

CHAPTER 6

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Chester Heights Borough's heritage is reflected in its many historic homes, natural landscapes, historic homes, and remnants of rural industry. Many older communities in Delaware County and the Philadelphia region recognize that if they are to thrive in the future, they should not ignore their heritage but embrace and build upon it. In doing so, these communities are preserving the unique character of their architecture and neighborhoods, while fostering community pride and encouraging the economic development potential of their historic resources. They are also providing a framework for making appropriate revitalization and design decisions for the future.

Historic preservation is the act of safeguarding resources that are fifty years old or older and are important to individuals, their communities, or possibly the nation. *Historic resources* can include any all or a portion of a community's built environment, be it a building, neighborhood or a district, but also other aspects of a community's culture beyond the built environments such as parks, landscapes and archaeological resources, which are artifacts of the past buried underground. Some of these resources beyond historic buildings can be significant, and their protection should also be considered.

Municipalities who value their roots foster a stronger sense of community identity. Since Chester Heights still exhibits much of its history through the built environment and its landscapes and desires to protect its unique character, the Borough should actively pursue historic preservation.

GOAL: IDENTIFY, MAINTAIN, AND ENHANCE THE FULL RANGE OF THE BOROUGH'S HISTORIC RESOURCES.

THE VALUE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Historic preservation is a series of actions that build on a municipality's existing features and uses them to make the entire community better. Preservation is not just about grand architecture or famous people, but also about the ordinary or vernacular historic development patterns and cultural resources that tell a community's unique story. Preservation is a means to enhance the local quality of life and to potentially improve a community's image and identity. This chapter contains information on the legal status of historic preservation at the various levels of government and a series of tools that can aid a municipality in preserving its historic resources.

Values

The initial idea of historic preservation often comes from a shared set of values in a municipality concerning the state of its historic and cultural resources. The driving force may be affection for certain buildings, landscapes, or historic settings; it can also be a pride in the lives and accomplishments of its citizens, past and present. These two values are especially important to Chester Heights.

Pride

Successful communities express a sense of pride and a common vision of what the future of their community can be. It is often helpful to have a symbol around which to rally which in the Borough's case might be the Camp Meeting site or St. Thomas Church. A National Register of Historic Places property such as the Camp Meeting can act as a catalyst in continuing the protection of the Borough's numerous other significant historic resources.

Economic Development

Economic benefits can be at times be accrued by rehabilitating older sections of a community, as property values often rise in historic neighborhoods as a result. Residential property values generally increase, or at least stabilize, where a neighborhood has achieved historic preservation status through a local, state, or national designation. A municipality that pays attention to the variety of styles and ages of buildings is also a more visually interesting place in which to live, work, and recreate.

COMMUNITY CHARACTER

OBJECTIVE 6-1:

TO MAINTAIN AND PRESERVE THE HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS WHICH HAVE SHAPED THE CHESTER HEIGHTS INTO ITS PRESENT-DAY CHARACTER.

The historic development patterns of Chester Heights can be attributed to broad social trends that have transformed not only the way people build houses, but also the evolution of public infrastructure and services that make up a modern-day municipality. Amidst dense development throughout the eastern portion of the county during the late 19th and early 20th century, Chester Heights maintained its rural character and historic developmental context. Documenting these contexts is a way of understanding what remains as evidence of the Borough's past. Proactive preservation tools act as the catalyst for further efforts to preserve those elements in the community that are currently endangered and could benefit from restoration or rehabilitation.

Development Patterns

Like many of the municipalities in the western portion of Delaware County, Chester Heights began as a small rural community. As some of the more western townships of the

County gradually evolved into more developed communities, driven by the development of modern transportation systems, Chester Heights remained rural in character. Today, the scattered farmsteads in Chester Heights, formerly part of Aston Township, continue to dominate the landscape. However, pockets of modern residential development from the late 20th century border the majority of remaining open space and historic landscapes.

