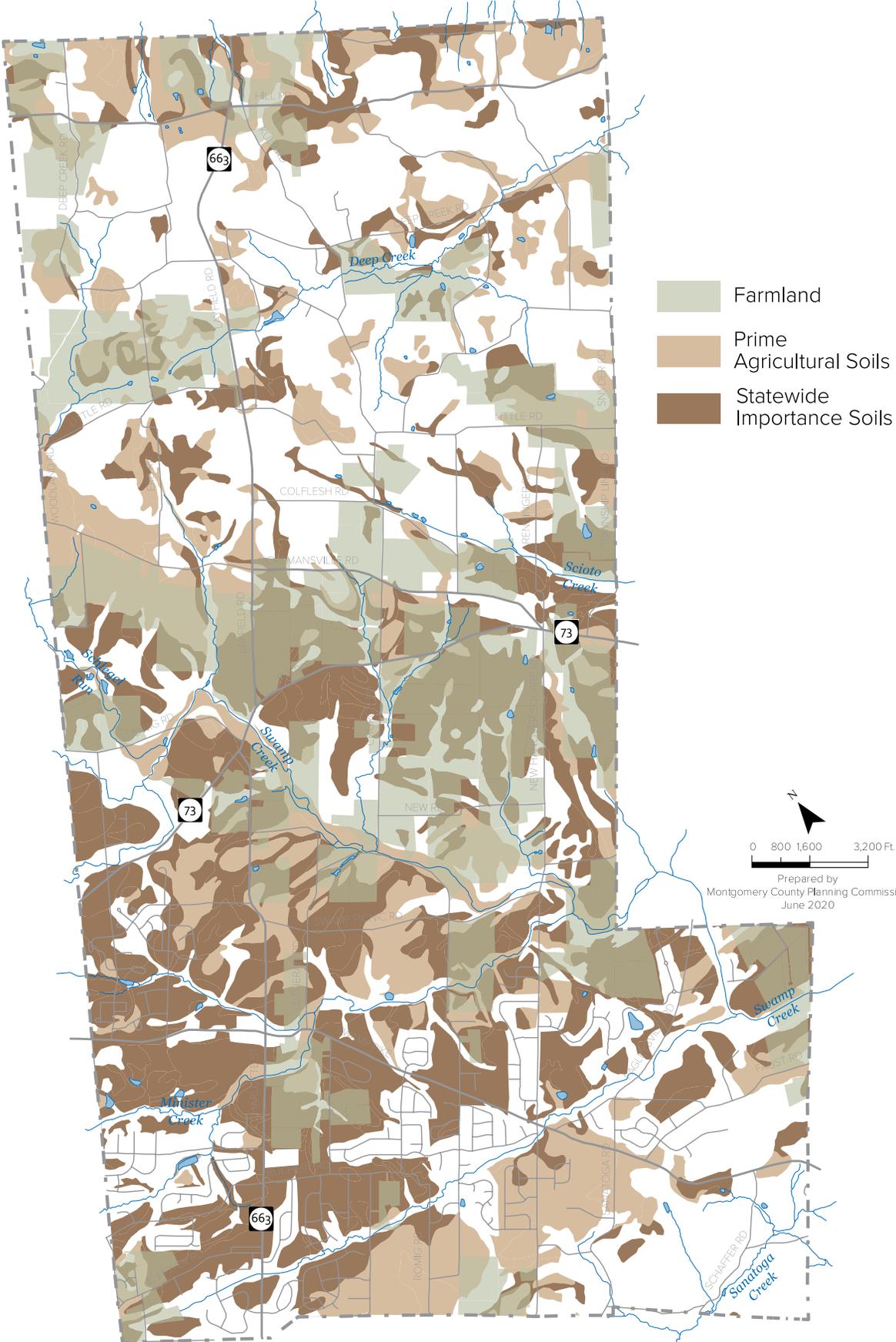
Agriculture

Historically, New Hanover Township was established as a farming community, which is evident in the number of farms that continue to operate in the township. Covering a quarter of all land area in the township, agricultural uses represent the second largest land use after residential uses. Proper land management and preservation of farmlands contributes greatly to the overall natural resources and community character. Farms serve an important economic role in the community, but are often under development pressure. The average age of an American farmer is 57.5 years old, and many are finding they do not have a viable succession plan to continue farming operations after they retire. Payments from sale of farm fields can be generous, and agricultural lands are attractive to developers because they are generally flat and clear of trees.

Options exist for farmers to ensure their lands remain under active production in perpetuity; Montgomery County operates a Farmland Preservation program that has permanently preserved over 1,200 acres – just under half of all acres of farmland - in New Hanover Township since the program was established by the state legislature in 1990. Farmland preservation results in permanent deed restriction on the property to ensure it can only be used for agricultural purposes, and property owners are given a one-time payment for these future development rights. A majority of the preserved farms in New Hanover were accepted into the program between the mid-1990s and mid-2000s, and additional properties continue to apply to the program. The township has also contributed to farmland preservation directly, by purchasing a conservation easement to preserve the lands of Suloman's Dairy. This local landmark is surrounded by housing developments, and the effort made by the township to preserve this farm will ensure it too will not be developed, thereby keeping the local rural character intact.



MAP: 21 || *Agricultural Soils*

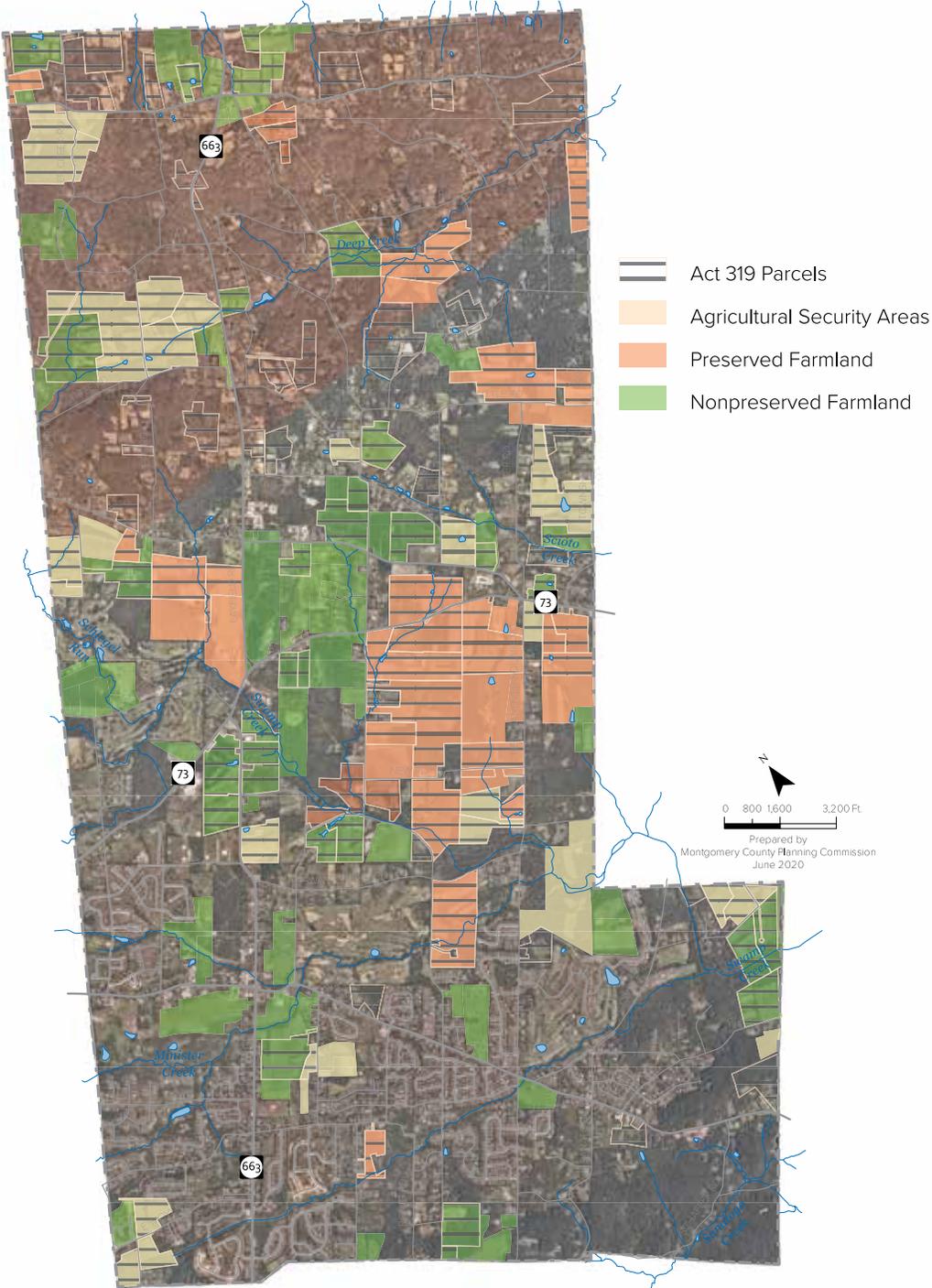


Preservation of agricultural lands is important to the county to ensure Montgomery County maintains our farming heritage and sustains local food production. At the local level, agricultural preservation is key to retaining the rural community character that residents find so attractive. Eighty-one percent of survey respondents from the comprehensive plan community survey indicated they “strongly support” prioritizing farmland preservation, citing that the presence of farms and other open space was a key reason why they chose to live in New Hanover. Many residents reported concerns over loss of farmland for housing development detracts from their desire to remain in the township and feel it is becoming too “urbanized.” It is important for township staff to encourage property owners of the non-preserved farms to apply to the county’s farmland preservation program or pursue protections through another one of Pennsylvania’s agricultural programs. Preservation of these lands will not only maximize the amount of land that is protected for food, livestock, and nursery production, but will also assist in supporting individual farmers’ livelihoods and protect the township’s heritage. Different levels of agricultural preservation are available, based on the interest of the property owners and the size and condition of the land itself:



- Agricultural Security Areas
 - ◊ Requires a combined minimum from one or more properties of at least 250 acres.
 - ◊ Must produce at least \$2,000 annually from the sale of agricultural products.
 - ◊ Protects designated lands from local ordinances and nuisance lawsuits affecting normal farming activities.
- Act 319 Clean and Green
 - ◊ Preferential tax assessment program based on use value rather than fair market value.
 - ◊ Typically results in reduced tax of farmland, making it more financially feasible to continue farming operations, especially in areas with development pressure.
 - ◊ Must be 10 acres or more in size or generate at least \$2,000 annually in farm income.
- Preserved Farm
 - ◊ Represents the most permanent form of farmland preservation where the development rights are purchased, and only farm activities may be carried out on the land in perpetuity.

MAP: 22 || *Preserved Farms*



Agricultural lands require a specific set of land management tools to remain viable and productive, and to reduce negative impacts on the natural environment. Publications from Penn State Extension, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Natural Lands, and Montgomery County can provide good resources for farmers to grow their knowledge of land use management and tackle other business-oriented development. A growing interest in agro-tourism like pick-your-own fields, hayrides, and other on-farm experiences represents an area where farmers can diversify their income, provide value-added amenities to their lands, and better connect with the local community.

Parks and Open Space

Maintain township-owned parks in good condition.

- ▶ Update maintenance plans for each park and open space resource that account for anticipated incremental increases in park use.
- ▶ Create new wayfinding signage to identify park and open space locations.
- ▶ Assess parking capacity and parking demand in township-owned parks and open space areas, and enlarge or improve parking areas to meet demand.
- ▶ Collaborate with youth sports leagues and others who rent field space to maintain existing fields and surrounding property in good condition.
- ▶ Publish planned activities, user schedules, and rental availability of all parks and fields.
- ▶ Budget for future staffing and equipment needs for the Public Works Department to accommodate future parks and open space maintenance demands.

Establish greater connectivity among parks, open space, and residential areas.

- ▶ Pursue implementation of the proposed trail system from the 2006 Open Space Plan and the 2015 Bicycle and Pedestrian Trails Map. Prioritize trails that connect residential areas to nearby parks and open space resources.
- ▶ Apply for grant funding from DCNR and other sources to construct the Dotterer Road Trail.
- ▶ Require new land developments to create or connect into a trail to provide non-motorized access to parks within a mile of the development.
- ▶ Review and implement appropriate connections among neighborhoods and community destinations.

Enhance park amenities to provide a balance of active and passive recreation needs for all park users.

- ▶ Improve community awareness of parks through new wayfinding signage and planned activities and programs.
- ▶ Install new outdoor passive recreation amenities in public open space and/or parks, as recommended in this comprehensive plan and the 2015 Open Space and Recreation Master Plan.
- ▶ Increase comfort at playgrounds by planting additional trees and vegetation for shade, providing playground shade canopies, and installing new seating and picnic tables.
- ▶ Install a boat ramp in Hickory Park.
- ▶ Evaluate participation rates at existing indoor recreation facilities. Develop new programming, specifically targeting adult and family fitness classes.

Prioritize the preservation of open space and natural features to maintain areas of undeveloped land that contribute to the rural-suburban character of the township.

- ▶ Limit development within open space areas to passive recreation amenities like walking trails and wildlife viewing stations to maintain the rural character and environmental integrity of the properties.
- ▶ Prioritize properties identified in the Open Space Acquisition Map to plan for capital investment necessary to secure development rights or purchase agreements with targeted properties. Properties that contain sensitive natural features or are adjacent to existing open space, parks, or agricultural uses should be targeted for early acquisition.
- ▶ Build criteria for secondary acquisition targets that considers preservation of contiguous area and sensitive landscapes containing woodlands, steep slopes, creeks, and wetlands.

- ▶ Support property owners and farmers in preserving their agricultural lands under one of the farmland preservation categories. Target agricultural lands adjacent to already preserved farmland to establish contiguous preserved space, where possible.
- ▶ Provide resources to property owners and farmers on best management practices to maintain working agricultural lands.

Provide a diverse range of recreation amenities to support changing population dynamics and enable residents to life active, healthy lifestyles.

- ▶ Evaluate the need for new sports/athletic fields to support additional playing areas for local leagues or a tournament-level complex based on community demand and capacity of existing facilities.
- ▶ Establish consistent coordination with youth sports organizations and the Boyertown Area School District to determine the capacity and projected demands of fields.
- ▶ Publish field usage schedules accessible by residents to promote transparency and reduce use privatization.
- ▶ Complete a master plan for the Wassmer-Layfield Open Space as a community-level park, trail, and recreation destination.



5

Transportation involves the everyday movement of people and goods and encompasses all modes by which movement can happen, whether that is driving, walking, biking, or taking public transit. In order to facilitate efficient and safe movement, a well-developed transportation network needs to exist to accommodate all users. The relationship between land use and roadway networks are inextricably linked and require coordinated improvements to ensure a well-connected and functional roadway system. One of the primary challenges for the township's future will be the ability of the existing roadway network to accommodate future growth and development. New Hanover Township has a roadway network primarily consisting of two-lane roads, with limited linkage points to the broader regional roadway network. Increased housing development in the township and in surrounding communities has already placed greater strain on the capacity of the road networks which has led to congestion and accelerated wear and tear on the area's roads and bridges. New roads created to service individual housing developments have introduced more cul-de-sacs and stub-out streets with limited ability to connect those streets to the existing network and concentrates traffic on a few main through-roads. Future transportation improvements should address the management of circulation patterns based on new development and development pressures, and identification of areas of congestion to develop solutions to facilitate safe and efficient movement both within the township and to external regional destinations.

Priority Areas

- ▶ Update the roadway classification system and design criteria to reflect modern demands on roadway functionality and capacity constraints.
- ▶ Coordinate with county and state agencies on bridge and intersection improvements to optimize travel and reduce congestion on roadways in the township.
- ▶ Prioritize both vehicular and pedestrian connections between adjacent properties.
- ▶ Implement access management techniques to reduce motorist conflicts and improve safety.
- ▶ Build out the pedestrian and bicycle network to provide increased safety and accessibility for residents who choose to seek options for non-motorized travel.

Vehicular Roadways

The roadway network in New Hanover Township is fairly limited, with many roads primarily servicing local destinations. Three main roads carry the majority of the average daily traffic volumes: PA Route 663/North Charlotte Street and PA Route 73/Big Road both average between 5,000 and 10,000 daily trips and Swamp Pike averages between 10,000 and 15,000 daily trips. These roads serve as the primary north/south or east/west routes connecting into the wider regional transportation network and carry both local traffic and through-traffic. Most of the roadways within the township are two-lane undivided roads, even on the arterial highways, with limited to no shoulder areas. Some of the routes are built on older “wagon trails” that were formalized over the years.

One of the major challenges facing the township is developing roadway solutions to manage the travel demands resulting from increasing population growth. Much of the roadway and bridge infrastructure is aging and in need of repair. Increasing traffic volumes from development in and around the township is placing greater stress on the roadway network, which was not designed to accommodate the current traffic rates. Few new roadways have been developed in recent years except for internal roads built to service new residential subdivisions. Many of these new roads do not connect into one another, but primarily concentrate traffic movements onto major collector roadways. This funneling effect results in longer travel times, greater congestion, and can increase the potential for crashes.

Building capacity through road widening on the main routes is restricted because of historic development patterns; many older structures take direct access from the main arterials and are located close to the roadways. This limits the potential for road widening to accommodate increasing traffic volumes. The township will likely need to focus on other transportation improvements like intersection improvements, signal timing, and the addition of dedicated turning lanes, where possible, to manage increasing traffic congestion. Other solutions may rest in the ability of new developments to be designed in a manner that enables vehicular and pedestrian connectivity between adjacent properties to provide greater options for patterns of movement.



Roadway Ownership

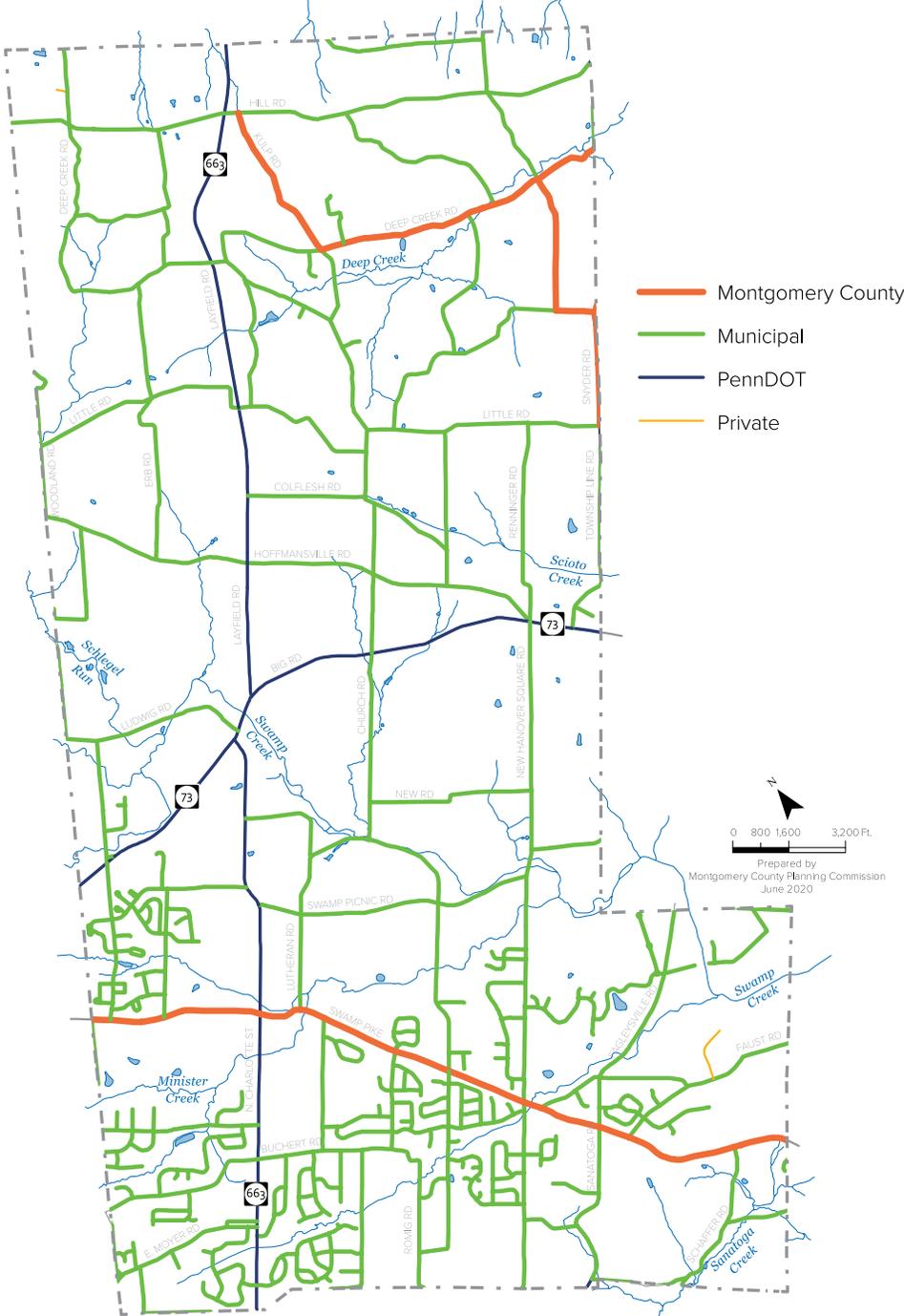
New Hanover Township owns most of the roadways in the township: approximately 80 to 90 roadway miles. The township Public Works Department maintains all local roads. Maintenance responsibilities include pothole repair, snow plowing, road salting or brining roadways in advance of wintry precipitation, and patching and repaving of the roadway surfaces. Road repairs primarily take the form of:

- Sealant – either chip seal (which may be contracted out) or fog seal (lasts 7-10 years)
- Cold in-place recycling – where roadway is ground and re-rolled (lasts 20 years)
- Mill and overlay – where the top layer of roadway is removed and fully replaced (lasts 20-25 years)

All other roadways not owned by the township are owned by Montgomery County or the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT). Montgomery County owns the length of Swamp Pike within the township as well as portions of Kulp Road, Deep Creek Road, and Henning Road. Maintenance of county-owned roadways is the responsibility of the Montgomery County Roads and Bridges Department. PennDOT owns PA Route 73/Big Road and PA Route 663/North Charlotte Street/Layfield Road. PennDOT operates a program called “PennDOT Connects,” which is focused on improved coordination and collaboration with municipalities on planning projects related to bridge and roadway upgrades. This program helps to identify and incorporate multi-modal improvements based on local priorities. The township may coordinate on maintenance with these other roadway owners, but primarily each agency is responsible for maintaining their own

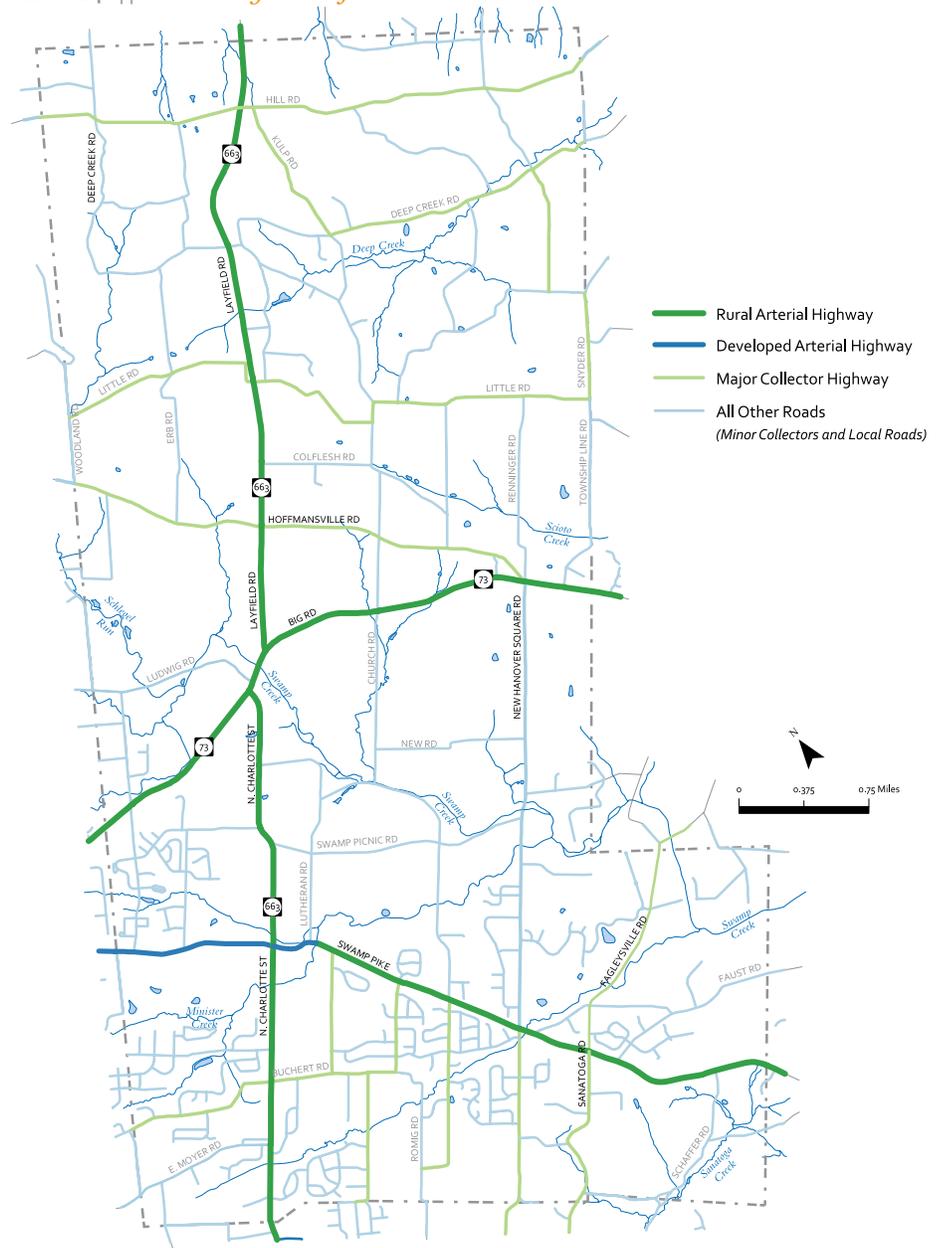
roadways, and any new access points onto each roadway must receive a highway occupancy permit (HOP) from the agency with controlling jurisdiction over that road.

MAP: 23 || *Roadway Ownership*



The cartway refers to the area of pavement from curb to curb, or from either edge of pavement where curbing is not present. The “UROW” stands for the ultimate right-of-way, which is the legal line that extends beyond the cartway itself and may include areas containing sidewalks or other infrastructure like utility poles. In the modern land development process, the UROW is usually dedicated to the township, or to the county or state depending on the jurisdictional agency. This process of dedication ensures that the municipal, county, or state authority has ownership of this area on either side of the road for future roadway improvements or widening. However, many older land developments and private properties may not have gone through the process of dedication, meaning that the UROW belongs to individual property owners. Aggregation of the land area within the UROWs to implement roadway improvements therefore becomes complicated because of the number of owners involved. The township should ensure that all future rights-of-way eligible for donation are accepted to facilitate future roadway improvement projects.

MAP: 24 || *Roadway Classification*



NEW HANOVER TOWNSHIP STREET CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM				
Street Classification	Cartway Width*		Ultimate Right-of-Way (UROW)	Main Function
	Existing Roads	New Roads		
Rural Arterial	¹	N/A	120 ft	Connect major centers of activity and provide longer-distance travel. Carry high proportion of area travel; also provides direct access to low intensity uses.
Developed Arterial	Swamp Pike ²	N/A	80 ft	Connect major centers of activity and move higher volumes of traffic. Only a portion of Swamp Pike has this classification.
Major Collector	36 ft	Residential 36 ft Nonresidential 40 ft	80 ft	Distribute trips from arterials through residential areas. Provide links between arterial, minor collectors, and local streets.
Minor Collector	30 ft	Residential 32 ft Nonresidential 33 ft	60 ft	Provide links between arterial, major collectors, local streets, nonresidential areas, and residential neighborhoods. Carry lower traffic volumes than Major Collectors.
Local Roads	28 ft	Residential 32 ft Nonresidential 28 ft	52 ft	Provide direct access to residential and nonresidential properties, connects to collector roads. Not intended for through-traffic.
Marginal Access	24 ft	24 ft	47 ft	Connect adjacent properties without requiring access to higher volume roadway.
Alley	22 ft	22 ft	36 ft	Rear access to nonresidential properties; not permitted in residential developments.
Private Roads	³	³	³	Similar to local roads; must be constructed to meet public street standards.
TC and TN District Roads	N/A	14 ft -72 ft based on classification and presence of on-street parking and/or medians	34 ft – 76 ft based on classification and presence of on-street parking and/or medians	Provides design criteria for major collectors/boulevards, local streets, and rear access lanes. Reduced lane widths compared to rest of township to facilitate compact urban form characteristic of a traditional small-town downtown.

¹As required by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation or the County of Montgomery.

²As required by the County of Montgomery.

³As determined by the Township Supervisors with direction from the Township Engineer.

*Cartway widths are required to increase by 8 feet for each lane of on-street parking, up to 16 feet.

Roadway Classification

Functional roadway classification is the grouping of roads into a hierarchy by the character of service and function they provide. Some roads serve to convey traffic within neighborhoods or between abutting properties (lower-order roads) while others serve to link larger areas to each other (higher-order roads). Other intermediate-order roads provide links between the higher-order roads while providing some access to properties. The New Hanover Zoning Ordinance identifies the classification of existing roadways in the township as belonging to the following categories: Rural Arterial Highway; Developed Arterial Highway; Major Collector Highway; Minor Collector Roads; Local Roads. Designation for Marginal Access Streets and Alleys is also provided, but few if any roadways fall under these classifications.

Separate street classifications and design standards are defined for roadways constructed in the TC-Town Center and TN-Traditional Neighborhood zoning districts. Design standards for these districts support narrower roadways with amenities like on-street parking, sidewalk bulb-outs, and center landscaped medians to reflect the more compact urban form permitted in these zoning districts, which differ from the more rural-suburban design standards required elsewhere in the township. All roadway classifications are identified and defined in the New Hanover Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance and are specific to the township. Different but similar classifications are assigned by Montgomery County and the state based on their interpretation of roadway characteristics, but for design and construction purposes for all new roads, the township's classification system is enforced.



Classification levels for new streets are based on projected traffic volumes, measured as ADT counts (Average Daily Traffic), which is the average number of vehicles traveling per day on the road. All other design considerations, from the cartway width, to UROW widths, to on-street parking, to driveway designs and intersection spacing are based on the assigned classification. When new developments are constructed, they must meet the design and width standards for that roadway classification. If the property is surrounded by older properties, it can create isolated improvement areas because the roadway is only widened along the property frontage of that parcel. Over time, adjacent properties may also be developed, and their roadway improvements will tie into existing ones, but this will happen piecemeal unless a larger effort is undertaken to provide improvements in a coordinated manner.

Another consequence of new development is that additional traffic is generated along existing roadways, which in some cases may experience ADTs in excess of what the roadways

may have originally been designed to handle. However, a broad-brush re-classification effort solely based on ADT may create a burden for property owners because it may trigger an increase in the required widths of the rights-of-way, which may impact property usage, building setback requirements, and access needs. Given the rate of new construction and completion of new housing developments over the past fifteen years, an updated analysis may be warranted to better understand the function of the roadways within the larger network rather than a strict reliance on ADT counts.

Previous studies and generally accepted patterns of traffic show that many of the township's major roadways funnel through-traffic to the region's other major highways. Swamp Pike and PA Route 73/Big Road serve as the primary means by which many residents in the region access Route 100. Route 663 connects residents to Route 422 to the south, and to Green Lane and Quakertown to the north. With the influx of new residents, an updated origin/destination study would

help to determine what is local traffic and what is regional traffic. Better understanding how people move within and through the township can lend greater nuance to how roadways should be classified. A determination can then be made as to if roads are properly assigned in their classifications and if those classifications make sense within the larger regional and county network. The existing classification definitions may need to be amended as well to better reflect current roadway conditions and desired look, feel, and function of roadways. Inconsistencies across required widths for existing and new streets should also be addressed. Updates to acceptable designs for each classification category could also be considered to create a street network that is most suitable for the land uses and needs of the community.

The PMRPC Comprehensive Plan identified some limitations of a traditional functional classification system, including the fact that an entire road is placed into a certain class based on select characteristics such as trip volumes relative to other roadways, but this classification may not be appropriate for all segments of that road. A more nuanced approach to classification systems and design criteria, such as those articulated in the Smart Transportation Guidebook, prepared in 2008 by PennDOT, NJ DOT, and DVRPC. The design standards included in this guidebook could serve as a model for future amendments to the township's classification and roadway design, which includes recommendations not just for the treatment and width of roadways themselves, but also landscaped buffers (verges) and sidewalks.

SMART TRANSPORTATION GUIDELINES FOR DIMENSIONAL ROADWAY AND ROADSIDE ELEMENTS

<i>Roadway Elements</i>	<i>Urban</i>	<i>Suburban</i>	<i>Rural</i>
Travel Lanes	10 to 11 ft lanes (11 ft as typical minimum) of 35 mph or below; 12 ft for roadways of 35 mph or above and high traffic volumes and heavy vehicles	11 to 12 ft	10 ft for lightly trafficked roadways; 11 to 12 ft for roadways with regularly trafficked roadways or with speeds above 35 mph
Shoulders	4 to 6 ft if no sidewalks are provided	8 to 10 ft, but 4 to 8 ft for suburban neighborhoods	8 to 10 ft for arterials, 4 to 8 ft for collector roadways
Medians	Provide depending upon access control, left turn, and "pedestrian refuge" needs. Left turn medians are 12 to 18 ft, pedestrian refuges 4 to 8 ft	Provide depending upon access control, left turn, and "pedestrian refuge" needs. Left turn medians are 12 to 18 ft, pedestrian refuges 4 to 8 ft	Design depending upon access control, left turn needs
On-Street Parking	7 to 8 ft parallel parking; consider in town center contexts	Provide on-street parking as needed in suburban neighborhoods	N/A
Grass Buffers	4 to 6 ft along neighborhood streets, typically absent in town/village centers	4 to 8 ft	N/A
Sidewalk	Strive for 6 to 10 ft in town/village centers, 5 to 8 ft in town/village neighborhoods	Minimum 5 ft	N/A
Bike Lanes	5 to 6 ft	5 to 6 ft	N/A

Source: PMRPC Comprehensive Plan

Swamp Pike

Swamp Pike began as a toll road in the eighteenth century and was one of the first major routes through the rural part of the county. Today, it carries the most traffic through the township, with PA Route 663 and PA Route 73/Big Road being the other top-traveled roadways for vehicle traffic. Swamp Pike carries just as much traffic as Route 100 but has dramatically less capacity; it is only two lanes wide with limited turning lanes, and almost no shoulder compared to Route 100, which is a divided multi-lane highway. Development patterns on Swamp Pike over the past century have established conditions, such as businesses and churches with limited frontage to allow road widening, and individual housing lots with individual driveways taking access from Swamp Pike, that are challenging to change and costly to implement. These limitations restrict capacity building along the pike through traditional means and it is anticipated that increased development in the region will continue to add volume and congestion to the roadway.



Launched in 2020, the Montco Pikes Project is a new undertaking by the Montgomery County Planning Commission and its consultants, in coordination with municipal stakeholders, to analyze six county “pikes” and provide recommendations to modernize those roadways. The segment of Swamp Pike that passes through the township is owned by the county and is included in this study. All elements of the roadway will be analyzed, from the vehicular network, to bicycle and pedestrian amenities, to identify necessary improvements to meet the future transportation needs along these county corridors.

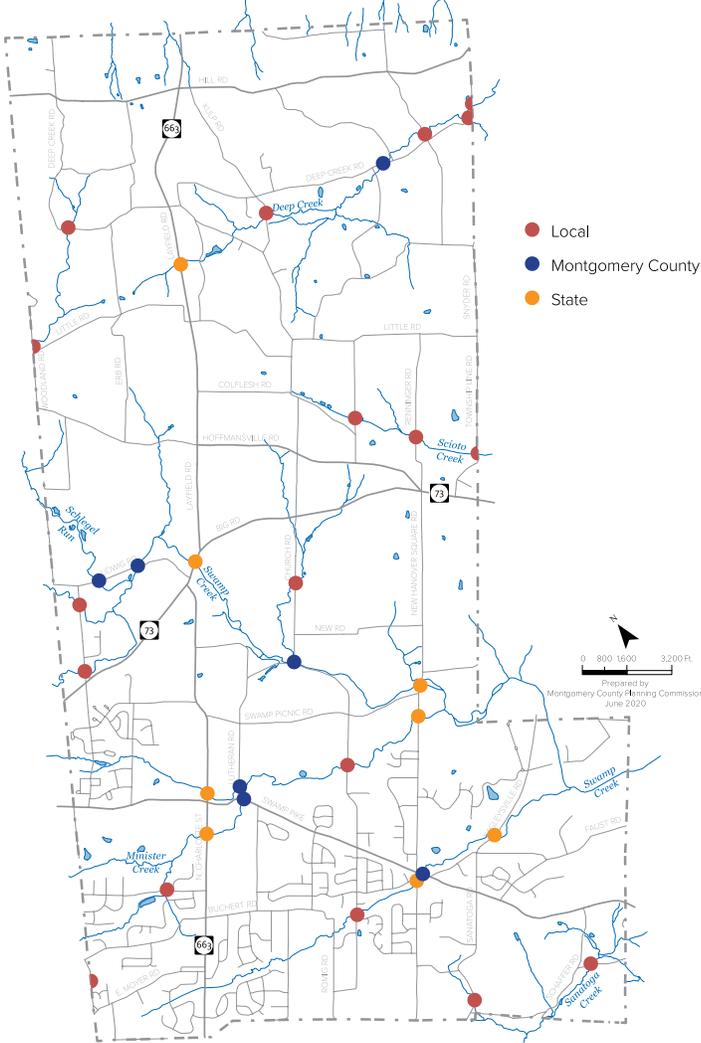
Bridges

The township is pursuing a bridge replacement program to use state and grant funding to bring all six township-owned bridges up to suitable levels of operation. Montgomery County owns seven bridges in New Hanover and PennDOT owns seven. Current county bridge projects include the replacement of the bridge crossing Swamp Creek on Swamp Pike between New Hanover Square Road and Wagner Road; the bridge crossing Minister Creek on Lutheran Road near the intersection with Swamp Pike and; the bridge crossing Schlegel Run on Ludwig Road near the intersection with Middle Creek Road. Because bridge replacement projects close down sections of the roadways and require detours for weeks to months on end, the township will need to coordinate with the county’s Roads and Bridges Department to ensure detours are planned in a way to minimize traffic disruption to the greatest extent possible. It is anticipated that these projects will be completed by 2025, and the average lifespan of bridges is about 70 years.

PennDOT has plans to replace the bridge on PA Route 663/North Charlotte Street that spans over a tributary of Minister Creek just north of the intersection with Swamp Pike. The intended scope of work for this project will include widening of the bridge to allow sidewalks and a constructing a left turn lane for southbound traffic to turn left onto eastbound Swamp Pike. This lane would then tie into the dedicated left turn lane recently constructed at the intersection.



MAP: 25 || *Bridge Ownership*



Non-Motorized Transportation Network

Walkability

Sidewalks represent an important component of the transportation network. Beyond providing a means for outdoor exercise, the provision of a connected and well-developed sidewalk and/or multi-use trails creates an alternative for residents to access nearby destinations without having to drive. Not all areas of the township would benefit from a formal sidewalk network; in the more rural areas where properties are spaced further apart, sidewalks provide limited benefit to the community. In the past, little investment was made in sidewalk development and so a majority of the township has no sidewalk, although many of the newer residential subdivisions have internal sidewalk networks on one or both sides of the street, and some newer commercial developments have sidewalks along their frontages.



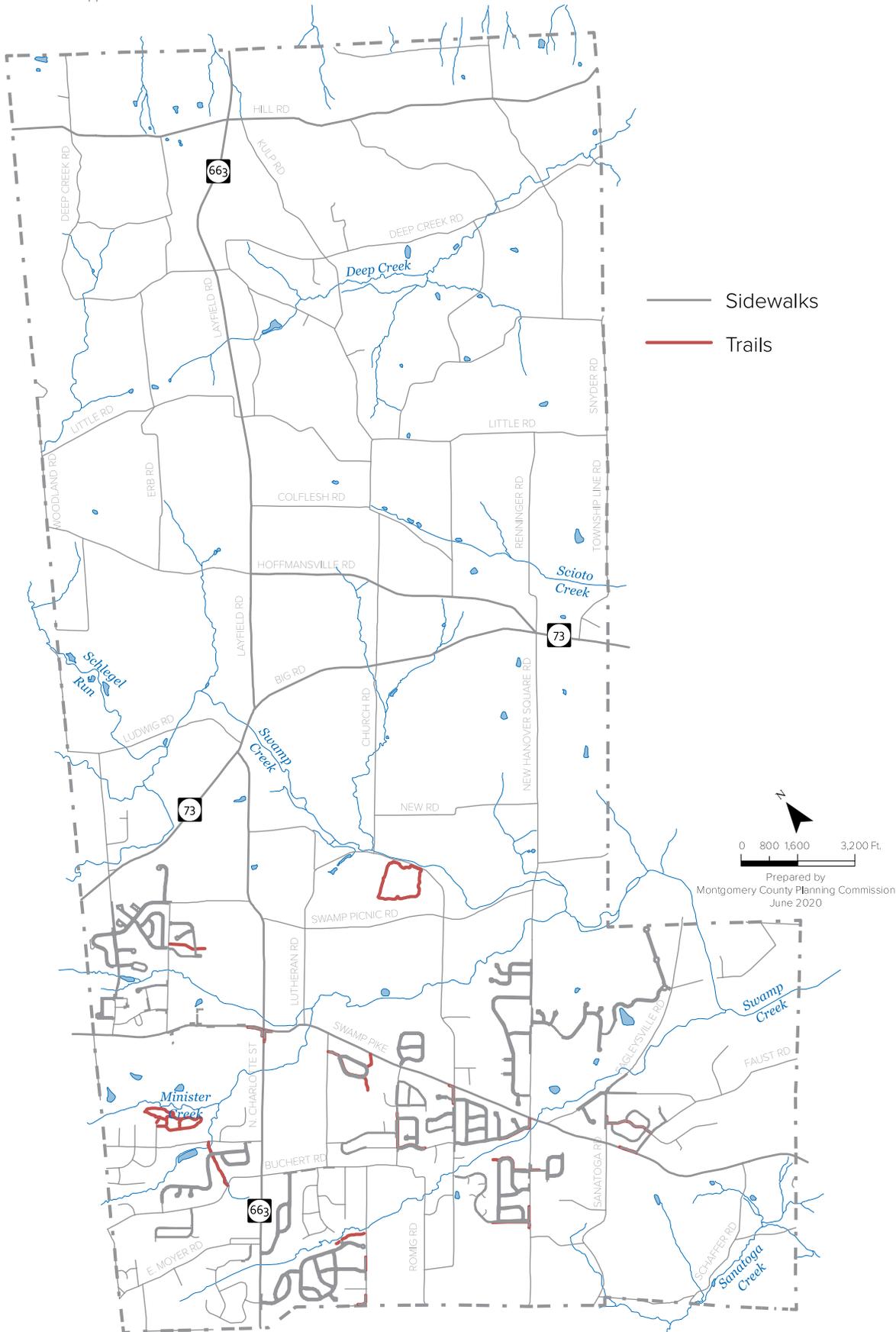
The township should continue to prioritize the development of sidewalks in all residential subdivisions and nonresidential development where appropriate. These sidewalk and path networks need to connect with one another to gain the maximum benefit and to link adjacent properties. Where formal sidewalks are impractical or infeasible, trail systems made of asphalt pathways or other construction material trails should be installed to function as the pedestrian route. The township should also prioritize sidewalks and other connected pedestrian/multi-use pathways within a half mile around public schools and parks, as well as other key commercial destinations.