Early Chester Heights

Located within the northernmost section of Aston Township, the rural community of Chester Heights began as a series of small farms. Acreage totaling one thousand acres was surveyed to Thomas Brassey in 1684 and subsequently divided into smaller tracts by 1710. One of those tracts containing one hundred and nineteen acres bordering Concord Township was surveyed to Thomas Martin. In 1734, Martin constructed a large fieldstone farmhouse along Valleybrook Road that remained in the family until after 1870. Even after numerous additions to the Martin House, Sprucehaven Farm remains an iconic structure in Chester Heights as one of the original homesteads in the Borough. Also among the earliest landowners in Aston Township was Gilbert Woolman, whose two hundred and fifty acre property extended northwest from Llewellyn Road. The Woolman Homestead is among the oldest surviving houses from the early 18th century.

While Thomas Martin, Gilbert Woolman and other early landowners such as John Pennell, William McCracken, Caleb Heyburn and J.W. Thatcher established residency in northern Aston Township, there were also instances of transient inhabitants. According to Ashmead, “as late as 1770, a family of Indians had a wigwam on the Aston side of Chester Creek, on or in the vicinity of the present farm of George Drayton, but they did not remain there constantly.” During the American Revolution, the rural fields of northern Aston Township created a reprieve for soldiers, “a number of stragglers from the defeated American Army, hungry, demoralized and exhausted in their flight from the field at Brandywine, collected in the neighborhood of Logtown, where they passed the night, sleeping in the outbuildings and open fields.” (Ashmead, 293).

Rural Industry

With the improvement of the Baltimore Turnpike and the development of the Octoraro Line of the Pennsylvania Railroad, mills and other rural industries began to transform the primarily agrarian community of Chester Heights. Transportation enhancements on the Baltimore Turnpike and the Pennsylvania Railroad not only brought new industries into this rural region, but they significantly changed the landscape. Logtown Road or Valleybrook Road, one of the oldest roads and earliest routes from Chester to the interior of the county, realized an increase in residences along its route. Along the original alignment of the Baltimore Pike “The Malsterer’s” - reputedly a tollhouse for the turnpike - is situated to south of the roadbed. Then, on Christmas Day in 1833 the railroad made its first run through Chester Heights.

Rural industries including various milling endeavors flourished in Chester Heights. Joseph Thatcher, a well-known 18th century coach-maker built “Forge Hill” on an early

Pennell land grant. Thatcher also erected a tilt mill prior to 1811 on Chester Creek 100' north of Baltimore Pike, which was run by Enos Thatcher from 1812-1815. Together with Thomas Thatcher, Enos added a stone mill, but it remained idle during the recession after the second war with England. In 1841, Joseph and Isaac Thatcher revived the mill making self-sharpening plows. However, the mill was destroyed in the great flood of 1843 and never rebuilt. A small blacksmith shop next to the mill built c. 1820 survived the flood and continued to operate until 1884.

In 1797, John Lungren, a papermaker, purchased eighty acres of land and the rights for a mill to manufacture paper along Chester Creek in Aston Township. By 1799, a stone paper mill, dam, and stone dwelling known as "The Mansion" or "Stonehaven" were erected by John and Sarah Lungren. During the War of 1812, large amounts of paper money were required and Lungren Mills supplied paper for United States currency. After John Lungren's death, his sons, William and Charles operated the mills until 1823. William Martin purchased the mills and renamed the mill seat "Lenni Mills" after the Lenni Lenape Indians.

Located along Valleybrook Road, George Drayton operated a successful lumber mill. The remains of the Drayton & Sharpless Lumber Company lumberyard buildings have been incorporated into "Smithbridge Village" complex. Drayton & Sharpless more than likely provided the millwork for the 2-story brick Drayton House. An 1881 renovation is dated by the carpenter's name and date found on the back of a stair riser.

Mid 19th Century

With the population increase in Chester Heights due largely to improved transportation and industry, social and religious institutions began to thrive in the mid-19th century. The original 1836 building rented to Aston for \$2/month, known as the Logtown School changed its name to the Chester Heights School in 1880. The current stone located at the corner of Valleybrook and Llewellyn, is the replacement of the original schoolhouse.

The congregation of St. Thomas's church in Chester Heights is the oldest Catholic congregation in Pennsylvania. Worshippers first gathered in 1729 under the sponsorship of the Wilcox family, owners of the Ivy Mills paper mill in Concord. Services were held in the Wilcox family chapel, St. Mary's Chapel, built in 1837. In 1852, the cornerstone for the current church along Valleybrook Road was dedicated and blessed by St. John Neumann, Bishop of Philadelphia.

As Philadelphia's growing middle class sought resorts to visit and rural excursions as an escape from crowded urban lifestyles, rural summer residences became a popular destination. Built in 1850 as a summer residence, "Rose Hill" became a resort hotel in Chester Heights. In 1900 the Bond Baking Company purchased the large Queen Anne summer residence to serve as an executives' summer retreat. The building sits on a small knoll overlooking Llewellyn and Lenni Roads.

In response to Philadelphia’s secular interests and vacation resorts, the Methodist Preacher’s Meeting in Philadelphia considered the idea of establishing a site for camp meetings and excursions. The Preacher’s Meeting appointed a site committee to locate, “a suitable grove in the country to which its members and Sunday School children might have ready access for social and religious purposes, without the danger of contamination from dens of vice such as are too often found in connections with places of resort in the neighborhood of large cities” (Camp Meeting documents). The Camp Meeting obtained a charter from the Pennsylvania legislature in 1872 and purchased a one hundred forty eight acre tract of land in Aston Township. The Camp Meeting consisted of Victorian open cottages and a tent shaped eclectic Classical Revival style Tabernacle with a large portico as the focal point for services and worship.

20th Century: Chester Heights Borough

The transition into the 20th century brought many changes to Chester Heights, most notably the community’s incorporation as an independent municipality in 1945. Changes also took place among many longstanding businesses. After a series of owners at Rose Hill, Anne Pope established a private boarding school for special needs adults in 1923. As Rose Hill estate transitioned into a school, a pump house and carriage barn was built in the 1920s with the latter redesigned in the late 1930s for classrooms and male dormitories. In 1937, William Fager became the owner-director of this highly respected facility.

In 1947, Stonehaven (Lenni Mills) was sold to the Pincins, who resided at the house and operated a fire extinguisher repair business. In March 1995, the Westlake family purchased the property to restore the house and now use it as a conference center and office for Westlake Plastics Company, whose headquarters are currently across the road in the old Lenni mill buildings.

“In 1900, George Wood bought three adjoining tracts of land in Delaware County, Pennsylvania. One had remnants of buildings from the Rocky Run Dairy Farm and this became the nucleus of an expanded farm operation. Wawa Dairy Farms opened in 1902 to sell milk bottled under sanitary conditions from cows certified as healthy and free from disease. Wood catered to the growing urban market concerned with consuming safe milk. Efficient transportation on and off the farm made all the difference in bringing a perishable product to market. Bottles crated at the dairy and sent by wagon to the Wawa Station went for transport to Philadelphia markets and beyond. George Wood had a gentleman’s agreement not to compete with small dairies near his Wawa farms and thus his milk was not originally distributed in the immediate vicinity.

By the late 1950s, the Wawa Dairy had expanded its home delivery business to include over one hundred forty-five routes. The first Wawa Food Market opened on April 16, 1964 and today, the company is familiar to many as a chain of over 500 convenience stores in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia.

HISTORIC RESOURCES

OBJECTIVE 6-2: TO IDENTIFY THE RESOURCES THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE BOROUGH'S DEVELOPMENT AND TO ENCOURAGE COMPATIBLE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT.

The historic character of Chester Heights as described in the preceding development patterns, is visually evident throughout the Borough. The housing stock varies by style, age, and type and entire streets are filled with excellent architectural resources, with homes dating back to the 19th and 18th centuries. Residents of Chester Heights also enjoy the rural atmosphere retained by open spaces, parks, and rolling hills that provide the community a unique identity in Delaware County.