Sidewalk design should be tailored to fit the context of the development and the surrounding community to provide the greatest sense of safety and accommodation to users. Sidewalks or paths along busier roadways or commercial areas should be wide, clear of obstructions, and separated from travel lanes with a landscaped verge. Verges are beneficial in that they can be the location of street trees or even serve as locations for stormwater management facilities, and can also house utility poles, hydrants, electrical boxes, or other impediments that would otherwise encroach on sidewalks.

Additional pedestrian safety measures should include proper ADA curb ramps and painted crosswalks at intersections. Crosswalks are important to provide increased visibility to pedestrians by alerting drivers of where pedestrians will be crossing the roadway. Using continental-style crosswalks that contain solid white blocks parallel to the line of sight has been shown to be more noticeable to approaching motorists than standard crosswalks with only parallel lines, which can blend with other roadway markings. Decorative crosswalks, like stamped brick or painted designs, are attractive but may require more frequent maintenance to keep them in good conditions and should only be used in an appropriate context where traffic volumes are low.



MAP: 26 || Sidewalk and Bike Trails



Bikeability

As part of the 2015 update to the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan, the township adopted a Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan that identifies a connected network of trails linking residential areas to parks and open space areas, and along major roadways. All new developments are required to establish 8-foot-wide bike paths along their property frontage or pay a fee-in-lieu. Paths can be on-road or off-road based on the posted speed limit of that roadway, but given the complexities in widening some of the roadways, and due in part to preferences of residents and township staff, off-road paths, or “side paths” are the preferred bicycle trail infrastructure. As new developments are completed, portions of the off-road pathway network are being completed, but leave dead-ends at the edge of properties. As more of the pathway network is installed, the township should evaluate priority areas to fill in gaps where it is missing to create a more connected and complete pathway system.

A benefit to the side path is that it functions as a multi-use path suitable not just for cyclists, but also for pedestrians. Where possible and desired, especially along more heavily trafficked roadways, a path of at least 10-12

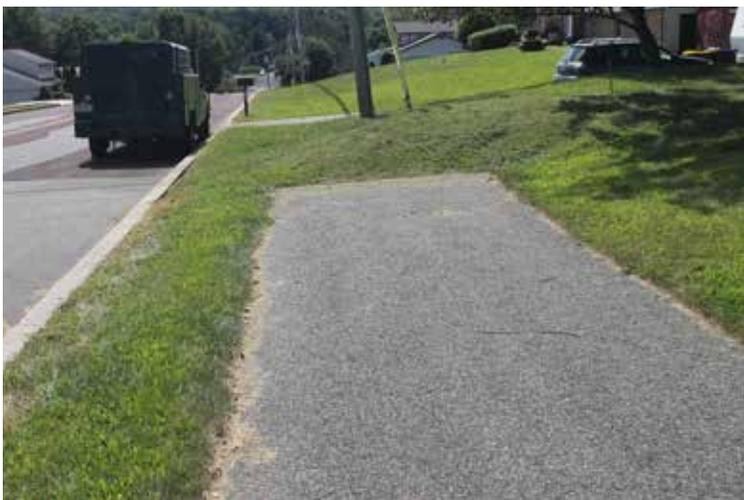
feet should be installed, which is the width standards recommended by the Montgomery County Planning Commission in its bike plan, *Bike Montco*. If there are opportunities for road widening projects on any routes identified in either the township’s or county’s bicycle plan, dedicated bike facilities, such as a protected or buffered bike lane or wide shoulder should be installed on-street to fortify the bike network.

The incremental installation of bike paths or multi-use trails along roadway frontages as properties are developed or redeveloped will help the county fulfill its goal to see bike networks established across the county. PA Route 73/Big Road is identified as a priority bicycle route in *Bike Montco*. Other roadways identified as part of the Planned Bicycle Network include PA Route 663; Moyer Road west of PA Route 663/North Charlotte Street; Fagleysville Road from PA Route 73/Big Road to Swamp Pike; Sanatoga Road south of Swamp Pike; Little Road across the township to Hoffmansville Road; Deep Creek Road east of PA Route 663/Layfield Road; and Hill Road at the northern end of the township. *Bike Montco* provides recommended bicycle facility types based on the different roadway types. Most of the local roads in the township can be characterized as “low stress” for bicyclists, meaning the

traffic volumes and speed limits are low enough that even without a dedicated on-road bike lane, most cyclists would feel comfortable riding with existing traffic. For the more heavily trafficked roadways, paved shoulders of at least six feet wide are recommended, if not a dedicated bicycle lane, to provide greater separation between vehicles and bicyclists and increase safety. Many roadways in the township currently have no shoulder area. Road improvements should consider the feasibility and desirability of widening designated roads to create shoulders to accommodate bicyclists.

Trails

Trails serve an important recreation function as well as contribute toward creating a well-developed and accessible non-motorized transportation network. As previously discussed, trails can be used to connect residential developments to nearby community destinations like parks, schools, and other residential neighborhoods. Trails are discussed in greater depth in the Parks and Open Space chapter, but notably, some of the proposed bike and pedestrian trails identified in the New Hanover Bicycle and Pedestrian Trails Map correspond with primary bike routes and multi-use trails identified in the county’s bike plan and walkability plan.



An excerpt from Bike Montco: Recommended bicycle facility types

Average Daily Trips (ADT)	Roadway Type	SPEED LIMIT		
		25 MPH	35 MPH	40–55 MPH
<p>Least</p> <p>Most</p>	Local Rural/Scenic	Marked shared lane Shared lane (no provisions)	Paved shoulder Marked shared lane Shared lane (no provisions)	
	Local Urban	Bicycle lane Bicycle boulevard Marked shared lane	Buffered bicycle lane Bicycle lane Marked shared lane	
	Collector Rural/Scenic	Buffered bicycle lane Bicycle lane Paved shoulder Wide outside lane	Buffered bicycle lane Bicycle lane Paved shoulder Wide outside lane	
	Collector Urban	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	
	Minor Arterial	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*
	Principal Arterial		Protected bicycle lane Buffered bicycle lane Paved shoulder*	Protected bicycle lane Buffered bicycle lane Paved shoulder*
	Shared-use Paths 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.

NOTE: This table lists the suggested bicycle facilities in order of most protection to least protection. Whenever possible, the facility that provides the most protection should be utilized.

Safe Routes to School

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is a program intended to promote walking and bicycling to school through infrastructure improvements, enforcement, tools, safety education, and incentives to encourage walking and bicycling to school. New Hanover Township has limited connectivity between residential areas and the public schools, but increasing housing development, especially in the area surrounding Boyertown Middle School East on PA Route 73/Big Road, could justify installing sidewalks or trails to enable students to walk to school. Grant funding through the SFTS program is offered by the US Department of Transportation and can be used for infrastructure, outreach, and education.

Public Transportation

There is no public transportation option within the township. The PMRPC Comprehensive Plan notes that an extension of the SEPTA Manayunk/Norristown regional rail line has been proposed that would terminate in Wyomissing and include a stop in Pottstown Borough. This rail extension, known as the Schuylkill Valley Metro, could provide an alternate commuting option to relieve congestion on US 422. However, there is limited funding for such a rail extension project, and it is unlikely to happen in the near future. SEPTA also operates Bus Route 93, connecting Pottstown Borough with the Norristown Transportation Center via Collegetown along the Ridge Pike/High Street corridor.

Regionally, the Pottstown Area Rapid Transit (PART) operates bus service within Pottstown and adjacent municipalities, but does not currently serve destinations in New Hanover Township. In 2019, a proposed amendment to the bus routes created the Orange Line that extended service into Gilbertsville, Douglass Township and Boyertown via Route 100, Moyer Road, and Gilbertsville Road, but no service was extended into New Hanover Township. In the future, if and when the New Hanover Town Center is constructed, the demand for transit services and enhanced points of destination in the township may warrant extension of the PART routes. There are a number of benefits to introducing public transportation services to this region, as heavy traffic along roads like Swamp Pike and especially Route 422 could potentially be lessened by offering alternative modes of transportation for workers traveling to employment sites in places like King of Prussia and Philadelphia. Other transit-supportive infrastructure may be more feasible in the near term, such as park and rides for carpoolers that could be adapted to accommodate a bus stop.

Roadway Improvements

Roadways have a lifespan of about 15 to 25 years, depending on the pavement treatment and general wear and tear. Roads with greater traffic volumes will deteriorate faster than roads with lower traffic volumes, but they all need repair eventually. In addition to this general maintenance, improvements that increase the safety of motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians or improves circulation patterns to reduce congestion are critical investments to the roadway network. Roadway improvements have been identified through various studies over the years by the township, the PMRPC, the county, the state, and DVRPC.

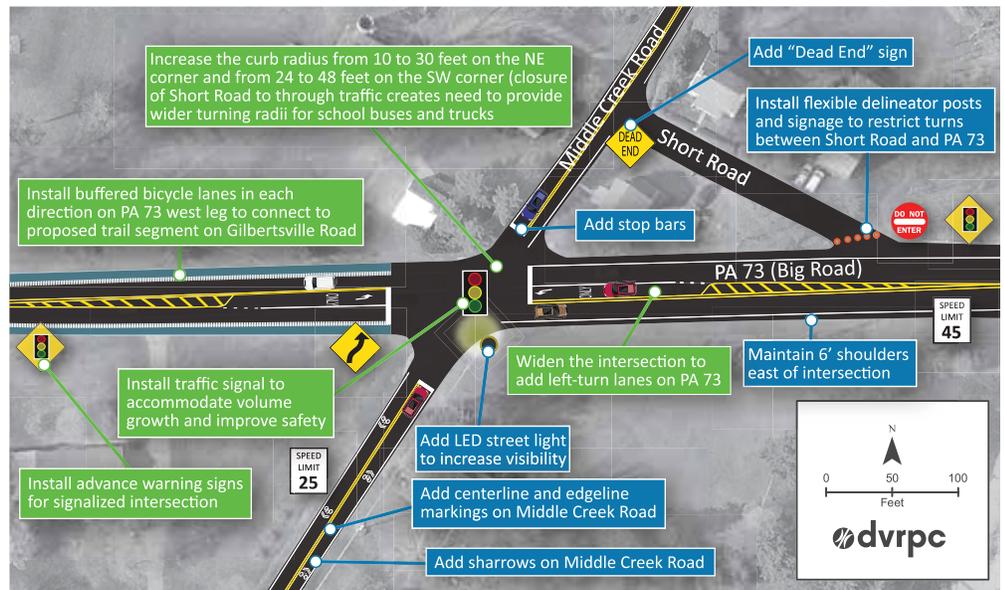
General considerations for the future roadway network from the township's 1998 Comprehensive Plan still hold true today, and tie into other recommendations made within this chapter, especially the recommendations to consider the impact new development will have on the roadway system as a whole. If nonresidential uses continue to remain limited in the township, it should be anticipated that roadway traffic will continue to concentrate on the routes that lead to major shopping centers and places of employment.

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Improvements to address capacity to accommodate anticipated new development (traffic signals, widening, etc.)
- 2 Access management techniques
- 3 Land use options that decrease need for trips/length of trips
- 4 Promotion of alternative transportation means
- 5 Need to protect the carrying capacity of road system and consider the impact on the system when development proposals would increase traffic

The 2015 PMRPC Comprehensive Plan identified “County Recommended Projects” that are not currently in the state’s Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), but are priority projects that will be nominated for future TIP funding. One project in New Hanover was identified as a priority project and has since been completed. It involved widening PA Route 663/North Charlotte Street to accommodate exclusive left turn lanes on both approaches to Swamp Pike. Future bridge projects are planned to tie into these completed improvements to further extend the length of the dedicated turn lane northbound.

DVRPC completed the Pottstown Region Traffic Analysis in 2019 and identified one project in New Hanover Township. This study was conducted as part of the Pottstown Area Regional Plan Development element of DVRPCs work program to identify potential roadway safety and improvement projects to address traffic growth in the region. The intersection of PA Route 73/Big Road and Middle Creek Road was identified as a location of transportation concerns based on the project impact of future development. Proposed intersection improvements include the installation of a traffic signal, road widening to add left-turn lanes on PA Route 73/Big Road (for turns onto Middle Creek Road), sidewalks and ADA curb ramps, and a buffered bicycle lane on PA Route 73/Big Road west of the intersection.



Two specific intersection projects were identified in *Montco 2040: A Shared Vision* as “vision roadway” projects. These are projects that did not have funding as of 2015 but should be a priority for receiving funds. Both of these intersections are included in the township’s Act 209 update.

- Improve the intersection at PA 663/Layfield Road at PA 73/Big Road; and
- Widen the intersection at PA 663/Layfield Road at Hoffmansville Road to improve alignment and sight distance and to allow for future turn lanes.



Transportation Impact Fee (Act 209)

New Hanover Township has enacted a Transportation Impact Fee ordinance, as authorized by the PA Municipalities Planning Code. This ordinance enables the township to collect fees from development projects to help fund the off-site roadway and intersection improvements required as a result of increased traffic attributable to new development. Fees are based on how many new weekday trips a development is projected to generate. These collected funds are earmarked for specific roadway improvement projects rather than being included in the general funds. Collected 209 fees can also be used as match

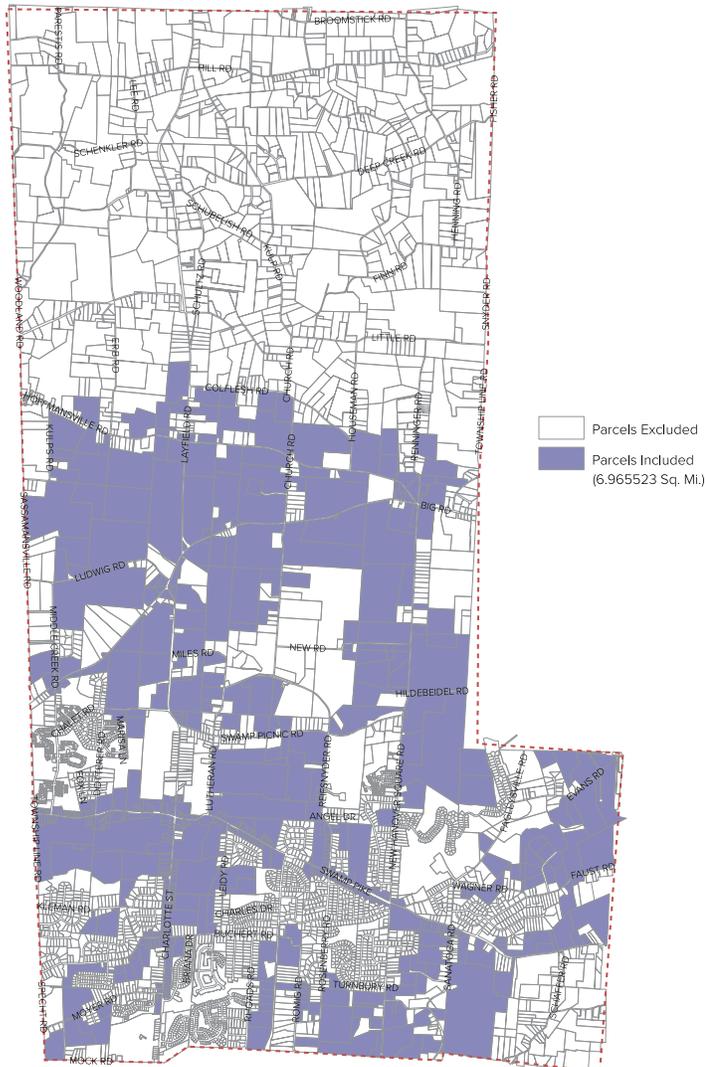
The Transportation Impact Fee ordinance includes a list of identified roadway and intersection projects necessary to accommodate future anticipated traffic and is updated on a regular basis to reflect completed projects, newly identified projects, and cost updates. This list is created based on the results from a multi-step planning process that includes an advisory committee (TIFAC), and includes the following components:

- ▶ **Land Use Assumptions Report** – predicts anticipated growth and land development for residential and non-residential land uses within the designated transportation service area over a time period of at least five years.
- ▶ **Roadway Sufficiency Analysis** – evaluates roadway and intersection conditions to determine current and predicted levels of service. Specifies desired future levels of service for each roadway or intersection.
- ▶ **Capital Improvements Plan** – lists improvements needed to achieve the desired level of service. Costs for each project are calculated which are then used to determine the impact fee assessed.

dollars towards transportation grants to leverage additional funding for transportation projects.

In addition to the transportation impact fees collected from new developments for intersection and roadway improvements, the township also receives funding from the Municipal Liquid Fuels (MLF) program to pay for maintenance, repair, construction, and reconstruction of public roads. The amount of funding each municipality receives is based on its population and miles of road on their approved Liquid Fuels Inventory.

MAP: 27 || *Act 209 Boundaries*



The township first adopted a Traffic Impact Fee ordinance in the 1990s which was updated in 2005 and 2018. The forecasts from the 2018 updated ordinance projected development and traffic improvements through the year 2030; it is likely that another Act 209 update will need to be completed around that time to reflect completed projects and evaluate the changing development conditions in the township. However, the Act 209 report recommends the TIFAC continue to meet periodically and make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors to update the Capital Improvements Plan or impact fees based on new subsequent development, after completion of identified projects, or as a result of any significant changes to the land use assumptions, costs of improvements, or projected revenues needed for the improvements construction.

Of the studied intersections identified by the TIFAC, four intersections were found to meet the preferred level of service and therefore no improvements were identified. Some of the identified projects are already underway and will be completed before 2030. Some project scopes, like the proposed roundabout at PA Route 73/Big Road and PA Route 663/Layfield Road, will likely need to be amended based on evolving information and coordination with nearby developments. This underscores the need for continued review and revisions to the project list on an as-needed basis to address changing needs and conditions in the township.