Resource Identification

Listed below in Table 6-1 and Map 6-1 are a list of significant and potentially significant historic resources that the Borough should actively consider and plan for preservation. Many of these resources are listed for their local significance, such as enhancing the character of an intact neighborhood or the overall identity of the Borough. To complete this inventory, DCPD staff conducted a windshield examination of the Borough, as well as atlas research, informal interviews, secondary historic research, and collaboration with the Chester Heights Historical Society. This inventory provides the groundwork for the more complete and official Historic Resources *Survey* which is presently being updated by the Chester Heights Historical Society.

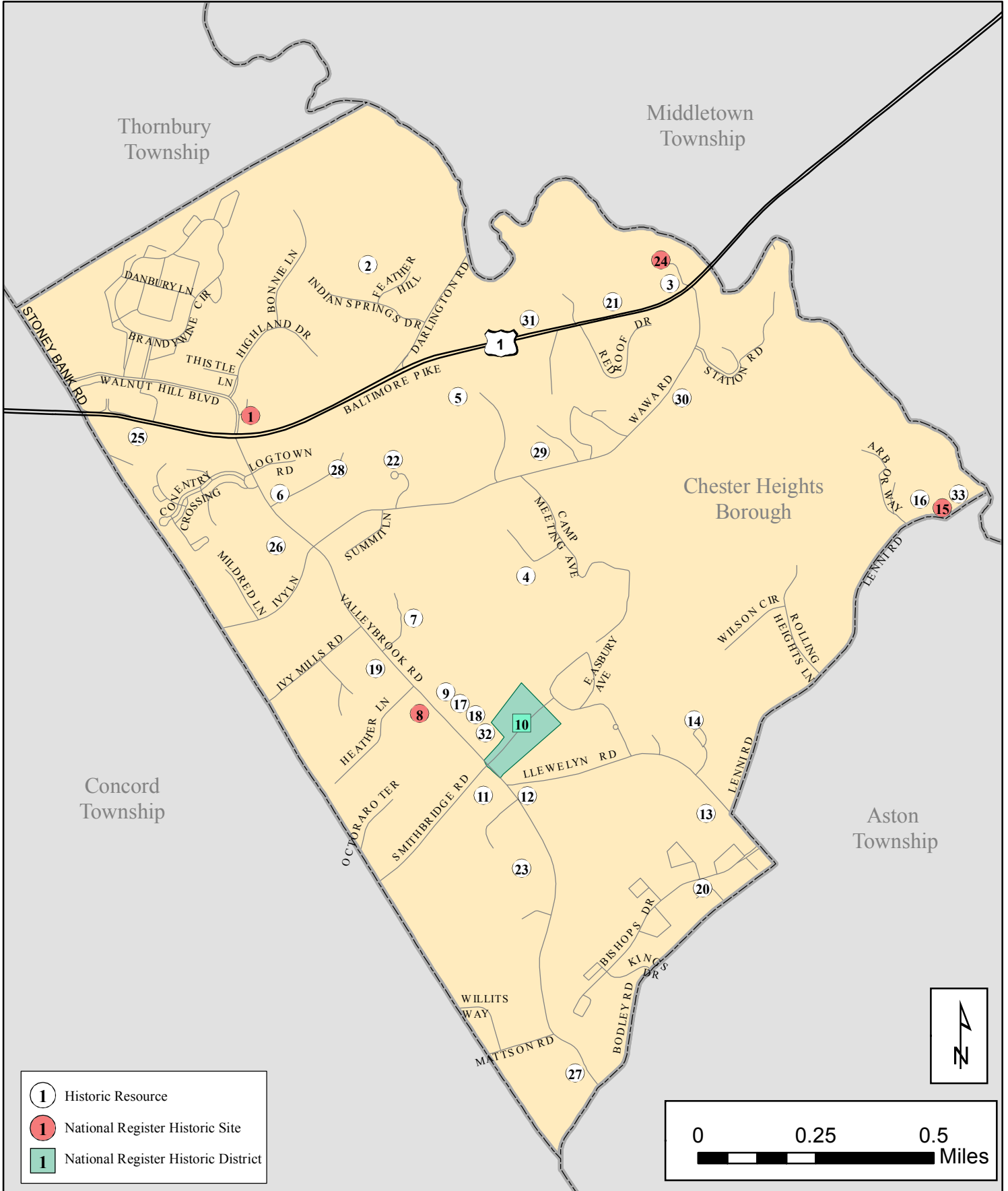
It is important to note that what is included in Table 6-1 is in no way the final or comprehensive designation of resources throughout the Borough. The inventory is meant to be a guide towards realizing the historic fabric of the Borough and is a sample of the official Historic Resources Survey being updated by the Chester Heights Historical Society. The updated survey is based on the 1983 survey completed by DCPD. Historic Resource Surveys attempt to provide comprehensive documentation of a municipality's historic resources but do periodically require updates.

Archaeological Resources

In 1990, DCPD contracted with Cultural Heritage Research Services, Inc. (CHRS) to complete the *Delaware County Archaeological Resource Inventory and Management Plan*. Within the plan is an archaeological analysis of each municipality in Delaware County, based upon known resources and predictive archaeological models. Existing documentation is the key to identifying known resources, whereas the predictive model

**TABLE 6-1
HISTORIC RESOURCES**

Map #	Name/Location	Description
1	Hill of Skye, 1730 Walnut Hill	c. 1722 Vernacular, red and black glazed Flemish bond brick, National Register
2	Hamanassett, 725 Darlington	c. 1856 built from A.J. Downing's <i>The Architecture of Country Houses</i>
3	Little Forge Hill, 371 Baltimore Pike	c. 1790 Georgian, stone
4	Home Farm, 249 Wawa Road	c. 1800 fieldstone farmhouse
5	Blossom Hill, 240 Wawa Road	c. 1916 Tudor Revival, cut stone
6	Logtown Inn/Suzanne Taylor House, 490 Valleybrook Road	c. 1770 original Penn Plan, later additions
7	St. Thomas the Apostle, 364 Valleybrook Road	c. 1852 Gothic vernacular
8	Sprucehaven Farm, 363 Valleybrook Road	c. 1734 Federal vernacular, National Register
9	George Drayton House, 360 Valleybrook Road	c. 1881 Gothic Victorian
10	Chester Heights Camp Meeting, 320 Valleybrook Road	c. 1870 Folk Victorian cottages, National Register Historic District
11	Norman Powell Home, 8 Smithbridge Road	c. 1850 Folk Victorian
12	Chester Heights School, Llewellyn Road	
13	Shisler Landscaping & Nursery, Llewellyn Road	c. 1850 Gothic Victorian
14	Rose Hill, Llewellyn/Lenni Road	c. 1850 Queen Anne Victorian
15	Stonehaven, 484 Lenni Road	c. 1789 Georgian vernacular, National Register
16	Westlake Plastics, Lenni Road	
17	Parastudy, 354 Valleybrook Road	c. 1870 Folk Victorian
18	Wilson's Auction House, 344 Valleybrook Road	c. 1930
19	The Exchange, 391 Valleybrook Road	c. 1920 Brick bungalow
20	Woolman Homestead, 253 Bodley Road	c. 1725 with later additions Penn Plan
21	Locust Hill, 327 Baltimore Pike	c. 1786 Georgian Vernacular, fieldstone
22	White Oak, 186 Wawa Road	c. 1938 French Revival
23	Hannum House, 229 Valleybrook Road	c. 1811 Federal vernacular
24	Forge Hill, Baltimore Pike	c. 1780 original section Penn Plan, National Register
25	Crier in the Country, 52 Baltimore Pike	c. 1740 with multiple additions, Victorian Gothic
26	Logtown House/Jesse Walter House, 471 Valleybrook Road	c. 1814, Georgian vernacular
27	Peter's Tenant House, 103 Valleybrook Road	c. 1790 Georgian vernacular
28	The Malsterers, 476 Valleybrook Road	c. 1800 Colonial, vernacular
29	Tipton House, 250 Wawa Road	c. 1800 Federal vernacular
30	Bungalow, 295 Wawa Road	c. 1920 Bungalow
31	Creek Farm, Baltimore Pike	
32	Groff House, Valleybrook Road	c. 1890 Second Empire
33	William Griffith House, Lenni Road	c. 1790, Georgian Vernacular, National Register Eligible



Chester Heights
Borough

Map 6 - 1
Historic Resources

Disclaimer
This map is for analytical purposes only. The reliability of this map depends on the accuracy of the underlying data sources which have not been verified.