SUMMARY OF 2018 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PLAN

	<i>Intersection</i>	<i>Existing Traffic Control</i>	<i>Improvements Required</i>	
			<i>Pass-Through</i>	<i>Development</i>
1	Big Road (SR 73) and Middle Creek Road	Stop Sign	Install traffic control signal	No improvements recommended
2	Big Road (SR 73) and North Charlotte Street (SR 663)	Stop Sign	Install traffic control signal and install westbound left-turn lane*	Optimize the signal timings/phasing, install an additional eastbound through lane and northbound right-turn lane
3	Big Road (SR 73) and Layfield Road (SR 663)	Stop Sign	Install a traffic control signal along with a separate eastbound left-turn lane* Install a single-lane roundabout with a southbound bypass lane*	Install an additional westbound through lane that will be dropped as the westbound left-turn lane at the adjacent intersection of Big Road (SR 73)/North Charlotte Street (SR 663)
4	Layfield Road (SR 663) and Hoffmansville Road	Signal	No improvements identified.	
5	Big Road (SR 073) and Hoffmansville Road/New Hanover Square Road	Signal	Optimize the signal timings/phasing and install a northbound left-turn lane	Optimize the signal timings/phasing and install a westbound right-turn lane
6	North Charlotte Street (SR 663) and Dotterer Road	Stop Sign	No improvements identified.	
7	Swamp Pike and Middle Creek Road	Stop Sign	Install a westbound right-turn lane and realign the Middle Creek Road approach (Developer Project)	Install traffic control signal and install eastbound left-turn lane
8	Swamp Pike and Dotterer Road	Stop Sign	No improvements recommended as a traffic control signal is not warranted	Install eastbound left-turn lane, restrict northbound left-turn movements via a channelized island
9	Swamp Pike and North Charlotte Street (SR 663)	Signal	Optimize the signal timings/phasing	Optimize the signal timings/phasing and install an additional eastbound and westbound through lane
10	Swamp Pike and Leidy Road	Stop Sign	No improvements recommended	No improvements recommended as a traffic control signal is not warranted
11	Swamp Pike and Romig Road	Stop Sign	No improvements recommended	Install traffic control signal
12	Swamp Pike and Rosenberry Road/Reifsnnyder Road	Stop Sign	No improvements recommended	No improvements recommended as a traffic control signal is not warranted
13	Swamp Pike and New Hanover Square Road	Signal	Optimize the signal timing/phasing and install eastbound and westbound left-turn lanes	Optimize traffic signal timings/phasing and install westbound right-turn lane
14	Swamp Pike and Wagner Road	Stop Sign	Install an eastbound left-turn lane	N/A
15	Swamp Pike and Sanatoga Road/Fagleysville Road	Signal		Optimize the signal timings/phasing
16	North Charlotte Street (SR 663) and Kleman Road	Stop Sign	No improvements identified.	
17	North Charlotte Street (SR 663) and Buchert Road	Signal	No improvements identified.	
18	North Charlotte Street (SR 663) and Moyer Road	Stop Sign	Install traffic control signal and install a northbound left-turn lane*	N/A

Source: Pennsylvania Act 209 Transportation Impact Fee Study for New Hanover Township: Roadway Sufficiency Analyses Report and Transportation Capital Improvement Plan, 2019.

*Indicates current Township Act 209 project.

PERCENT OF HOUSEHOLDS BY THE NUMBER OF VEHICLES PER HOUSEHOLD

<i>Available Vehicles</i>	<i>New Hanover Township</i>	<i>Douglass Township</i>	<i>West Pottsgrove Township</i>	<i>Upper Pottsgrove Township</i>	<i>Lower Pottsgrove Township</i>	<i>Pottstown Borough</i>	<i>Montgomery County</i>
No vehicle available	0.3%	0.6%	4.1%	0.0%	2.0%	7.1%	5.9%
1 vehicle available	7.2%	12.7%	25.9%	9.2%	17.0%	33.7%	31.9%
2 vehicles available	49.3%	40.4%	39.9%	45.9%	38.8%	37.8%	42.4%
3 or more vehicles available	43.2%	46.3%	30.1%	44.9%	42.1%	21.5%	19.8%

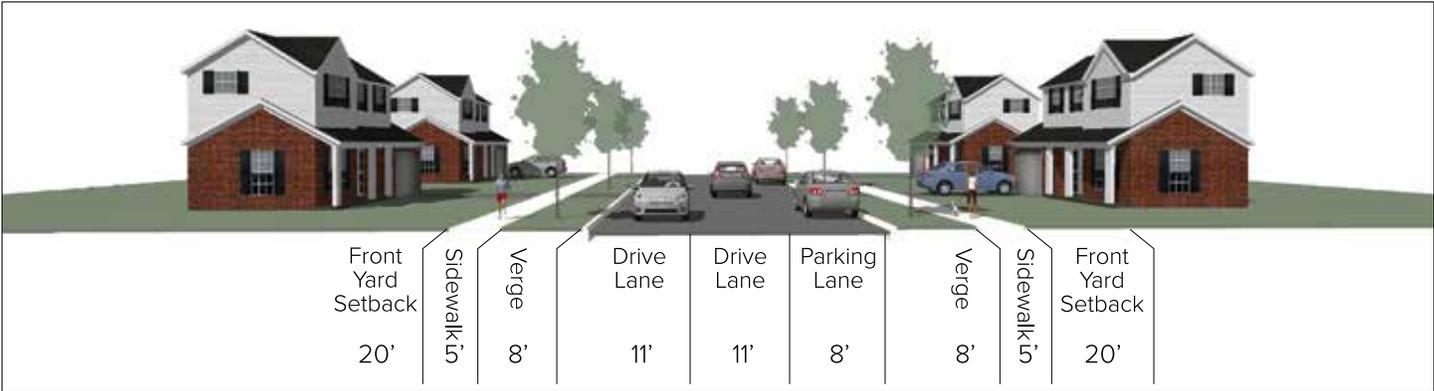
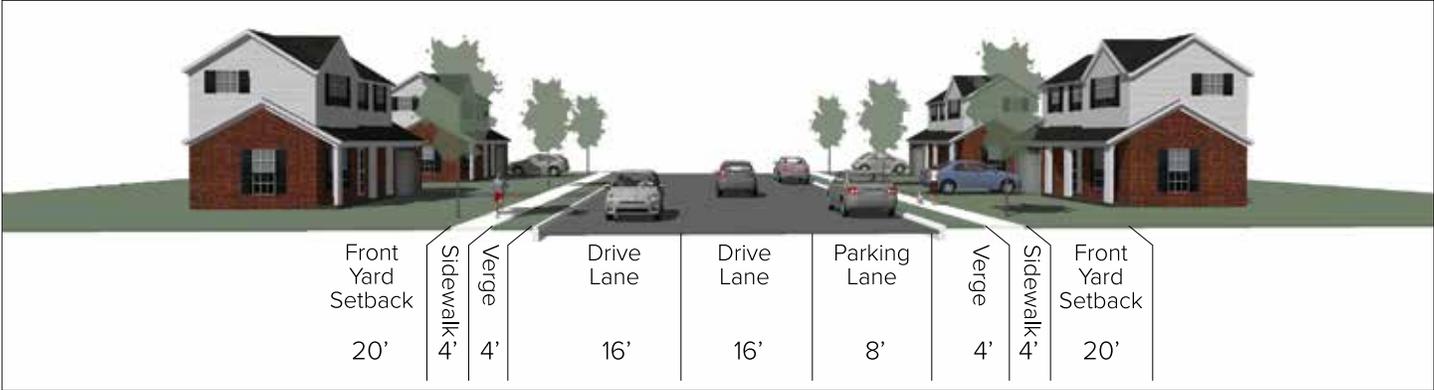
Car Ownership

Residents in New Hanover Township have comparable car ownership rates to other townships in the region, with over 90% of all households owning at least two or more cars. However, New Hanover has more than double the percentage of homes with three or more cars than the county as a whole. This is likely because there are fewer alternative transportation options in the township and a personal vehicle is a necessity for every household member of driving age.

What this also means is that most households will have greater demands for car storage in New Hanover than in other areas of the county. Almost all homes in the township have an attached or detached garage, but many residents utilize some or all of their garage space as household storage. Cars are then parked in the driveway or on the street. Increasingly, new single-family detached residential developments are being constructed that prohibit on-street parking on one or both sides of the road but provide off-street parking lots to accommodate overflow and guest parking, or extra cartway width has to be provided for on-street parking. Parking lots provided within residential developments are generally not centrally located and are therefore inconvenient to use for many homes.

They do not provide the flexibility to shift the location of higher-and lower-demand parking needs in the same way that on-street parking does. They may also cause nearby homes to be less desirable because of the commercial feel they lend to a residential street. Both parking lots and unnecessarily wide roads create more impervious surface and may restrict more desirable road and lot orientation layouts. Wide roadways can also create an “open road” feeling that contributes to speeding in an area that should be more focused on pedestrian-oriented neighborhood design. While it is important to maintain enough clear roadway for emergency vehicles, roadways should be designed to be compatible with the surrounding land uses and should allow for greater flexibility for on-street parking without the need for parking lots. The township should consider amending these design standards to better meet parking demands in residential neighborhoods.





The design standards outlined in the Smart Transportation Guidelines for suburban roads recommends an 11 to 12 foot travel lane with a 7 to 8 foot parallel parking lane for on-street parking. Given these lane widths, a two-lane road with on-street parking on one side could fit in a 32-foot wide cartway. However, current roadway standards for a new residential local road require a 32-foot cartway with no parking (equals 14 foot wide travel lanes), or a 40 foot cartway with on-street parking on one side and a 48 foot cartway with on-street parking on both sides. To provide additional context, this would be about equal to the entire width of the eastbound or westbound side of Route 422.

In new developments where the Performance Standard Development zoning standards are being applied, the increase in the cartway widths for on-street parking detracts from the preservation of open space and cozier neighborhood feel intended by the zoning ordinance and permitted housing types. The township should consider if roadway standards for these kinds of developments should be more tailored to suit the desired community character of these neighborhoods rather than rely on existing roadway designs more suited to more traditional subdivisions with larger lot sizes.

MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION TO WORK							
<i>Means of Transportation</i>	<i>New Hanover Township</i>	<i>Douglass Township</i>	<i>West Pottsgrove Township</i>	<i>Upper Pottsgrove Township</i>	<i>Lower Pottsgrove Township</i>	<i>Pottstown Borough</i>	<i>Montgomery County</i>
Drive Alone	85.2%	93.2%	84.7%	84.8%	85.9%	73.8%	78.6%
Carpool	6.6%	3.3%	8.4%	9.1%	7.0%	11.3%	6.6%
Public Transportation	0.9%	0.1%	0.6%	0.3%	0.5%	5.0%	5.4%
Walk	1.0%	1.5%	1.6%	0.8%	1.5%	4.9%	2.4%
Other	0.2%	0.2%	2.1%	0.0%	0.3%	1.7%	0.8%
Work from Home	6.2%	5.0%	2.5%	5.1%	4.7%	3.3%	6.1%
Mean Commute Travel Time to Work (minutes)	35.2	32.5	30.4	31.8	31.0	27.8	28.7

The vast majority of residents drive alone to their place of employment, with very few using alternative means of transportation. Carpooling is consistent with rates within the county as a whole, but the rate is less than all but one of the other Montgomery County municipalities in the PMRPC region. New Hanover also has the highest mean commute time to work of all nearby municipalities and the county as a whole, likely because residential areas are not located near large workforce centers and there are limited employment opportunities within the township. The constrained roadway networks reduces the route options residents have to commute to work, and increased traffic and congestion could add delays to the commuting time.

Interestingly, New Hanover also has a higher pre-pandemic work from home rate than other Montgomery County municipalities, just slightly above the county as a whole. Residents who have the option to work from home may choose to live in the township because of the other community benefits and lifestyles it offers, so proximity to jobs may be less important. Residents may also choose to seek jobs that offer the option to work from home if they cannot find work within an acceptable commuting range and/or are unable to locate closer to their places of existing or desired employment.



Access Management

The 1998 Comprehensive Plan recommended access management techniques as a consideration for the future roadway network. Access management refers to roadway designs and decisions intended to limit the number of conflict points along roadways and at intersections to reduce movements that unnecessarily impede through-traffic and provide enhanced safety for turning movements. Conflict points arise when motorists are attempting to turn onto or off a roadway, and roadway designs don't allow for enough distance or clarity to make these movements safely. Some examples of access management include reducing the overall number of driveway entrances into a single property or along a roadway segment and formalizing entrance points through curbing or other barriers to define entrance/exit points. Driveways should also be spaced to allow for safe deceleration and acceleration, or adjacent properties can share one common driveway entrance. Restricting turning movements can also help reduce conflict points with traffic moving in the opposite direction, such as restricting



Reimagining Roadways

New driving and technology-based platforms may fundamentally change the way people get around. Ride sharing services may change the motivations some people have for personal car ownership, but it is unlikely there will be a radical shift in the driving and mobility behaviors of New Hanover residents within the next twenty years because of the lack of nearby destinations and density that make ride sharing services economical. However, advances in autonomous vehicles or other automotive technology may reduce the need for individual car ownership. This may change the way residents engage with current transportation systems by eliminating the need for car storage on properties and reducing congestion. While it is too early to plan for these theoretical advancements, it is important to consider how widespread adoption of a new transportation model would impact the existing roadway infrastructure network.

left turns on certain roadways, and dedicated turning lanes would allow for vehicles to move out of through-lanes while waiting to execute a turn.

Access management is more important for higher order roadway classifications, because more turning points results in greater delays and congestion. Historic development on arterials like Swamp Pike and Hoffmansville Road where residential homes take direct access from the major roadways are challenging to correct. The development of vehicular connections between adjacent properties and the development of marginal access streets or reverse frontage roadways would improve access management by providing alternative driving routes connecting lower-order streets, relocating vehicular driveway entrances to the rear of properties, and limiting the number of individual turning points along arterial roads. Residential zoning districts with arterial highways, like the R-2 District north of Little Road, have the potential to see additional development of residential land uses that create new driveway access points on these major roadways. Reverse frontage roads or alleys may not be suitable or desirable in those areas of the township, but appropriate design standards should be applied to increase safety for all roadway users navigating these access points.

Access management techniques should also be applied to nonresidential uses. Limited commercial development within the township has kept new access points to a minimum, and current zoning districts limit the potential for new commercial development to designated areas of Swamp Pike, PA Route 73/Big Road, PA Route 663/North Charlotte Street, and Hoffmansville Road. The majority of these property frontages are on state

or county roads, which would require a HOP and review by the agency with jurisdiction, which means that it is unlikely there will be unrestricted new access points. However, any new access point should be considered not just as it functions for that property, but the impact it has on existing patterns of access on surrounding properties. Neighboring commercial properties can create shared parking areas and/or connect via marginal access streets to consolidate access points and build improved connectivity.



Complete Streets

A Complete Streets policy aims to enable safe access for all roadway users while balancing their diverse needs. By adopting this policy, a municipality demonstrates its commitment to design and provide a range of transportation amenities to facilitate multi-modal transportation. Design standards are contextually specific for their locations, so a complete street in the township will look vastly different than a complete street in Pottstown Borough, but the end goal is to incorporate designs to improve safety and efficiency. Amenities can include:

- ▶ Wide sidewalks along both sides of roadways to increase pedestrian safety and comfort.
- ▶ Bump-outs at corners and intersections to reduce the crossing distance for pedestrians over roadways, or median islands to serve as pedestrian refuges over wider roadways.

The Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC), working with a host of public, non-profit, and industry leaders, developed a Complete Streets policy for county-owned roads, bridges, and facilities. The policy calls for MCPC to advocate for a Complete Streets design approach when working with partner agencies on their projects, whether public or private. The township may wish to adopt a Complete Streets policy for all local roadways as a complement to the County Complete Streets policy.

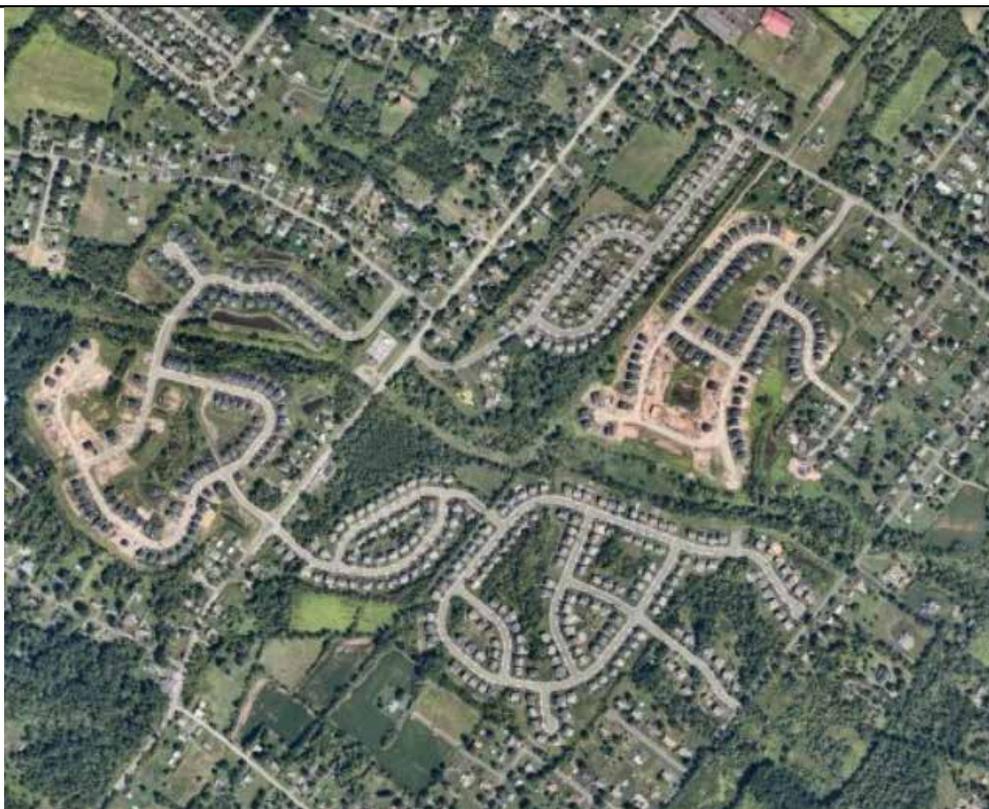


Building Connections

Creating new roadway connections between local streets and minor collector streets provides an alternate route to disperse traffic that would otherwise spill over onto higher order roads and provides additional choice to motorists to select a route that best gets them to where they need to go. Most new residential subdivisions have been built with limited capacity to connect into adjacent properties which creates a network of cul-de-sacs and dead-end streets. The Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance prohibits new residential streets from tying into an existing residential street if the expected ADT from the new development will exceed the allowable ADT level for the existing street classification. This may unintentionally create a condition where a logical roadway connection is not permitted where it should be to create a more robust local roadway network rather than funneling all traffic onto already over-burdened arterial highways. This outcome hinders, not improves, access management by creating new driveway entrances to an increasing number of isolated residential developments.

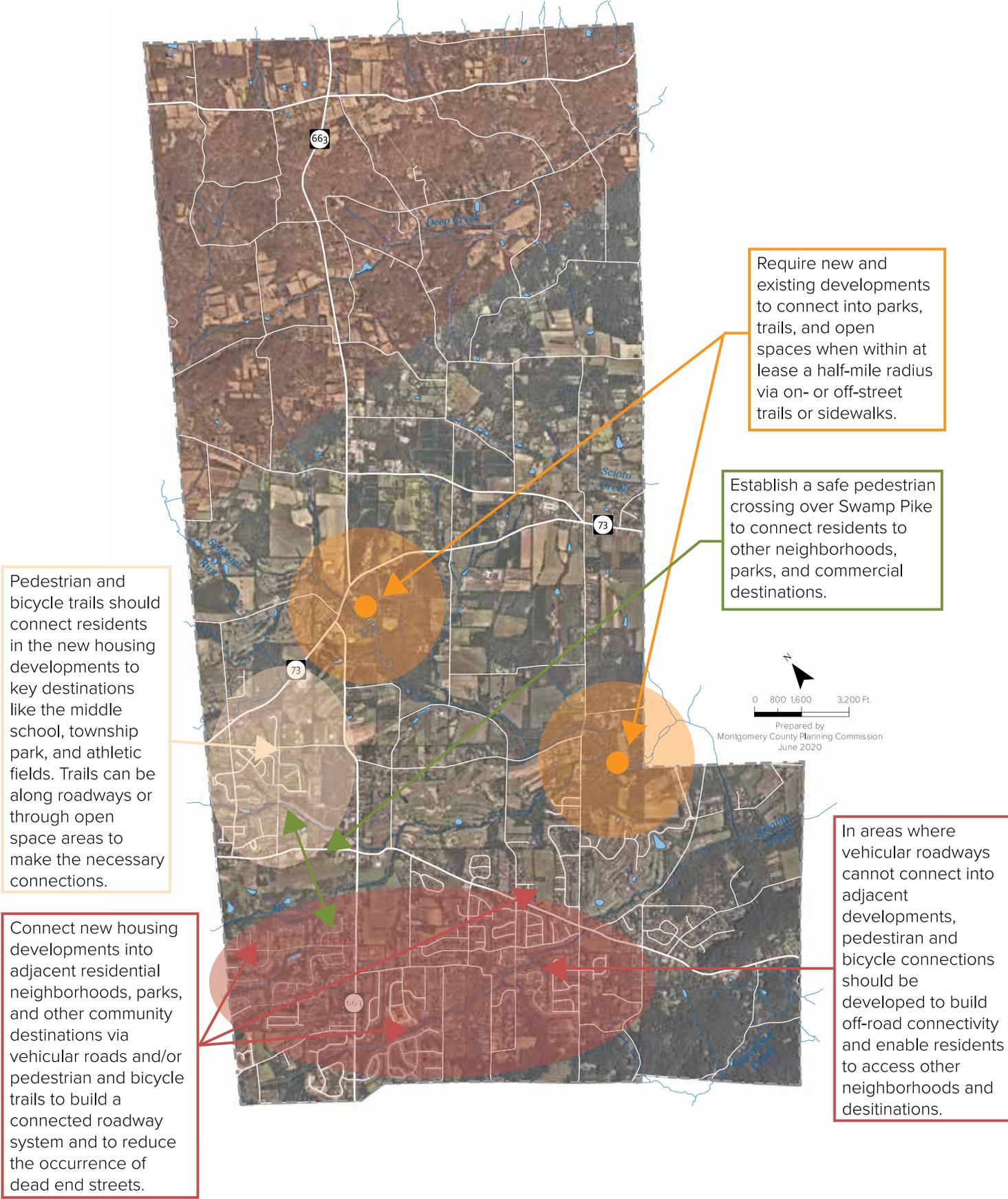
Limited means of ingress and egress may also negatively impact emergency response time. Where vehicular roadway connections are impossible due to existing housing development or topographical limitations, at the very least pedestrian and bicycle connections should be considered to connect neighboring residences. The township should consider the impacts of the ordinance language to determine if this results in the desired community layout and character, as well as the impacts it would have on the surrounding roadway network.