Prepared by
Delaware County
Planning Department
February 2010

relies heavily on the identification and location of particular soils, water sources, and slopes.

The predictive model used by CHRS indicates the majority of land within Chester Heights Borough has a high potential for prehistoric and archaeological sites. The southeastern portion of the Borough along Bishop’s Drive experienced residential suburban growth in the 1960s and is excluded from the high sensitivity areas. CHRS identified five major areas in Chester Heights as archaeological resources; St. Thomas Catholic Church and Cemetery, Chester Heights Camp Meeting (also listed on the National Register of Historic Places), the Lenni Mill Complex, the cluster of buildings in Logtown, and the vast amount of open land acreage throughout the Borough.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CULTURAL RESOURCES

The Borough should:

- 6-1 Continue to assist the Chester Heights Historical Society maintain and update the historic resource survey and follow up with placement of potentially eligible historic resources on the National Register of Historic Places.

Technical Assistance: DCPD Historic Preservation Section
Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission
PHMC

Seek to secure long-term conservation of open land throughout the Borough to protect archaeological resources as well as historic landscapes.

Technical Assistance: DCPD Historic Preservation Section
Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission
PHMC

PRESERVATION IN CHESTER HEIGHTS

OBJECTIVE 6-3: EVALUATE CURRENT PRESERVATION ACTIVITIES THROUGHOUT THE BOROUGH TO IDENTIFY THE APPROPRIATE LEVEL OF BOROUGH PARTICIPATION MOVING FORWARD.

Historic preservation can be mandated or encouraged at various levels of government. No longer relegated to the few historically minded members of a community, preservation activities entered the realm of governmental actions with the enactment of the National Preservation Act of 1966. Preservation is most directly effective at the local level, since the municipality is the only body legally allowed to create and mandate preservation regulations. Not taking full advantage of these legal opportunities may result in the Borough losing its valuable historic fabric and community character.

Federal Involvement

National Register of Historic Places

The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) manages the National Register of Historic Places for Pennsylvania. The program was established by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. Properties listed in the Register include districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that are significant in American history, architecture and engineering, archaeology, and culture. National Register properties are distinguished by having been documented and evaluated according to uniform standards.

The National Register criteria recognize the accomplishments of all peoples who have contributed to the history and heritage of the United States and are designed to help state and local governments, federal agencies, and others identify significant historic and archeological properties worthy of preservation and consideration in planning and development decisions. Listing in the National Register, however, does not interfere with a private property owner's right to alter, manage, or dispose of property. It often changes the way communities perceive their historic resources and gives credibility to efforts to preserve these resources. However not all buildings and cultural resources that are worthy of the National Register are actually listed. Many places hold significance but have not entered the National Register process. Some places have received the preliminary level of National Register designation, deemed "eligible" for National Register listing by PHMC. This preliminary level also has some benefits including possibly making these places eligible for grant funding for building and site rehabilitation or improvements. Chester Heights presently has five resources listed on the National Register and one eligible resource (see Table 6-1) however, there appear to be many more resources worthy of this distinction.

Having National Register status provides the following advantages:

- Recognition of the historic significance of the resource
- Special consideration if a federally funded project is found to affect the resource in any way
- Eligibility for federal tax credits
- Qualification for special funding from federal and state sources
- Prestige and status is given to the resource and community

Districts or clusters of historic buildings or resources (such as an industrial complex or a village of residences) may also be placed on the National Register as a district. In this case, each building that simply contributes to the district's historic significance is entitled to the same benefits enjoyed by an individual building on the National Register.

It should be emphasized that listing a property on the National Register is not a restrictive designation. Changes and alterations to a property listed on the National Register can be completed at the owner's discretion. In extreme cases inappropriate changes may result in the removal of the National Register designation status however generally the only time that changes to a National Register property are reviewed and potentially limited occurs when federal funding is involved in the project.

State Involvement

Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code – Act 247

The Pennsylvania MPC, Act 247, specifically enables local regulation for preservation. However, simply having the MPC as a guide for local municipalities does not ensure protection. It is the responsibility of the Borough to become an active participant in preservation.

Pennsylvania Historic District Act – Act 167

Pennsylvania Act 167 (1961 PL 282) is the most important legislative tool for protecting *clusters* of historic resources in a community. The historic district does not need to be on the National Register of Historic places to be eligible for protection under the Act. Act 167 authorizes the municipal government to:

- Delineate an historic district defined by architectural and historical similarities in which proposed changes to structures are locally reviewed for consistency with guidelines.
- Authorize additional regulations to the base zoning of the area.
- Establish a Historical Architectural Review Board (HARB) to make recommendations to local officials.
- Determine guidelines to regulate physical changes including demolitions, additions and alterations as well as new construction within the district.
- Create a review process leading to the granting or denial of a Certificate of Appropriateness for changes within the district.

A community can create a local historic district with specific design guidelines and requirements that must be met. Historic districts establish design guidelines to assist homeowners with appropriate choices for exterior alterations. These design recommendations reflect the overall historic character of the district that the community values. Provisions established by the district guidelines vary depending on the particular age and architectural style of each community. Examples of what these guidelines and recommendations might address include building height, bulk, roof line, overall proportions, façade openings, architectural detail, building materials, and fences.

Historical Architectural Review Board

Beyond having an Historical Commission established to oversee a municipality's individual resources, a Borough could create a HARB to govern an Act 167 Local District. The principal duties of this Board are to review proposed changes within a local historic district and to recommend, either for or against, a Certificate of Appropriateness regarding proposed construction, alterations, or other work in the district. A community could also opt to have a Historical Commission and a HARB, or just one of these stewards of historic resources.

Municipal Involvement

Local governments have the ability to protect historic resources through the adoption of specific historic preservation ordinances, as specified in the Municipalities Planning Code (MPC). Historic ordinances can be created to protect the characteristics and values of the community. An ordinance can influence rehabilitation, demolition, new development, and financial incentives. The ultimate goal of such an ordinance is to maintain the shared character of the community. Chester Heights currently does not have any ordinances dealing with historic preservation, which leaves the municipality vulnerable to losing historic resources.

Historical Commission

A Historical Commission is the most common type of group that can be appointed by the municipality to formally oversee local preservation activities. Usual activities might include recording historical data, identifying significant community resources in a survey format, acting as a review board for historic ordinances, advising residents and officials on potential historical activities, proposed subdivision or land use plans, and recommending incentives and methods for preservation. Though not mandated by law, its Commission members are appointed by the municipal officials and should include local residents and officials. Another way to create a formally recognized advisory body could be by establishing a task force or subcommittee of a municipal Board or Council or the local Planning Commission.

Municipal Zoning Ordinance

Another appropriate medium for a municipality to use for addressing historic properties is the local zoning ordinance. An historic overlay can be incorporated into the municipal zoning ordinances to protect scattered resources in a municipality, which in the case of Chester Heights are abundant. Historic overlays can be drafted to include incentives for developers who utilize preservation-friendly rehabilitation methods. At the least, a mention and definition of historic properties in a zoning ordinance provides the basis for official recognition as a significant part of the community. The historical resources to be protected by a zoning overlay must be included in an official historical resources survey. The body reviewing activities in an historic overlay district is customarily the Historical Commission.

Historic zoning overlays authorize a municipal government to:

- Delineate historic resources – scattered or grouped, possibly covering the entire municipality
- Establish a group to oversee activities, i.e., Historical Commission or existing Planning Commission
- Determine design guidelines focused on development of properties adjacent or near existing resources, buffering or visual protection, and protection for archaeological sites.