Increasing the availability of other local destinations and nonresidential uses within the township may also



reduce the burden on the roadway network, or at least shorten the driving trips for New Hanover residents. Limited commercial development means residents must drive outside of the township for almost all basic shopping needs and employment. Additional community-focused commercial development could provide closer destinations, which could reduce the length of vehicle trips made, and potentially reduce the use of a personal vehicle altogether if appropriate pedestrian and bicycle connections were made to link these areas to residences.

MAP: 28 || *Connectivity Opportunities*



Recommendations and Strategies

Maintain area roadways in good condition

- ▶ Coordinate with PennDOT and Montgomery County Roads and Bridges on bridge repair projects. Ensure that planned bike lanes and trail connections are included in the plans.
- ▶ Fund and construct the intersection projects identified in the Act 209 Capital Improvements Plan.
- ▶ Implement a user-interface program to enable residents to report roadway concerns and track roadway projects.

Maximize travel efficiencies and reduce traffic congestion

- ▶ Conduct a comprehensive roadway network analysis to evaluate the applicability of roadway classifications. Update classification system, definitions, or design standards as needed. Provide recommendations for improvements to address safety issues and congestion areas.
- ▶ Require new developments construct new connector roads into adjacent properties, or provide stub-outs, as appropriate, to dilute traffic movements across a more diverse set of roadways.
- ▶ Eliminate the creation of new cul-de-sacs in new development to the greatest extent possible.
- ▶ Update the Act 209 on an as-needed basis, or by the year 2030, whichever comes first.
- ▶ Require new nonresidential developments to connect into adjacent properties, or provide for future connection points to adjacent undeveloped properties where feasible.
- ▶ Evaluate roadway widths, driveway designs, and parking requirements in residential neighborhoods to ensure new developments are providing suitable amounts of parking and locations of parking throughout the neighborhood.

Enhance pedestrian safety and connectivity throughout the township

- ▶ Paint new continental-style cross walks at all intersections. Upgrade standard crosswalks to continental-style crosswalks.
- ▶ Require adjacent residential subdivisions to connect with each other through a formal on-street sidewalk network, or through an off-street trail or pathway.
- ▶ Coordinate with the Boyertown School District to establish walking trails between the Boyertown Middle School East and surrounding residential neighborhoods.

Support bicycle and trails networks

- ▶ Construct multi-use trails along routes identified in the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan.
- ▶ Install new on-road or off-road bike amenities when roadways or intersections are being upgrades, as appropriate.
- ▶ Provide education to residents about available on- and off-road bike routes through the township and region.
- ▶ Coordinate with Montgomery County and property owners to secure access easements or property acquisition for the West County Trail alignment.

Expand resident opportunities to utilize public transportation.

- ▶ Coordinate with Pottstown Borough to establish bus routes and connection points to better enable township residents to ride to regional community destinations via the Pottstown Area Rapid Transit bus network.
- ▶ Build a “park and ride” location to encourage carpooling to regional centers of work, and to serve as a potential future stop on the PART bus network.





6

New Hanover Township has a limited business and commercial economy. Historically, commercial retail and other businesses in New Hanover were concentrated primarily in the village areas of Sassamansville, Hoffmansville, and along Swamp Pike. Those development patterns still hold today, with very little land devoted to or even zoned for retail, commercial, and office uses outside of these areas. For those commercial uses that do operate in the township, they are generally located in converted residential homes or in small-scale one- to two-story buildings on individual properties. As a result, residents travel to communities outside of the township to meet the majority of their shopping needs, access medical care, and commute to their jobs. This is seen as both an asset to the community because it means properties generally retain their rural and suburban characteristics, but also results in more frequent and longer distance vehicular trips for residents to access goods, services, and employment and represents a loss of potential revenue for the township. As the population of the township grows, provision of a greater variety of certain commercial and personal services like grocery stores, daycare centers, salons, and dining establishments may be desired by residents who seek these businesses closer to home. In order to retain the township's more rural character while also diversifying revenue streams and providing essential services to residents, consideration should be given to what kinds of businesses are permitted within the township to strike a balance between enabling adequate services for residents while preserving key open space areas.

Priority Areas

- ▶ Ensure new commercial development is reflective of the township's historic villages and rural community character.
- ▶ Develop place-based economic growth to highlight the natural and scenic beauty of the township and its many farms and open space amenities.
- ▶ Attract local restaurants and neighborhood-scaled, community-oriented commercial businesses that meet the goods and service needs of a growing population.

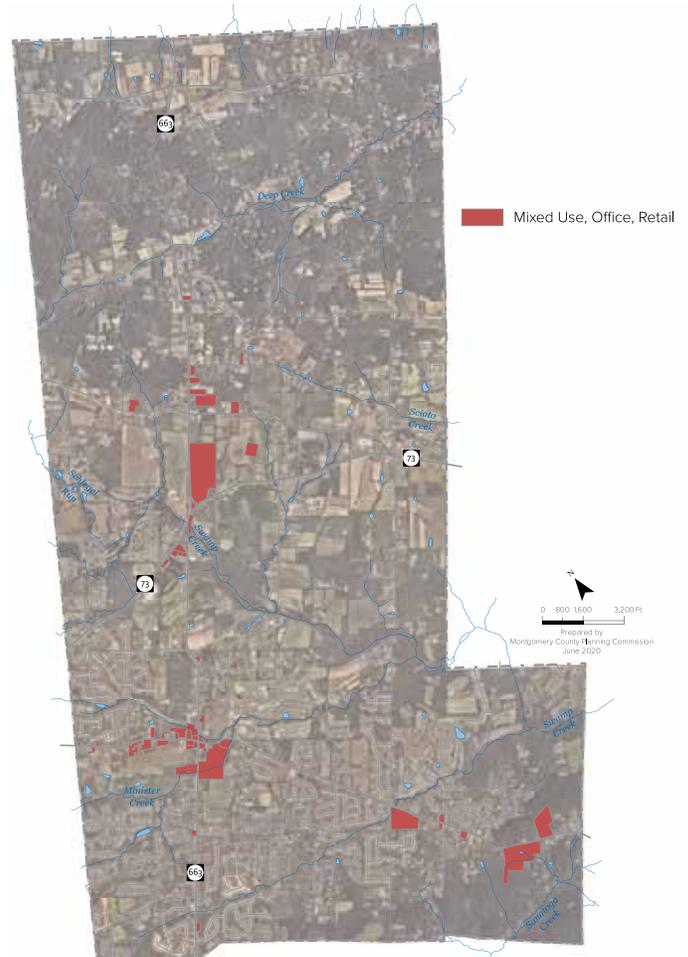
Commercial and Office Uses

In total, less than 2% of the township’s total land area is used for office and commercial (comprised of retail and mixed-use) purposes. Businesses seeking to locate in the township have a much more limited selection of existing commercial properties from which to choose, and the time and costs associated with redevelopment in the zoning districts where commercial uses are permitted may be prohibitive to many small businesses. Existing commercial and office uses are concentrated in a few key areas along Swamp Pike and PA Route 663/North Charlotte Street. Almost all businesses are located in standalone buildings, and some are located in converted residential homes. There are three multi-unit commercial developments: Hanover Court Shopping Center (built in 1995), Halteman Office Center (1804-1810 Swamp Pike, built between 2002-2008), and Park Suites (built in 2011). These latter two primarily house medical offices and financial offices. Newer constructed commercial uses continue the pattern of standalone parcels, including the Wawa gas station and the CVS Pharmacy located on the south corners of the intersection at Swamp Pike and PA Route 663/North Charlotte Street. Other businesses present in the township like banks, kennels, plant nurseries, and restaurants are also included in this use category. New Hanover also has several auto-oriented businesses, primarily pre-owned vehicle sales and autobody shops.

There are no big-box shopping centers or large strip commercial shopping centers. The largest multi-building shopping center includes Freed’s Supermarket as well as a gift shop and a local restaurant. There is a large shared parking lot for these businesses, but the site overall is not well-unified and the parking area is sprawling with ill-defined patterns of vehicular circulation.



MAP: 29 || *Commercial Land Use*



Industrial Uses and Utilities

There are very few industrial uses within the township. At present, all industrial uses are considered light industrial which have reduced noise, traffic generation, and other community impacts than heavy industrial uses. There is an active proposal under consideration for a quarry site north of Hoffmansville Road. This use would introduce heavy industrial uses and an extractive use to the township within the area zoned HI Heavy Industrial and would be the largest industrial use in the township. There is concern that this site may have negative impacts on the local water supply, water quality, and air emissions, and may bring an increase in the number of heavy trucks and equipment onto the roadways. The largest utility site is the township's wastewater treatment facility, located off of Fagleysville Road.



Agricultural and Recreational Businesses

New Hanover is home to many local growers and other farm-based businesses, including a number of horse riding and boarding stables. Growers have the option of selling their products directly to consumers, through on-farm sales, farm stands, or CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) shares, or wholesalers. For farms that participate in on-farm sales, some choose to offer a “pick-your-own” option where visitors can go into the fields to harvest what they will purchase, which provides a unique experience and builds stronger connections between the farming and non-farming community. The township's numerous golf courses also bring visitors to New Hanover and some offer additional services beyond golfing, such as club houses and banquet hall rentals for business and special events.



Zoning for Nonresidential Uses

There are very few areas in the township that are zoned for commercial and industrial land uses. All of these zoning districts are comprised of properties that take vehicular access from at least one of four key roadways: PA Route 663/ North Charlotte Street, PA Route 73/Big Road, Swamp Pike, and Hoffmansville Road. Other zoning districts also permit commercial uses by either conditional use or special exception. It may be less clear in these districts how a commercial component would contribute toward the cohesive development of a property or area, and developers may face increased scrutiny to justify a proposal that would include commercial uses. It may therefore be less likely that a commercial or other nonresidential use will be approved.

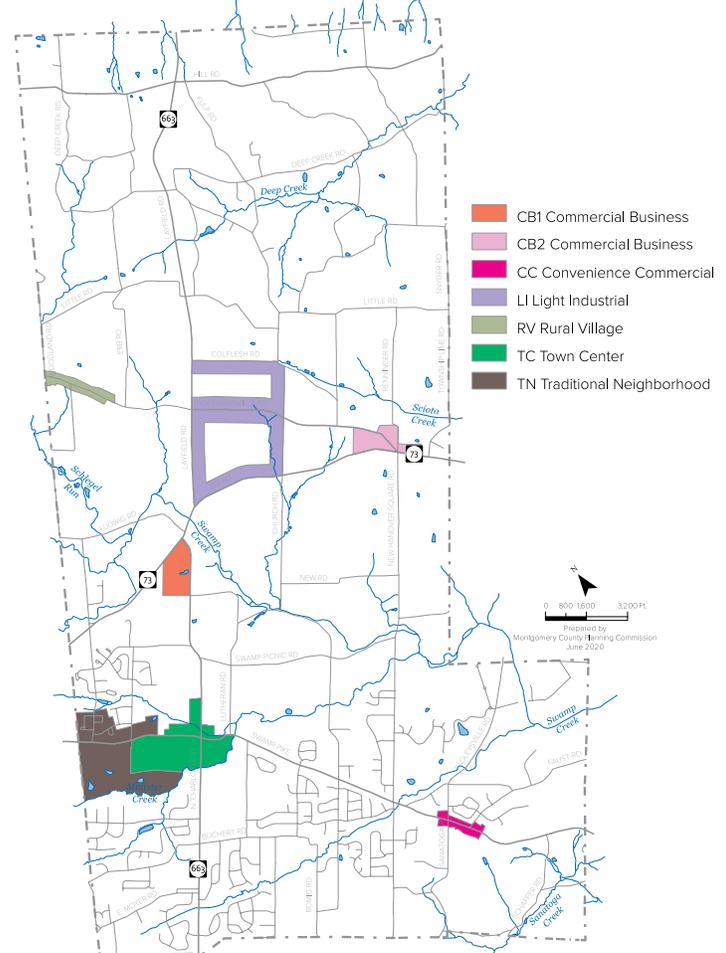
The size and parcel make-up of the commercial-exclusive districts vary. Some of the districts, like the CC, CB2, and the RV districts, have no undeveloped land left and have many residential properties interspersed with commercial uses. These two districts are also characterized by numerous small, shallow parcels, which would make significant re-development of these properties challenging. It is unlikely that there will be substantial changes to the land uses or the structures themselves within these two districts over the next twenty years.

The TN Traditional Neighborhood and the TC Town Center zoning districts have the largest and the greatest number of undeveloped properties. These two districts combined represent a significant land area that would greatly impact the character of the township. At present, the New Hanover Town Center land development plan has been proposed for the properties within these two zoning districts and is under review by the township. The proposal would include significant development of a retail commercial center with a large residential component. Most small businesses would be unable to independently develop such large properties unless significant subdivision were to occur, so it is more likely these properties will be developed as one large coordinated development comprised of numerous commercial structures, as is the case with Town Center.

The benefit of a large-scale development is that considerations for design, access management, internal circulation, and other functional site elements can be coordinated to achieve a commercial hub suitable to the community character. However, this site has a limited number of existing roadways so traffic circulation patterns should consider how best to diversify the roadway connections to provide greater motorist choice and reduce the funneling effect such a large development would have on nearby roadways. Because of the potential for substantial residential development within these two districts and the proximity of the existing residential neighborhoods to the north and south of this zoning district, pedestrian and bicycle connections should also be considered a high priority to provide residents with non-motorized access to the commercial center in support of other connectivity goals articulated in this plan.



MAP: 30 || *Nonresidential Zoning*



Nonresidential Growth

Only a handful of nonresidential developments have occurred over the past fifteen years, exclusively in the commercial, office, and agricultural sectors, totaling 55,232 square feet. All of these developments resulted in commercial buildings under 16,000 square feet. In the zoning districts where properties are smaller, it can be expected to continue to see new construction on scale with these other recent developments. Older buildings can be more challenging to retrofit for modern commercial needs because their internal configuration, parking availability, and technological capacity may not be suitable for modern office or retail needs. Due in part to these constraints and limited supply of existing office/commercial buildings, it is likely that future commercial growth will be a result of infill or redevelopment projects, particularly in the RV, CC, and CB2 districts, and in the TC district north of Swamp Pike.



Redevelopment potential in the TC District is strong at the northwestern corner of the intersection at Swamp Pike and PA Route 663/North Charlotte Street where there is a large auto-oriented repair shop and former gas station. The other three corners of the intersection were developed in the early 2000s, with a CVS Pharmacy, Wawa, and a bank. The developments on the south side of Swamp Pike incorporated streetscaping elements such as grass verges, wide sidewalks, and landscaping, but currently have limited adjoining sidewalks into which they can connect. Any redevelopment or new construction projects in the TC district in the vicinity of this intersection should match the established streetscape, pedestrian amenities, and landscaping. This intersection represents a key node in the township’s commercial core and any new development should consider the proposed impact of building design, access management, and other site considerations to continue to establish a cohesive corridor representative of the community character.

New large-scale development is more probable in the TC district south of Swamp Pike and in the CB1 district, which is largely undeveloped. Industrial development is limited to the LI and HI districts. The vast majority of new nonresidential growth will likely be located in these zoning districts. As previously mentioned, there are two large and significant land development proposals under consideration by the township that would be hugely impactful on the local and regional economy and environment. Expansion of shopping



and employment opportunities in the core of the developed area of the township should be further maximized to the benefit of the nearby residential homes to provide connected roadways and pedestrian and bicycle pathways. In all commercial zoning districts, any new commercial, retail, or office uses should balance the need for vehicular access to commercial properties with the community’s desire to match local character and aesthetics in building scale and architecture and reflect a more walkable, rural, village-style site layout.

Employment and Labor

Approximately 71% of the township’s population over the age of 16 participates in the workforce, and there is low unemployment (3%). The median household income (\$89,653) and mean household income (\$102, 697) are comparable to the county as a whole. Residents in the township are primarily employed in educational/health services, retail trade, manufacturing, and professional/technical services. With two schools located in New Hanover Township, the Boyertown School District is one of the largest employers.

Resident Labor

A much greater percentage of residents commute to locations outside of the township to work than commute from elsewhere to the township for work. Very few residents both live in and work in the New Hanover. The majority of residents commute to either Philadelphia, King of Prussia, or Pottstown Borough for work, but many other local employment centers within Montgomery County and other regional hubs like Reading and Allentown are represented in the commuting spread of residents. Residents of New Hanover also tend to have, on average, higher commuting times than the PMRPC region and the county as a whole, with 36% of residents traveling 45 minutes or more to work, and more than half of those individuals traveling 60 or more minutes.

Perhaps because of the limited employment opportunities in the township and/or the required commuting distance for most jobs, New Hanover residents have a higher percentage of residents in the workforce who work from home, pre-Covid, than other municipalities in the county. With more and more employers expanding work from home capabilities in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, there may be an even greater demand for housing in the township if these workplace policy changes remain in place long-term and as workers are more free to choose where they live without the constraints of commuting distance as a major factor in their decision making process.

Inflow/Outflow Job Counts



Source: On The Map, U.S. Census Bureau, 2017.

Employment in the Township

New Hanover is a net exporter of jobs, meaning more residents commute out of the township to work than non-residents who commute into the township for work. Because of the limited job potential within New Hanover, the ratio of residents who commute to other municipalities for work is about five times greater than the number of workers who commute into the township for work, representing a huge commuting workforce. Workers commuting into the township for



employment are primarily commuting from Pottstown Borough, Gilbertsville CDP¹, and Sanatoga CDP. The top three sectors of employment for jobs located in the township are in educational services, retail trade, and construction. The majority of existing jobs are located in the southwest area of the township near Swamp Pike where the multi-tenant office buildings are located. Other major employment concentrations are found at Boyertown Middle School and New Hanover Elementary School.

The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission estimates that the number of jobs in the

New Hanover will increase by 495 employees by 2045, representing an increase of 24.5%. This represents a substantial figure of growth that outpaces that of the county as a whole and is second only to Douglass Township within the PMRPC region. It is likely the increase in employment numbers may largely be achieved through the development of the New Hanover Town Center, but if the scope of the nonresidential components of that proposed development changes, the number of actual new workers employed within the township may differ from projections.

¹ A census designated place is a concentration of population identified by the United States Census Bureau for statistical purposes. CDPs are delineated for each decennial census as the statistical counterparts of incorporated places, such as cities, towns, and villages.

Retail Market Analysis

With few local opportunities for shopping and dining within the township, the majority of households must complete their errands in locations outside of New Hanover. There are many options in nearby municipalities, including shopping centers on Route 100 in West Pottsgrove Township, in Pottstown Borough, at the Limerick Shopping Center, and the Providence Town Center in Collegeville. Freed's Supermarket is the only full-service grocery store in the township, but grocery stores located in neighboring Douglass Township, Green Lane, and Lower Pottsgrove Township likely service the majority of residents. Other common shopping destinations like hardware stores, clothing and shoe stores, are limited or non-existent in the township.

A retail market analysis can show where there is "leakage" and "surplus" in a given community to demonstrate un- and under-tapped retail opportunities. Because there are so few businesses servicing the shopping retail environment, many of these industry groups show a leakage factor of 100 – meaning no spending in these categories is being captured in the market, simply because they just do not exist in the township. Overall, the leakage factor for total food and drink is 28.9 and the leakage factor for total retail is 72.4, which indicates that restaurants and other food establishments are more strongly represented in the township than other retail and commercial uses. Overall, the demand for goods and services vastly exceeds the supply available in New Hanover and represents a potential loss of hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of annual retail sales that are being captured in adjacent municipalities.



Future Business Needs

The vast majority of community survey respondents reported they are generally satisfied with the proximity of shopping destinations in nearby municipalities and do not feel a strong need to greatly expand commercial offerings in the township, primarily because there is a concern that increased development will further erode the rural community character and increase traffic volumes on area roadways. However, 61% of respondents indicated they would support or strongly support the development of a greater diversity of businesses in the township, while almost 9% said they would not support and 13% said they would strongly not support business development. Just over 17% of respondents were neutral. The proximity of shopping and retail opportunities was one of the lowest ranked reasons why people moved to the township, which supports the opinion that the expansion of commercial resources is unnecessary and unwanted.