There are instances in which incorporating zoning incentives can also encourage preservation. Incentives can include additional uses permitted by special exception or as

a conditional use. For instance, an historic house in a residential district in the historic overlay district could be used for a flower shop. Strict criteria could be established for these additional overlay uses. Similarly, by allowing the conversion of large single-family homes into higher-density multi-unit apartment structures (with appropriate performance standards), preservation can be encouraged and these historic structures kept as viable housing alternatives.

Local Landmark Designation Ordinance

Where an important structure is deemed to have special municipal significance a specific ordinance can be enacted for its protection. This ordinance would generally have two parts: one stating the significance of the structure, and the second establishing what actions would not be permitted to said landmark (such as the removal of an architectural detail) and/or other limitations placed on the structure. The advantages of a local landmark designation are that they can be used to protect the façades of outstanding individual structures however the consent of the owner would be required prior to adopting such an ordinance.

Demolition Ordinance

As a minimum level of protection for historic resources, provisions to regulate demolition of historic structures can be enacted as part of the local zoning ordinance or as a separate ordinance. A “stay of demolition” ordinance provides time for a Historical Commission to seek alternative uses and/or buyers for an endangered resource. Municipalities can also regulate by refusing a request for the demolition of an historic resource if it meets certain specified criteria and/or structural analyses and an economic study indicate alternative uses may be feasible.

Demolition by neglect is a difficult situation to address and control, as its effects continue gradually over time. The institution of maintenance standards can be enforced to help control this type of “demolition.” If the end result of this stay of demolition is the granting of a demolition permit, then adequate time may be added to the stay period for historical documentation of the building. This would require photographs, measurements, and site plans to be placed with the local historical group of Borough for future reference.

Establishing a demolition ordinance can deny a demolition permit or provide additional time to the stay of demolition and allow time to find another use, another buyer, or consideration of alternatives to demolition. The required documentation that is collected also becomes an invaluable historic record if the structure should be demolished. Furthermore, by bringing awareness of the threat of demolition, it can bring community together on historic preservation issues.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRESERVATION EFFORTS

The Borough should:

- 6-3 Consider the creation of an official historic preservation advisory body such as a Historical Commission. Encourage joint planning and cooperation with neighboring municipalities on preservation projects and initiatives.

Technical Assistance: DCPD Historic Preservation Section

- 6-4 Draft a Preservation Plan that details the Borough's short and long-term goals for the preservation of the community's historic resources.

Technical Assistance: DCPD Historic Preservation Section
Pennsylvania Historical Museum and Commission (PHMC)

- 6-5 Consider establishing an historic preservation overlay ordinance and/or a demolition ordinance.

Technical Assistance: DCPD Historic Preservation Section
Pennsylvania Historical Museum and Commission (PHMC)

- 6-6 Create a voluntary design guideline document to distribute to developers or homeowners to encourage the maintenance of existing neighborhood architecture in order to preserve the historic nature of the housing stock. Distribute to those who request building permit applications, or who are submitting development plans.

Technical Assistance: DCPD Historic Preservation Section

CHESTER HEIGHTS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Chester Heights Historical Society is a group of community members dedicated to the preservation of the Borough's historic resources and currently serves as the Borough's only formal historic preservation body. The Society is a private organization not under the guidance of the municipality and therefore does not satisfy the allowed action of the MPC in assuming the role of a formally recognized municipal advisory group. However, continued community-wide education on preservation issues and policies, especially through the on-going work of the Historical Society, will help to positively shape the preservation values of the Borough.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHESTER HEIGHTS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Historical Society should:

- 6-7 Identify properties and sites to research for a Determination of Eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places. Coordinate these efforts with an official Borough Historical Commission if one is established.

Technical Assistance: DCPD Historic Preservation Section
Pennsylvania Historical Museum and Commission (PHMC)

- 6-8 Initiate Preservation Awards for the Borough to recognize preservation efforts within the community.

Technical Assistance: DCPD Historic Preservation Section

- 6-9 Continue to educate and promote the Borough's historic values through citizen involvement in the preservation planning process.

Technical Assistance: DCPD Historic Preservation Section
Pennsylvania Historical Museum and Commission (PHMC)