This represents an interesting blend of residents who hold opposing opinions on the availability of businesses in the township. Individual comments have suggested that respondents feel they are adequately served by commercial areas in the surrounding municipalities without bringing greater intensity of development into the township. Increasing popularity and availability of online shopping has also changed the nature of brick-and-mortar retail shopping nationwide, decreasing the need for large retail centers. Big-box shopping centers are therefore less practical in the township due to the prevalence of nearby shopping centers and the option for online retail. However, with a growing population, especially in families with children and residents over 65, some personal

services and other small-scale retail may need to be expanded to accommodate resident needs and demand. Services like grocery stores, daycares, dry cleaners, hair salons, dentists, and other professional services grow in demand with population size and typically require smaller building footprints. These services are more suited to the availability of commercial buildings in the township than large retail and corporate office centers. Community-oriented commercial development would also provide these services closer to where residents live which would reduce the number of vehicle miles traveled for everyday essentials and other frequently visited destinations.



Increasingly, mixed-used developments are being proposed across the county that incorporate a blend of neighborhood-oriented commercial uses within a larger residential use. Often, these are designed so that the commercial component of the development is located near the public roadway so that it can be accessed by residents of the immediate and broader community. Businesses that provide essential goods and services like pharmacies, dry cleaners, or day care centers often find the most success by locating in these types of developments because they have a ready-made population that will utilize their business. Residents benefit from the proximity to these types of uses because it reduces the distance they must travel to access these goods and services, and residents may choose to walk or ride a bike instead of driving. By locating these service-based businesses closer to residents, it decreases the distance and amount of time residents spend driving, which may also help to reduce the vehicular demand on area roadways, particularly around peak traffic hours, which can reduce congestion. Mixed-use can also refer to the blending of different uses within a single building, such as ground floor retail or commercial uses, with office or residential uses in upper floors. Mixed-use buildings are already permitted in some of the commercial zones in New Hanover, but the township would need to amend their ordinances to better facilitate the creation of neighborhood-oriented mixed-use developments, such as those described herein.

When asked which types of businesses residents felt would be most valuable to meeting their needs, the majority of respondents in the community survey and at the public workshop expressed a desire to see a greater variety of sit-down restaurants, coffee shops/bakeries, and fast casual restaurants, rather than other retail opportunities. Specifically, residents expressed a desire for non-chain restaurants. Local food service businesses can play a key role in representing a community and are often highly valued and supported by a loyal following of patrons. These businesses may also be more beneficial to have within the township as residents seek more experience-based opportunities that are less easy to replicate, as can be the case with chain stores and restaurants. However, continued impacts from Covid-19 have greatly impacted service-based businesses, resulting in the permanent closure of many businesses. As the economy recovers, restaurants in particular should consider a diverse business model and site design that incorporates outdoor dining and pick-up or delivery locations for a greater range of service delivery.

Regardless of opinions on business growth, most respondents overall expressed a desire to see the rural character of the community maintained, which suggests future commercial development should be designed in a way that is sensitive to this. Site design standards, building architectural standards, and other regulatory guidelines should be reviewed and amended to ensure future commercial development meets these goals. Signage in particular can be very impactful in establishing a common or shared character throughout all commercial areas. Uniformity in sign styles, such as monument-style, height, and material type creates a cohesive appearance to better define the limited commercial areas.



Place-Based Economic Growth

Place-based recreation and agricultural business development has been identified as a key opportunity area for economic development in the township. The PMRPC Comprehensive Plan from 2015 recommends the following economic priority for New Hanover: *“Existing commercial and retail gaps in the more rural portions [of New Hanover] provide the opportunity for expansion of retail to serve the municipal population as well as draw others to the area. The report recommends that New Hanover capitalize on its rural landscape to develop recreational opportunities that can further draw outsiders to the area and help support the expansion of commercial activity. Agri-tourism activity and additional recreation amenities could help create a unique niche for this part of the region.”*

The advancement of experience-based and recreation-based businesses can create a market that spurs local economic growth and supports small business development.

Similar to how local restaurants can be seen as belonging to and representing the community, so too can agri-tourism and recreation industries serve to represent and embrace the community characters. These industries keep with the patterns of development desired by the community because they don't require large commercial buildings to be built, and can be incorporated into the existing fabric of the township. These types of businesses also help to build a unique experience that is native to New Hanover and establish a type of “brand” that highlights the township's natural scenic beauty, open spaces, and vast agricultural resources. Secondary businesses may also experience growth, as they support experience-based activities; for example, a growth in trail development may support bike shops and outdoor equipment suppliers, or a growth in seasonal activities like hayrides and flower displays on farms may support local restaurants as visitors and families make a full day of their travels to New Hanover.



Recommendations and Strategies

Provide new opportunities for business development to meet resident’s needs and to support a sustainable tax base for the township.

- ▶ Identify suitable areas to expand permitted commercial land uses in non-commercial zoning districts; OR re-zone areas to expand commercial opportunities.
- ▶ Develop stronger “village-style” site design standards to require commercial development to meet architectural, pedestrian, circulation, and landscaping standards in keeping with the rural village character of the township.
- ▶ Attract small businesses that can meet local retail, personal service, and other commercial needs.
- ▶ Adopt zoning permissions to allow neighborhood-oriented commercial uses within residential land developments, particularly for age-restricted development.

Pursue “place-based” tourism to support local destinations and businesses that create unique experiences .

- ▶ Promote agri-tourism and other agriculturally supportive business growth.
- ▶ Adopt regulatory ordinance that supports the development of on-farm business opportunities.
- ▶ Establish a farmers market or CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) program to support area growers.
- ▶ Invest in parks and trails that tie into larger recreational resources to develop strong outdoor recreation opportunities.







7

The existing land uses in New Hanover Township are fairly limited and homogeneous. The vast majority of the area in the township is used for residential and agricultural uses, and there is still significant area that is potentially developable. Development is generally concentrated in the lower half of the township, in part because of constraints created by natural features like wetlands and steep slopes, the existing service boundaries of the public water and sewer infrastructure, and the available transportation network. The township is also able to guide development through zoning regulations, which directs the intensity and location of different land uses. The established zoning regulations enable small-lot residential and commercial developments in areas served by public utilities while reserving areas outside of these service boundaries for larger-lot residential and other low density uses. Zoning regulations are a useful tool through which the township is able to preserve open space and influence development design and layout. New Hanover has taken strides to amend its zoning and other development regulations to require critical community features, like contributions to bike lanes and recreation space, and should continue to update its regulatory statutes to achieve the community's vision for the future.

Summary of Recommendations

- ▶ Increase the amount of open space in residential developments and amend open space design standards to preserve the township's rural character.
- ▶ Provide flexibility in residential zoning districts to allow neighborhood-oriented commercial uses.

Existing Land Use and Zoning

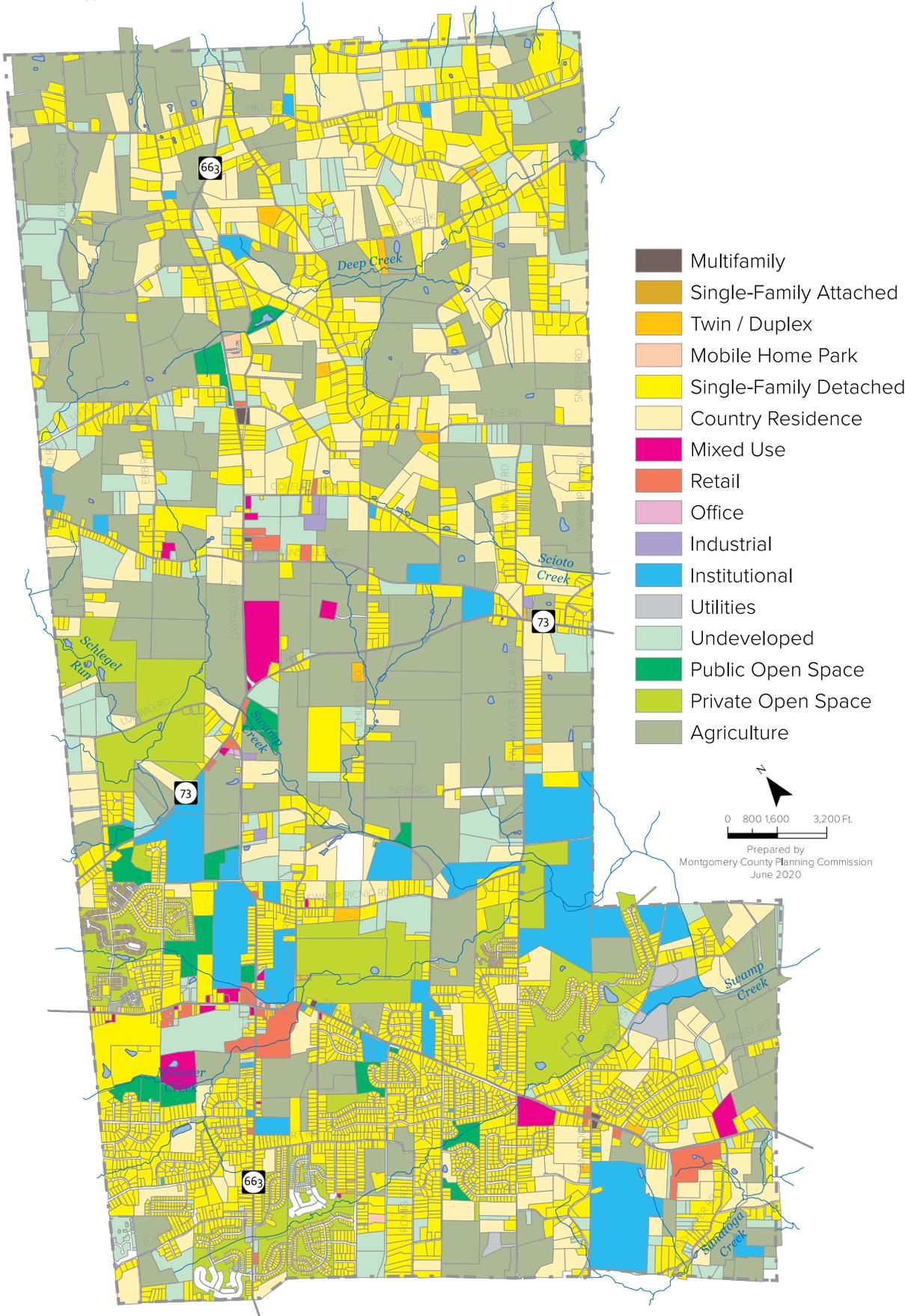
Land use refers to the active or inactive use of a property at a point in time, which can change over time. Generally this might happen if a property is redeveloped, retrofitted for a new use, or experiences turnover in ownership or tenancy. Zoning is the regulatory category assigned to a property which describes the types of land uses permitted for that property. In some instances, a property is used for a certain use that may not be permitted under the zoning district in which that property is located because the use existed before that zoning district was enacted. These are considered to be existing non-conforming properties, and are allowed to remain as long as the use does not change. Exploring the land uses of the township provides a more accurate picture of what uses are actually in existence versus the zoning, which provides broader categories of use types that would be permitted.

Land Use

Land uses in New Hanover Township are heavily dominated by open space, agricultural, and residential land uses. The ways in which land in the township is used has changed over time, and is heavily impacted by both natural and man-made characteristics. Since European settlement, the majority of land uses in New Hanover have been primarily agriculture, which is still one of the largest use of land today. The roadway networks established centuries ago remain intact today, and new roadway networks have been developed around these transportation networks. While residential land uses have dominated in recent decades, there are still significant areas of the township that remain in a more natural state due to limitations in developing areas of steep slopes, riparian areas, and other natural features.

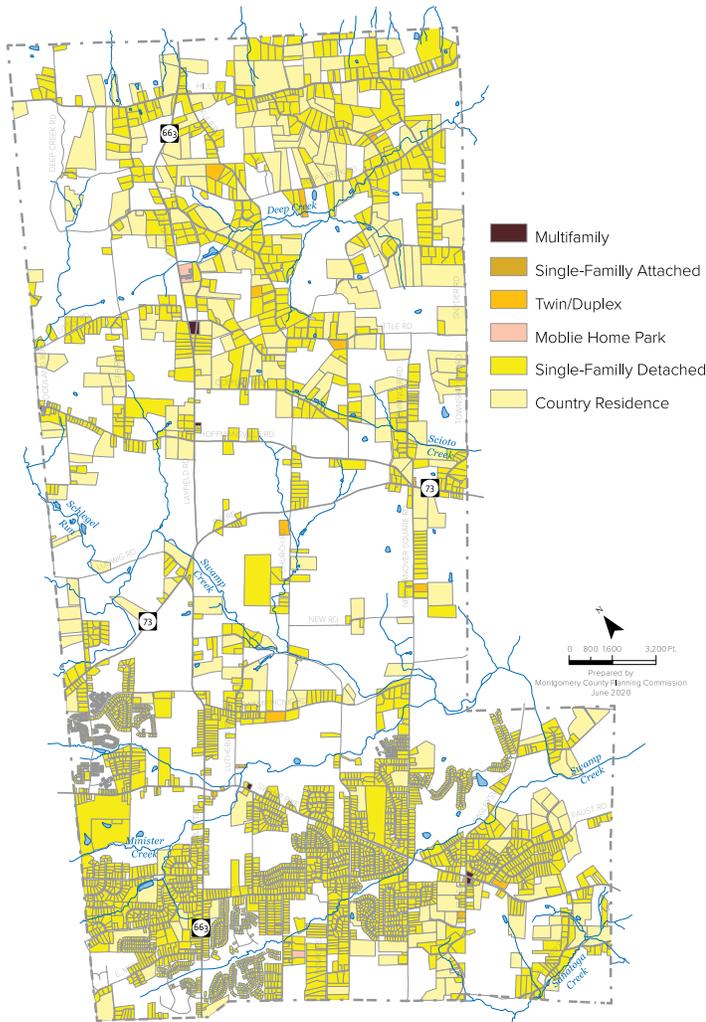


MAP: 31 || *Land Use*



Prepared by
 Montgomery County Planning Commission
 June 2020

MAP: 32 || Residential Land Use



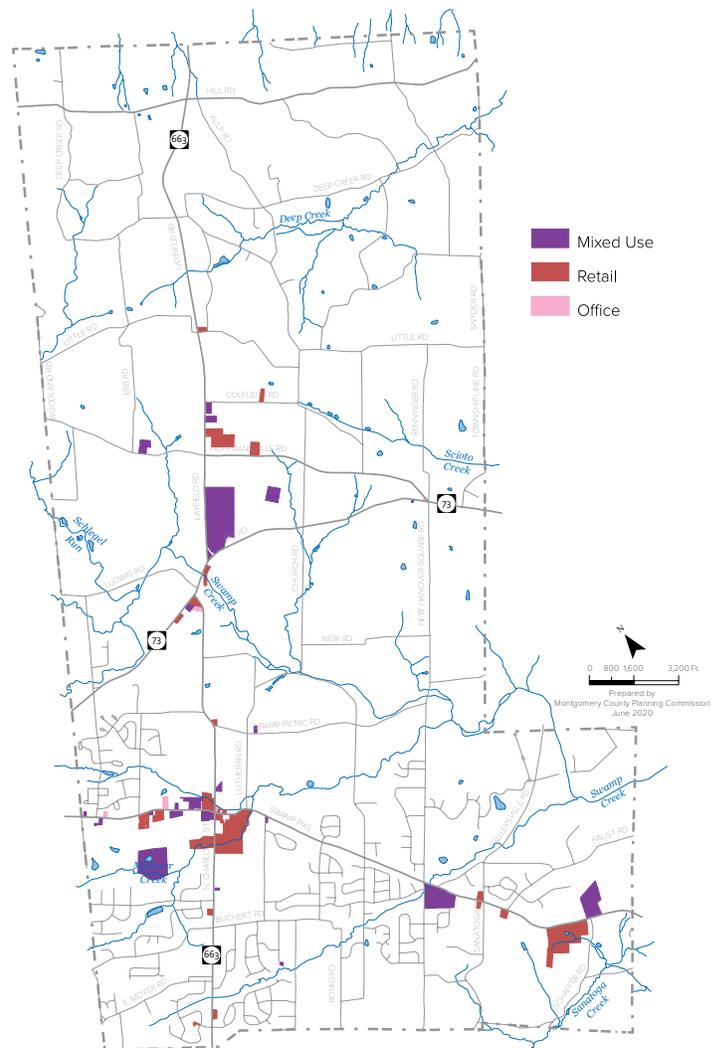
Residential Land Use

Residential land uses represent approximately 44% of the total land use area in the township, and is the single largest land use type. These uses include single-family detached, single-family attached (townhouses and twins/duplexes), multifamily, and mobile homes. Residential uses vary in terms of the lot size on which the homes are located, but a majority of the residential uses south of PA Route 73/Big Road are located on smaller lots than other residential uses located in the central and north areas of the township. Most residential uses located on larger lots have direct access to public roadways while residential homes on smaller lots are predominantly found in residential subdivisions with an internal road network and one or more access points to public roads. Regardless of the lot size, single-family detached is overwhelmingly the largest residential land use in terms of number of units and total acreage. There are very few multifamily and mobile home housing units in the township.

Commercial Land Use

Commercial land uses represent approximately 1.8% of the total land use area. These include all land use types classified as retail, office, and mixed-use. This land use category is one of the smallest in the township, and the amount of land area used for these purposes is less than many of the other municipalities within the PMRPC region. In part, this is because the zoning districts for commercial uses are limited in size and comprised of smaller properties. There has also not been strong market demand for larger commercial shopping centers in New Hanover. The majority of all commercial land uses are located along either Swamp Pike or PA Route 663.

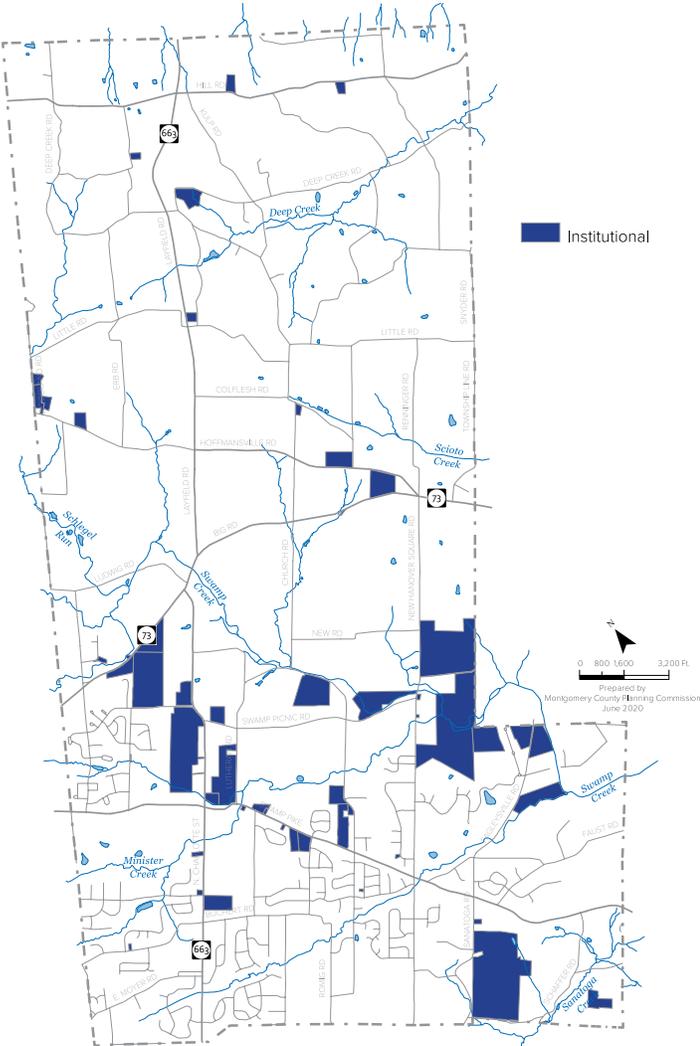
MAP: 33 || Commercial Land Use



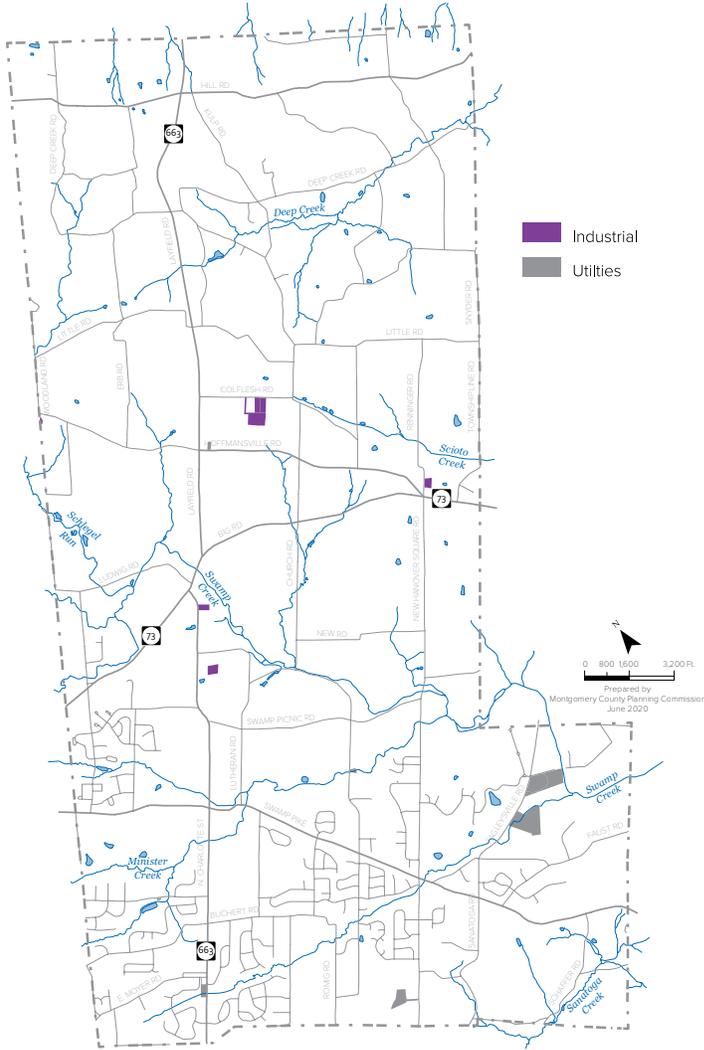
Institutional Land Use

Institutional land uses are comprised of all public and non-profit uses and include township properties, schools, and religious institutions. Institutional land uses represent approximately 5.6% of the total land use area. There are no major large institutions in New Hanover, such as university or college campuses, but there are some large properties that fall within this land use category because the township is home to a number of historic churches, schools belonging to the Boyertown Area School District, and the Girl Scout Camp.

MAP: 34 || *Institutional Land Use*



MAP: 35 || *Industrial Land Use*



Industrial and Utilities

There are very few uses within the industrial or utility category, which represent 0.15% and 0.33% of the township’s total land use area, respectively. The industrially-zoned districts are located in the central part of the township at the intersection of PA Route 663/Layfield Road and PA Route 73/Big Road but the majority of those properties are not used for industrial purposes at this time. The largest utility site is the wastewater treatment plant, located off of Fagleysville Road.

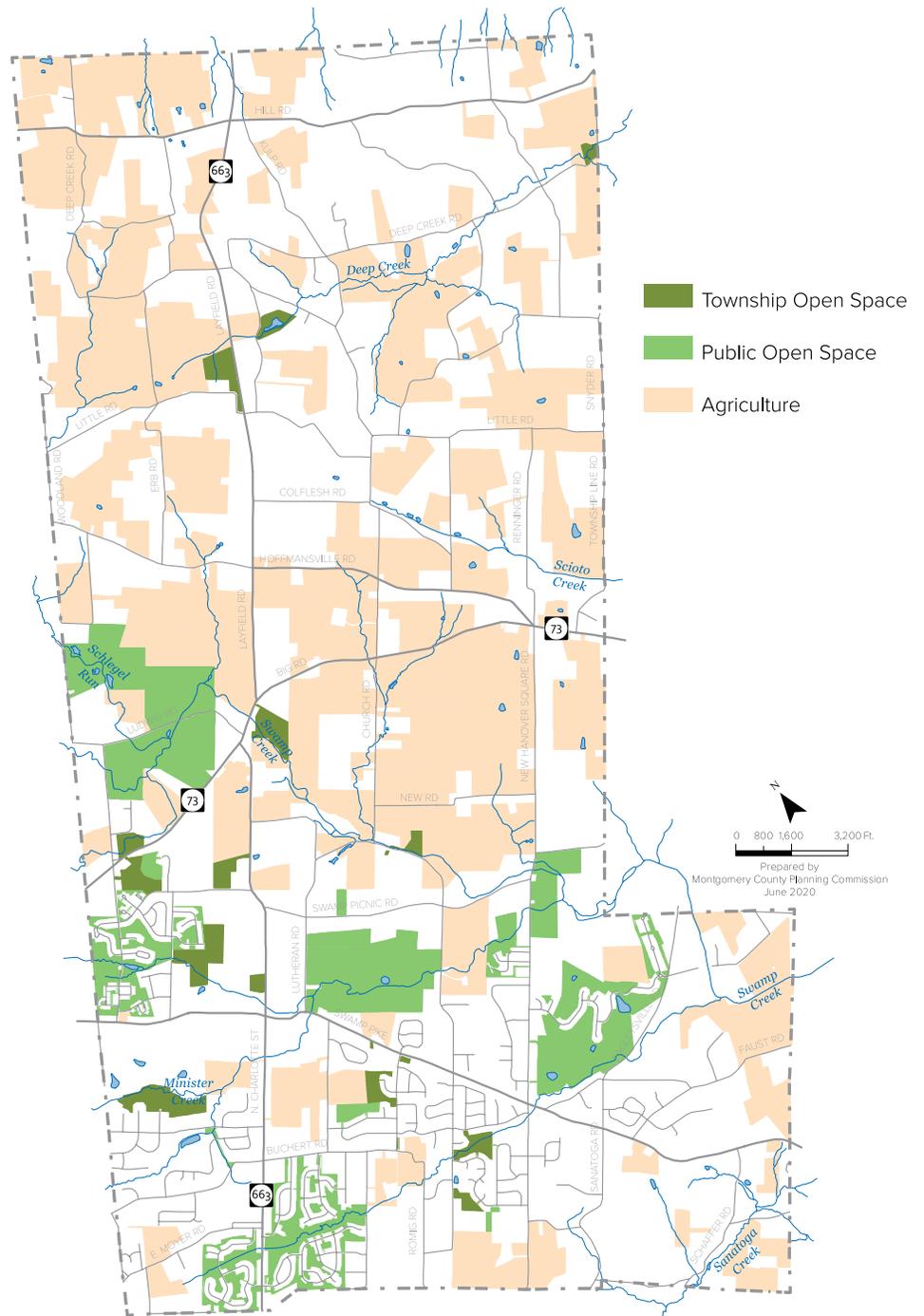
Open Space and Agricultural Land Use

Agricultural land uses comprise the second largest share of land uses in the township at 32.9%. Open space uses represent the third largest share of land uses at 7.9%. Open space areas are categorized as either public open space or private open space. Public open space is primarily comprised of the township-owned park areas while the golf courses are considered private open space. Other significant areas of private open space include the undeveloped portions of residential developments, often held as natural land, lawn area, or used for stormwater management basins. Agricultural uses have been decreasing over time; over one thousand acres of agricultural lands have been converted to other uses, primarily residential uses, since 2000.

Other Land Uses

Properties that are not improved with any structures or amenities, and do not have a specific use that could fall within one of the land use categories are themselves classified as undeveloped land. These properties can be ones where a previous use was abandoned, but in New Hanover, it is more likely that these properties are natural areas, like meadows or woodland, that have never been developed or used for any other functional purpose. Undeveloped land uses represent about 6.9% of the total land use area within the township, and are often found adjacent to agricultural land uses or residential land uses.

MAP: 36 || *Open Space and Agricultural Land Uses*



Zoning Districts

R-2 Residential is intended to provide for low density development in areas of steeper slopes and limited ground water supply, with a dual intent to maintain scenic beauty and protection of the sensitive natural features of that district. Residential uses in this district have a minimum lot area of two acres, which creates distance between dwellings and requires on-lot sewer and water systems. This district is located in the northern end of the township where there is a greater presence of topography unsuitable to more intensive development.

R-2M Residential Modified is similar to the R-2 District, except that it allows smaller lots of 50,000 square feet, which is just over an acre. This district occupies much of the central third of the township, and contains a number of agricultural properties, many of which are preserved, as well as the Hickory Valley Golf Club.

R-25 Residential is intended to provide for medium-high density development in areas that are or will be served by sewer and water services. Residential developments in this district have smaller minimum lot area requirements, ranging from 25,000 square feet to 15,000 square feet (about one-half to one-third of an acre). Further lot size reductions are permitted under the Performance Standard Development option, which permits a wider range of housing types besides single-family detached, such as village homes, twin homes, and duplexes. Dimensional standards for these housing types are intended to create a cohesive development

more akin to an older inner-ring suburban development where homes are closer together to foster community and create more walkable neighborhoods. Developments are also required to provide a mix of housing types when the overall number of housing units proposed exceeds a certain threshold which increases housing diversity within neighborhoods.

R-15 Residential is intended to provide for higher density residential development in areas around the Village of New Hanover serviced by public sewer and water. Use types and lot dimensions are similar to those permitted in the R-25 District, but residential housing types are further expanded under the Performance Standard Development option and includes townhouses and multifamily housing types. The provision of this zoning district has enabled the development of housing units with smaller lot sizes which is desirable for some residents who want a lower-maintenance property. Increasing the mix of available housing unit types in the township expands resident choice in finding housing that suits a household's individual economic and housing needs. Recent developments like Windlestrae have introduced townhouses as a housing type in the township, providing residents with additional housing options beyond single-family detached.

R-5 Residential is intended to provide for the development of a variety of housing types to meet the needs of an aging population. It is one of the few residential districts that includes a specific recommendation in the purposes to allow certain nonresidential uses that would be compatible with the

primary purpose of the district, although there is no requirement for integrated mixed-use, nor are there other design or development standards included in the base zoning district standards. The R-5 district permits housing types such as life care facilities and “retirement villages” by conditional use, while other residential districts permit these uses by special exception. It is one of the smallest residential zoning districts in the township and is located at the major roadway intersection of PA Route 663/North Charlotte Street and PA Route 73/Big Road. A proposal for land development has been received by the township that would consist of a substantial number of new housing units oriented in accordance with the standards for a “Retirement Village.” Any efforts made toward providing housing specifically geared toward older adults should give careful consideration to the included community features that are most suitable to the intended residential mix. Age-restricted or age-intended developments such as retirement villages should promote site layouts and integrated features like community centers, active recreation centers, walking trails, and convenience commercial like a café, grocer, dry cleaners, or other personal services that cater to the population. These features help to create an active, walkable, and dynamic neighborhood that facilitates healthy lifestyles and social gathering.

RV Rural Village is intended to capture existing rural development patterns in the Sassamansville Village. The district is limited to properties fronting Hoffmansville Road between Sassamansville Road and Erb Road. Permitted residential uses are allowed on smaller lots with shorter front yard

setbacks to mimic the historic development found in the village where homes are clustered closer to the roadway. Older homes are found primarily west of Kulps Road and are characteristic of housing styles common in the late 1800s. These homes lend a unique quality to the district and their historic elements should be preserved. This district also contains cemetery uses and the former Sassamansville Fire Company.

TC Town Center is intended to serve as a walkable and dynamic cultural, social, and commercial center in New Hanover. **TN Traditional Neighborhood** is intended to provide for mixed-use neighborhoods that serve as a complementary residential transition between the TC district and other zoning districts. These two districts contain the option to be designed as a unified development, which would mean that the district provisions for dwelling units, open space, and other site design considerations can be considered across the whole of the site rather than being met specifically within each district separately. The New Hanover Town Center land development plan under review by the township deploys this option, and would create a mixed-use commercial and residential center with a mix of a large suburban-style shopping complex, a walkable “main street”, and a residential neighborhood with a variety of housing types.

CB-1 Commercial is intended to serve as an area for commercial development near the portions of the township that are zoned for higher density residential. This district is directly adjacent to Boyertown Middle School East and sits at a major roadway

When utilizing the Performance Standard Development option in the R-15 and R-25 districts, single-family detached homes are permitted to be on lots as small as 6,000 square feet and have reduced setbacks intended to bring homes closer to the street in support of facilitating neighbor engagement and interaction. However, many recent developments have proposed deeper setbacks than what the minimum requires, resulting in site layouts that do not achieve the stated district goals. Zoning standards could be strengthened to require both minimums and maximum setbacks for buildings to better achieve these goals. Also in developments using the Performance Standard option, applicants are required to provide at least 35-40% open space in the development. The intent is that when combined, the overall density limits and open space provision will result in a development where the most ecologically sensitive areas are preserved as natural areas while housing units are grouped on the portions of the lot more suitable for development. In practice, these standards can fall short of achieving a successful design, as open space areas are often relegated to the perimeter of the site while large stormwater basins occupy the site's roadway frontage. The open space is not a useful amenity to the neighborhood, and open space vistas are not preserved within the broader community. Improvements to design standards for open space, such as requiring a percentage of homes to front onto open space, and an overall increase in preserved open space may better find a balance between preserving the rural character while allowing medium-density residential development. Standards for cluster development, conservation subdivision, or other similar zoning tools should be considered for these zoning districts to enhance community design outcomes.

intersection where PA Route 663/ North Charlotte Street connects with PA Route 73/Big Road. No residential uses are permitted in this district, which is limited in size and currently contains a few auto-oriented businesses and one medical office. The majority of this district is one large, undeveloped parcel, which has the potential to serve an important role as a key commercial gateway.

CB-2 Commercial Business

is intended to serve a similar purpose as the CB-1 district, although the district is almost entirely built-out as residential uses. The largest non-residential use in the district is the New Hanover Elementary School and the US Post Office. While this district is located at the intersection of PA Route 73/Big Road and Hoffmansville Road, which is another key intersection in the township, it is unlikely to see significant commercial development because the school occupies so much of the land area and because it is surrounded by agricultural and low-density housing.

CC Convenience Commercial

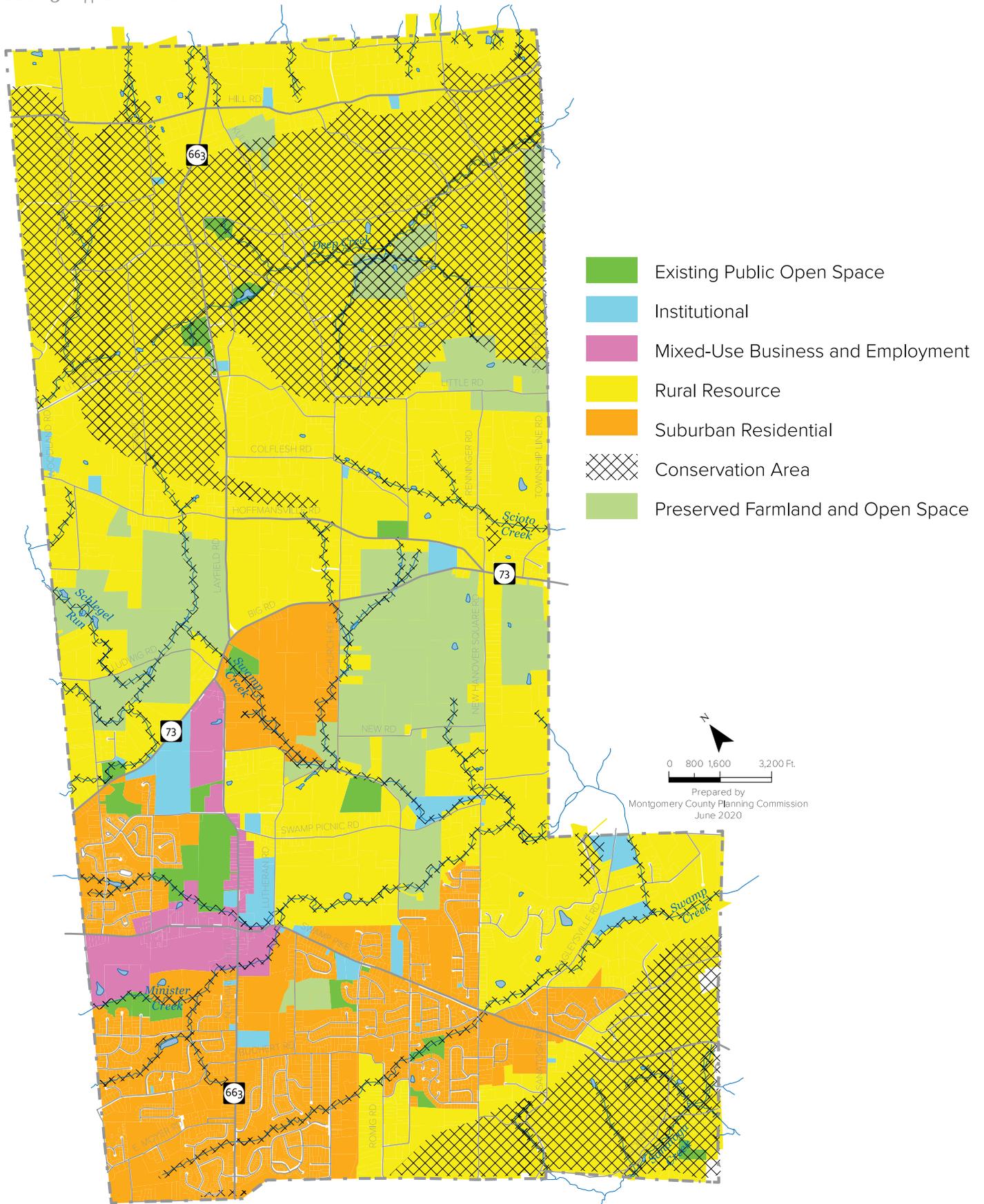
is intended to provide an area for limited commercial uses outside of the core commercial areas. It occupies a limited number of properties with frontage on Swamp Pike around the intersection with Sanatoga Road/Fagleysville Road. Over half of the designated district is built-out as residential uses. In the event these properties are redeveloped for commercial uses, it may be helpful to consider a coordinated access management approach between properties to reduce the number of curb cuts along Swamp Pike.

LI Light Industrial and **HI Heavy Industrial** are intended to provide for light and heavy industrial, office, and laboratory uses. The districts are organized in such a way as to locate the heavy industrial uses within the light industrial uses to provide a graduated intensity of uses to buffer any heavy industrial uses to the greatest extent possible from surrounding properties. A proposed quarry in this district has been under review by the township for many years, which has received community opposition because of the concerns for heavy truck traffic, noise, and potential for groundwater contamination. These districts are surrounded

by the R-2M residential district and the R-5 district, and are located outside the sewer area boundary. The use and intensity of an extraction industry within this area may not be the most suitable given the surrounding land uses, and any transportation impacts from such a use would have to be carefully considered. Extraction industries are not required to be provided within New Hanover according to the township's obligations for land uses under the PMRPC nonresidential land use commitment, although junkyards are. This district may be better suited for less intense industrial uses in the future.



MAP: 38 || *Future Land Use*



Future Land Use

Identification of future land use represents one of the core tenets of this comprehensive plan. These recommendations are based on an understanding of how the land area within the township is used presently, how it may be used, and how the community desires it to be used. All of the topics that have been discussed throughout this plan contribute to how future land uses are identified; historical growth and development patterns set the stage and now New Hanover must balance the constraints of new and changing development—such as the location and strength of the transportation network, utility service areas, and environmental protection—with the opportunities brought by investment in the township and the obligation to meet the needs of current and future residents. One thing is clear: the community has expressed a strong desire to retain the rural character of the township. While it is impossible to halt all forms of development, there are a number of strategies that can be implemented to protect the resources most valued by the community in order to achieve this vision for the future.

The following land uses belonging to the future land use map should not be understood as a zoning map nor a mandate to require a change in an existing land use, and does not impact the township’s current zoning ordinances or other regulatory statutes. It is intended to serve as a guide to articulate desired land use patterns and inform future municipal decisions regarding ordinance changes, zoning revisions, and other regulations that will impact land use characteristics and distribution throughout the township.

For the most part, the future land use map for New Hanover is consistent with the future land use maps from the Montgomery County Comprehensive Plan and the PMRPC Comprehensive Plan. The most notable change is a reduction in the areas identified as “secondary growth areas” in the PMRPC plan in favor of recommending a more nuanced future land use designation as recommended in the county comprehensive plan.

The township will continue to coordinate with the PMRPC to appropriately provide for non-residential land uses as a region, recognizing that provision of those uses is not appropriate in all communities.

Future Land Use Categories

Rural Resource

The primary uses will be low-density residential, agriculture, open space, and recreation. Community-oriented nonresidential uses may be permitted on higher road classifications that do not require public sewer or water service.



These areas will remain zoned for lot sizes of at least two acres or more per dwelling unit and be primarily serviced by on-lot sewer and water. Dwelling unit types should be primarily single-family detached, but provisions should allow for accessory dwelling units on properties to function as rental or in-law suites.

Sidewalks should remain more limited except in cases where properties can be logically connected by sidewalk or trail to a park, public open space, or other community destination.

Suburban Residential

The primary uses will be residential on lots of one acre or smaller. The primary housing type should be single-family detached, but should also include alternate housing types more suitable for a range of households, including attached housing and age-friendly housing. Integration of smaller housing types with fewer bedrooms will provide greater housing choice for residents, and design and

site layout standards should be developed to do this in a way that blends more seamlessly into neighborhoods. Age-restricted housing should not be limited to a single zoning district, but should be a permitted use in any residential zoning district.

Residential uses should preserve open space vistas to the greatest extent possible, and implement functional open space to serve as an amenity to the community while also protecting sensitive environmental features on the site. Secondary uses might include limited neighborhood-scaled retail or office uses that can serve as a transition to main roadways. Sidewalks and other means of non-vehicular connectivity are critically important for these land uses, and should be installed in their entirety.

Mixed-Use Business and Employment

Existing commercial districts and commercial land uses are incredibly limited in size and are disconnected from one another.





While most of the residential zoning districts allow some non-residential uses by either special exception or conditional use, it is unlikely that much commercial development will occur outside the zoning districts. These uses should therefore be flexible through the development of mixed-use or integrated uses on a site. Service-based and neighborhood-scaled businesses like day care centers, salons, and medical care facilities are likely the most suitable for the township. Residents in the township are well-served by larger big-box store shopping centers in nearby municipalities, but many residents desire to see small-scale commercial developments that provide a more unique shopping or dining experience. While this area includes the New Hanover Town Center, the township may wish to reduce the intensity of

commercial and residential uses allowed in the TN and TC districts to align better with the kind of commercial main street/village center desired by the residents. If New Hanover Town Center is developed, it will likely meet the commercial demands of the township for many years to come.

Preserved Farmland and Open Space

These areas are primarily preserved through the Montgomery County Farmland Preservation Program. This program requires the preserved farmland to remain in farming in perpetuity. Other portions of this area include properties that New Hanover has preserved through purchasing conservation easements.

While New Hanover Township has a large share of its agricultural

lands permanently preserved, more farmers should consider preserving their agricultural land. Where undeveloped land is next to agricultural or open space land, efforts should be made to identify the property owner to target acquisition or easement for that property to build contiguous areas of protected lands.

Existing Public Open Space

New Hanover has a diverse mix of public parks offering a range of amenities and landscapes. These park resources are an incredibly valuable asset to the community and should remain appropriately accessible to the public.

Institutional

These uses should continue to operate but if the existing institutional use should close, the physical buildings and properties should be retained and adapted

in a manner sensitive to the community context. They serve as important landmarks with historical significance, like many 19th and early 20th century churches in the township. These buildings are critically important to the fabric of the community and can be adapted to suit new uses if and when the institutional use is no longer viable on these properties. Additionally, the township should consider what the demand and need is for additional community services, such as a brick and mortar library. Libraries are great sources for community events, classes, continuing education, social programming, and activities for all residents from babies and toddlers to seniors to provide an outlet close to residents for learning, play, and socialization.

Conservation Area Overlay

The Conservation Area Overlay supplements the guidance of the underlying land use and targets environmentally vulnerable areas of the township for additional protection. The overlay follows the boundary of the diabase geologic formation which contains sensitive natural features such as woodlands and steep slopes. The overlay also includes riparian

corridors and waterways to ensure these areas are also preserved. These areas carry greater ecological value if they remain connected and undeveloped.

The Conservation Area Overlay should be preserved and buffered from development to the greatest extent possible, whether through best management practices and land stewardship up to formal preservation through acquisition or easements. Conservation subdivision should be encouraged in these areas.

Montco 2040: A Shared

Vision lays out the future

land use of the county.

Map 39 shows the county

comprehensive plan future

land use designation for

New Hanover Township.

As shown on the map, the

majority of the future land use

of the township is classified

as Open Space, Rural

Resource Area, and Suburban

Residential Area.

Map 40 illustrates the PMRPC

future land use designations

for New Hanover Township.

The three future land uses—

Conservation Area, Primary

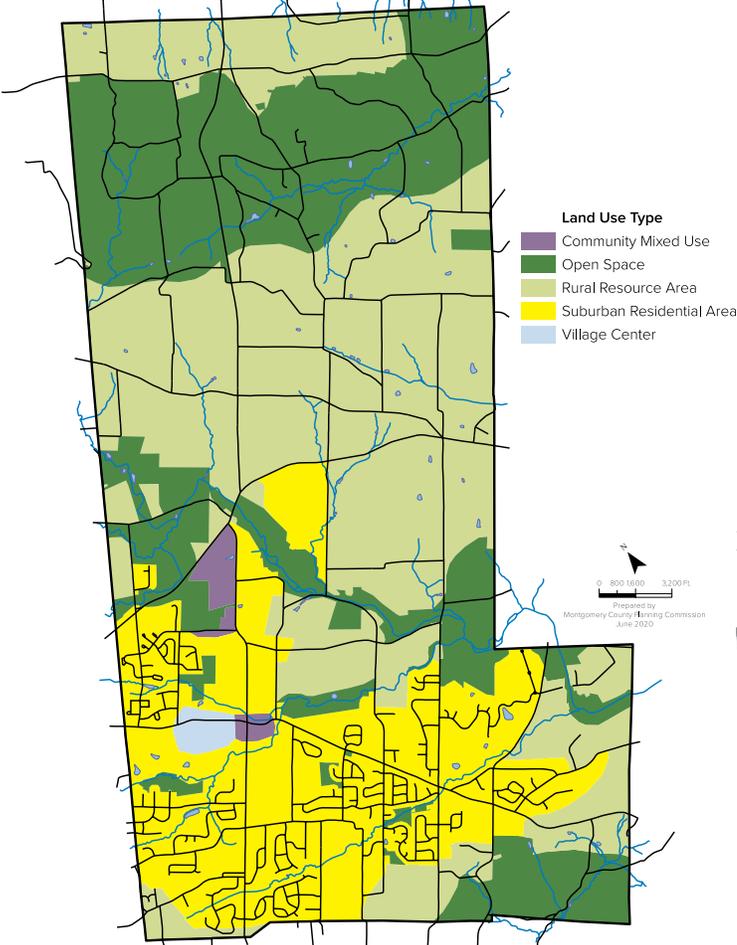
Growth Area, and Secondary

Growth Area—are used to

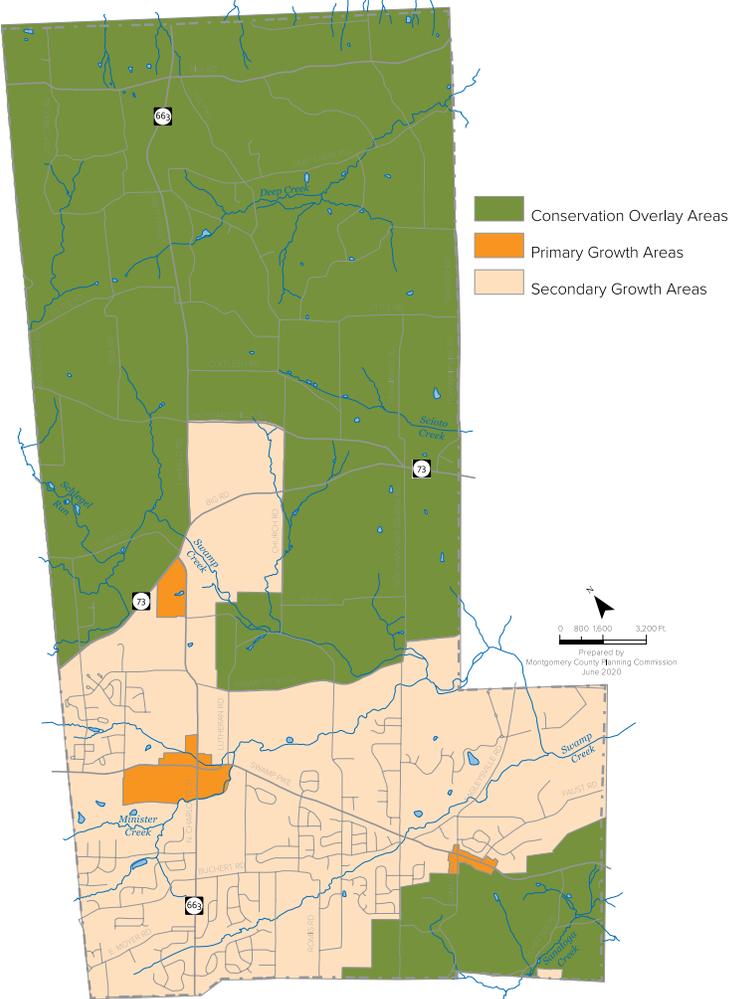
strategically plan for future

growth in the region.

MAP: 39 || *Montco 2040 Future Land Use*



MAP: 40 || *Future Land Use: Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Comprehensive Plan, 2015*



This section contains analysis of the recommendations and strategies provided throughout the plan. Recommendations are value based statements that demonstrate the community's vision while strategies are the specific action items to aid with the implementation of each recommendation.

The implementation chart assigns each recommendation a priority level and it designates a general time-frame for each strategy to be completed. This provides the framework for for the township to implement the strategies discussed throughout the planning process and achieve the goals laid out in the comprehensive plan.

The Partners and Funding Opportunities columns on the chart are provided to assist in the implementation of each strategy. The Abbreviation Table below provides abbreviations for the potential partners identified in the implementation chart. This information will benefit the Board of Supervisors and township staff in the upcoming implementation phase. The Montgomery County Planning Commission staff will assist the township in these future implementation processes.

Abbreviation Table:

Boyertown Area School District (BASD)

Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC)

Pottstown Area Rapid Transit (PART)

New Hanover Township Historical Society (NHTHS)

Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP)

Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT)

TriCounty Area Chamber of Commerce (TCACC)

implementation chart

CHAPTER	RECOMMENDATIONS AND STRATEGIES	PRIORITY	TIMELINE	PARTNERS	FUNDING OPPORTUNITY
Community Services	Grow capacity of government services and staffing to meet the needs of an increased populace.	Low			
	Coordinate with the police department to increase staffing and invest in new technology, vehicles, and other services to improve responsiveness and safety.		Medium		
	Invest in upgraded technology at the township building to improve administrative functioning.		Medium		
	Expand staffing for public works and other township departments, as needed.		Medium		
	Expand the capacity of the salt shed and public works garage. Invest in new road maintenance equipment, as needed.		Medium		
	Manage the expansion of utility infrastructure to align with future development goals.	Medium			
	Update the Act 537 Plan, and establish a recurring timeline for revisions every five years.		Medium	PA DEP	
	Establish on-lot disposal system management program to survey existing systems, identify failures, and provide resident education.		Medium		
	Restrict expansion of sewer services outside of the existing sewer system boundary except for designated properties with failing on-lot systems.		Medium		
Demographics and Housing	Support Aging in Place policies through infrastructure, amenities, and zoning.	High			
	Enhance sidewalk connectivity within and between residential developments and community destination points.		Short		
	Expand passive recreation opportunities including walking trails at township parks.		Medium	MCPC	
	Require walking trails in residential neighborhoods as part of open space requirements, where feasible.		Short		
	Create standards for age-restricted or age-targeted housing developments that include suitable recreation and/or commercial amenities for residents that do not require access to an automobile.		Medium	MCPC	

IMPLEMENTATION

Demographics and Housing	Create development incentives for residential zoning districts that includes single-floor living housing options.		Medium	MCPC	
	Amend zoning to allow age-restricted housing in any residential zoning district.		Medium	MCPC	
	Protect the township's rural suburban community character.	High			
	Amend open space requirements in residential developments to increase the amount of required open space and modify open space design standards to create more functional open space amenities within neighborhoods.		Short	MCPC	
	Decrease permitted housing density in new residential developments within the areas identified as medium to low density residential in the future land use map.		Short	MCPC	
	Amend the performance standards for higher density housing land uses in the township's zoning ordinance to better align future development with limitations in the availability for compatibility with soil typology, hydrology, and traffic impacts.		Short	MCPC	
	Increase access to healthy food options for township residents.	Low			
	Encourage residential food production via a community gardening or "edible landscapes" for larger residential developments.		Medium		
	Protect and preserve the township's historic resources.	High			
	Evaluate the means through which buildings, vistas, and other historic resources can be cataloged and protected.		Short	NHTHS	
	Adopt the appropriate preservation or historic district ordinance to achieve the goals of protecting key structures, vistas, and other identified resources.		Short	NHTHS	
	Create an inventory of historic and contributing properties to identify all contributing resources, whether publicly or privately held.		Short	NHTHS	
	Provide property owners with best practices and information on how to maintain architectural integrity of older and historic homes.		Short	NHTHS	
Natural Resources	Protect township waterways to preserve streams as unimpaired, maintain clean drinking water, and support wildlife habitats.	High			
	Enhance the standards for the riparian buffer conservation district to create stronger buffer requirements surrounding riparian areas and wetlands.		Short		
	Implement mitigation measures to meet the township's MS4 standards.		Short		

Natural Resources	Institute a yearly leaf collection for all developments of fifteen homes or more to reduce the amount of leaf litter that could be washed into sewer systems and waterways.		Short		
	Improve stormwater management across the township.	High			
	Identify failing stormwater systems and enact measures to rectify the failures.		Short		
	Update township ordinances to require naturalization of stormwater basins.		Short	MCPC	
	Provide a township-supported rain barrel program to provide education and materials to residents about proper installation and use.		Short		
	Adopt green parking lot design standards.		Short	MCPC	
	Publish educational materials geared toward modification of residential properties to support improved on-lot stormwater control.		Short		
	Adopt policies to encourage sustainability practices at the household and municipal level.	Medium			
	Prepare a stewardship plan to establish and outline specific goals for protection of natural resources.		Medium	MCPC	
	Adopt renewable energy ordinances to regulate proper installation of renewable infrastructure to protect public safety and property.		Medium	MCPC	
	Pilot an organics compost collection system township-wide to increase diversion of household waste from landfills.		Long		
	Publish educational materials to inform residents of township sustainability efforts and best practices for at-home implementation of sustainability initiatives.		Medium		
	Preserve natural features and champion protection of environmentally sensitive properties.	High			
	Create a maintenance plan to monitor preservation efforts at sites designed as Sites of Statewide Significance.		Short		
	Outline preservation techniques for properties identified in the Natural Features Preservation Map to be accomplished through updates to zoning ordinances, subdivision and land development ordinances, or other regulatory tools.		Short		
	Acquire properties that contain identified sensitive natural features in accordance with the Open Space Acquisition Map.		Short		DCNR Land Acquisition and Conservation Grant

IMPLEMENTATION

Natural Resources	Periodically review ordinances managing natural resources and update with best management practices as needed.		Ongoing	MCPC	
	Protect wildlife habitat in open space areas.	High			
	Identify locations of native wildlife habitats and threats to those habitats.		Short		
	Preserve contiguous natural areas to reduce habitat fragmentation.		Short		
	Provide educational resources to residents about the importance and recommended treatment of wildlife in a suburban setting.		Short		
	Update the landscape ordinance and required planting schedule to strengthen the incorporation of native plant species in landscaped areas.		Short	MCPC	
Parks and Open Space	Maintain township-owned parks in good condition.	Medium			
	Update maintenance plans for each park and open space resource that account for anticipated incremental increases in park use.		Medium		
	Create new wayfinding signage to identify park and open space locations.		Medium		
	Assess parking capacity and parking demand in township-owned parks and open space areas, and enlarge or improve parking areas to meet demand.		Medium		
	Collaborate with youth sports leagues and others who rent field space to maintain existing fields and surrounding property in good condition.		Medium		
	Publish planned activities, user schedules, and rental availability of all parks and fields.		Medium		
	Budget for future staffing and equipment needs for the Public Works Department to accommodate future parks and open space maintenance demands.		Medium		
	Establish greater connectivity among parks, open space, and residential areas.	Medium			
	Pursue implementation of the proposed trail system from the 2006 Open Space Plan and the 2015 Bicycle and Pedestrian Trails Map. Prioritize trails that connect residential areas to nearby parks and open space resources.		Medium	MCPC	
	Apply for grant funding from DCNR and other sources to construct the Dotterer Road Trail.		Medium	DCNR	DCNR Nonmotorized Trails Grant
Require new land developments to create or connect into a trail to provide non-motorized access to parks within a mile of the development.		Medium	MCPC		

Parks and Open Space	Review and implement appropriate connections among neighborhoods and community destinations.		Medium		
	Enhance park amenities to provide a balance of active and passive recreation needs for all park users.	Low			
	Improve community awareness of parks through new wayfinding signage and planned activities and programs.		Medium		
	Install new outdoor passive recreation amenities in public open space and/or parks, as recommended in this Comprehensive Plan and the 2015 Open Space and Recreation Master Plan.		Medium		
	Increase comfort at playgrounds by planting additional trees and vegetation for shade, providing playground shade canopies, and installing new seating and picnic tables.		Medium		
	Install a boat ramp in Hickory Park.		Long		
	Evaluate participation rates at existing indoor recreation facilities. Develop new programming, specifically targeting adult and family fitness classes.		Long		
	Prioritize the preservation of open space and natural features to maintain areas of undeveloped land that contribute to the rural-suburban character of the township.	High			
	Limit development within open space areas to passive recreation amenities like walking trails and wildlife viewing stations to maintain the rural character and environmental integrity of the properties.		Short		
	Prioritize properties identified in the Open Space Acquisition Map to plan for capital investment necessary to secure development rights or purchase agreements with targeted properties. Properties that contain sensitive natural features or are adjacent to existing open space, parks, or agricultural uses should be targeted for early acquisition.		Short		
	Build criteria for secondary acquisition targets that considers preservation of contiguous area and sensitive landscapes containing woodlands, steep slopes, creeks, and wetlands.		Medium		
	Support property owners and farmers in preserving their agricultural lands under one of the farmland preservation categories. Target agricultural lands adjacent to already preserved farmland to establish contiguous preserved space, where possible.		Short		
	Provide resources to property owners and farmers on best management practices to maintain working agricultural lands.		Medium		

IMPLEMENTATION

Parks and Open Space	Provide a diverse range of recreation amenities to support changing population dynamics and enable residents to live active, healthy lifestyles.	Low			
	Evaluate the need for new sports/athletic fields to support additional playing areas for local leagues or a tournament-level complex based on community demand and capacity of existing facilities.		Long		
	Establish consistent coordination with youth sports organizations and the Boyertown Area School District to determine the capacity and projected demands of fields.		Long	BASD	
	Publish field usage schedules accessible by residents to promote transparency and reduce use privatization.		Long		
	Complete a master plan for the Wassmer-Layfield Open Space as a community-level park, trail, and recreation destination.		Long	MCPC	
Transportation	Maintain area roadways in good condition	Low			
	Coordinate with PennDOT and Montgomery County Roads and Bridges on bridge repair projects. Ensure that planned bike lanes and trail connections are included in the plans.		Long	PennDOT	
	Fund and construct the intersection projects identified in the Act 209 Capital Improvements Plan.		Long	MCPC	County Transportation Program
	Implement a user-interface program to enable residents to report roadway concerns and track roadway projects.		Medium		
	Maximize travel efficiencies and reduce traffic congestion	High			
	Conduct a comprehensive roadway network analysis to evaluate the applicability of roadway classifications. Update classification system, definitions, or design standards as needed. Provide recommendations for improvements to address safety issues and congestion areas.		Short		
	Require new developments construct new connector roads into adjacent properties, or provide stub-outs, as appropriate, to dilute traffic movements across a more diverse set of roadways.		Short		
	Eliminate the creation of new cul-de-sacs in new development to the greatest extent possible.		Short		
	Update the Act 209 on an as-needed basis, or by the year 2030, whichever comes first.		Short		
	Require new nonresidential developments to connect into adjacent properties, or provide for future connection points to adjacent undeveloped properties where feasible.		Short		

Transportation	Evaluate roadway widths, driveway designs, and parking requirements in residential neighborhoods to ensure new developments are providing suitable amounts of parking and locations of parking throughout the neighborhood.		Short	MCPC	
	Enhance pedestrian safety and connectivity throughout the township	Medium			
	Paint new continental-style cross walks at all intersections. Upgrade standard crosswalks to continental-style crosswalks.		Medium		
	Require adjacent residential subdivisions to connect with each other through a formal on-street sidewalk network, or through an off-street trail or pathway.		Short		
	Coordinate with the Boyertown Area School District to establish walking trails between the Boyertown Middle School East and surrounding residential neighborhoods.		Medium		
	Support bicycle and trails networks	Medium			
	Construct multi-use trails along routes identified in the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan.		Medium		
	Install new on-road or off-road bike amenities when roadways or intersections are being upgraded, as appropriate.		Medium		
	Provide education to residents about available on- and off-road bike routes through the township and region.		Medium		
	Coordinate with Montgomery County and property owners to secure access easements or property acquisition for the West County Trail alignment.		Medium	MCPC	
	Expand resident opportunities to utilize public transportation.	Low			
	Coordinate with Pottstown Borough to establish bus routes and connection points to better enable township residents to ride to regional community destinations via the Pottstown Area Rapid Transit bus network.		Medium	PART	
	Build a “park and ride” location to encourage carpooling to regional centers of work, and to serve as a potential future stop on the PART bus network.		Medium	PART	
Economic Development	Provide new opportunities for business development to meet resident’s needs and to support a sustainable tax base for the township.	Medium			
	Identify suitable areas to expand permitted commercial land uses in non-commercial zoning districts; OR re-zone areas to expand commercial opportunities.		Medium		

Economic Development	Develop stronger “village-style” site design standards to require commercial development to meet architectural, pedestrian, circulation, and landscaping standards in keeping with the rural village character of the township.		Short	MCPC	
	Attract small businesses that can meet local retail, personal service, and other commercial needs.		Medium	Tricounty Area Chamber of Commerce	
	Adopt zoning permissions to allow neighborhood-oriented commercial uses within residential land developments, particularly for age-restricted development.		Medium	MCPC	
	Pursue “place-based” tourism to support local destinations and businesses that create unique experiences .	Medium			
	Promote agri-tourism and other agriculturally supportive business growth.		Long	Tricounty Area Chamber of Commerce	
	Adopt regulatory ordinance that supports the development of on-farm business opportunities.		Long	MCPC	
	Establish a farmers market or CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) program to support area growers.		Medium		
	Invest in parks and trails that tie into larger recreational resources to develop strong outdoor recreation opportunities.		Medium		



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