



Chester Heights Borough

Mini PROST Plan



Fall 2025





table of contents

01 Introduction	01
02 Demographics	04
03 Inventory of Natural and Historic Features	06
04 Public Involvement and Awareness	11
05 Critical Actions	13
06 Inventory and Needs Assessment	19
07 Parks Assessments	23
08 Plan for Open Space	37
09 Plan for Trails	39
10 Ordinance Review	41
11 Implementation Strategy	47
Appendix	52

01 introduction



about this plan

This Mini Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Trail Plan serves as a guide for decision making. This plan offers guidance on establishing an interconnected system of parks, recreation facilities, trails and open spaces that provides opportunities for passive and active recreation, and conservation of natural resources. This plan suggests strategies and policies to assist the Borough in improving the parks and facilities they already have, in stewarding land and water, conserving the remaining open spaces, planning for flexible uses and adaptable spaces and ensuring that these resources remain integrated into the community's way of life.

This plan should serve as a reference for Borough officials, administration, commissions, and boards; community organizations, and other interested parties, which may include the Garnet Valley School District, local clubs, private recreation providers, and recreation organizations. This plan is a guide for future actions and decisions. Further discussion, public involvement and approvals will be necessary prior to making any decisions related to parks and recreation.

This Mini- Parks, Recreation and Open Space plan provides guidance to Chester Heights Borough's elected officials, staff and volunteers, as they grow, maintain and improve their parks, trails, open spaces and recreational programs. As a "mini" plan, this document relies on input from the public, the project

Task Force, research and analysis by the consultants and guidance from the Borough's leadership. Numerous Task Force and Public Meetings were held to gather information, needs and wants, and other critical feedback from the public.

This plan focuses on a few big picture recommendations related to each topic area: Parks and Recreation Facilities, Open Space Conservation, Trail Connections and Land Use Ordinances. The recommendations are intended to be implementable in the near future and will bring big, positive changes to the community. While the plan does include some more granular recommendations, it does not include every finely detailed step for improving the entire parks and recreation system.

about chester heights borough

Chester Heights is a borough located in the western portion of Delaware County, Pennsylvania and contains approximately 2.2 square miles of land. It is surrounded by Thornbury Township to the northwest, Middletown Township to the northeast, Aston Township to the southeast and Concord Township to the west.

transportation

U.S. Route 1 (Baltimore Pike) runs southwest-northeast through Chester Heights Borough and is the principal arterial road serving the Borough. Valleybrook Road connects to Aston Township and runs north to south crossing over the West Branch Chester Creek and is considered a minor arterial road in the Borough. Llewellyn Road and Smithbridge Road, also minor



arterials, provide circulation throughout the Borough. These two roadways, along with the Pennsylvania Railroad, played a significant role in the historical development of Chester Heights. These transportation improvements brought several mills to Chester Heights in the nineteenth century. Consequently, the improved transit and industry resulted in population growth.

Wawa Station, a commuter rail stop on the SEPTA's Media/Wawa Line, exists just over the Borough border to the east, in Middletown Township. This is the closest train station to Chester Heights. Service on the Media/Wawa Line to Wawa Station was only recently restored in 2022 after being closed since 1986. Additionally, SEPTA Bus Route 111 passes through Chester Heights Borough on Baltimore Pike. These public transportation options connect Chester Heights and its residents to neighboring communities and farther, to Philadelphia and William H. Gray III 30th Street Station, which offers trains across the country.

land use and open space conservation

Most of the Borough is zoned for residential development and consists of multi- and single-family dwelling subdivisions. Originally a small farmland community, Chester Heights has maintained its rural and historic character, mostly due to early preservation efforts. To this day, the essence of the Borough can be ascribed to the preserved woodlands, picturesque rolling hills, and historic charm. There are very few vacant, undeveloped parcels left that are not under conservation easements or development limitations, and therefore it is projected to have little growth in the coming decades.

parks and trails

The Borough currently owns five properties which contribute to the parks and recreation system, and another that is currently vacant, but could be improved to accommodate a major trail. Community Park offers a little bit of everything, from flat fields

and a playground to a trail through the forest. DiSalvo Park has not yet been developed, but the public and Borough leadership have provided some great ideas! The Darlington Tract provides habitat and buffers the Chester Creek. Lenni Road park offers nearby residents access to another stretch of the Chester Creek. The newly acquired Powell Property can become the centerpiece of the Borough's conservation efforts, when it is improved for better access to passive recreation like walking, running and birding, restored habitats to support birds, bees, butterflies, fish and our other native animals, and beautified to provide a great place for residents to enjoy. Finally, the Borough owns a stretch of the old Octoraro railroad bed, adjacent to Community Park. The roughly 1/3 mile long rail corridor doesn't sound like much on its own, but it could be connected to nearby trails and properties to create a larger trail system.

programs and activities

The Borough parks and open spaces provide some limited opportunities for active recreation, but primarily offer more passive recreation opportunities. Most residents go outside of the Borough to meet the rest of their recreation needs. The public has confirmed that they don't mind travelling a bit for recreation if it means less development and protection of the wooded and rural character in Chester Heights Borough. When residents seek out other opportunities, like martial arts, yoga or Pilates, they attend classes at commercial providers' gyms and studios. They frequently find team sport opportunities at the Rocky Run YMCA or at the St. Thomas Aquinas gym. For other recreation activities and programs, they visit parks owned by the surrounding Townships or Delaware County. While residents want more passive recreation and trails closer to home, they are content to travel for more of their active recreation needs.

02 demographics

Background

Every community has different needs when it comes to parks, recreation, open space and trails. But most communities have the same types of needs. They all need some open space. They all need places for active outdoor recreation, like softball, soccer and multi-purpose fields. They all need sport courts for basketball or at least some paved areas for makeshift facilities for tennis, pickleball, and roller hockey. Everyone wants places to walk, whether it's a connected sidewalk system or a more formal trail system. But the differences, how much of each type of recreation facility, comes down to the people that live in the community.

We use demographics to gain a better understanding of who lives in a community now, and how that population may change in the coming decades. Demographics and land use, especially housing, are tied together, always influencing each other and recreation needs as well. Areas that are attractive to young or small families may feature an abundance of townhouses or apartments, which typically don't provide the backyard space that people use for barbecues or birthday parties. Parks in these communities may need to fill that gap. Communities which feature an aging population may have less need for flat fields, as the residents likely aren't playing football, soccer or lacrosse. They may instead have a need for pickleball courts and flat, easy to walk trails. They may also need more programming, events and activities. For these reasons, we study demographics and land use to assess the needs of the people who live in the community and to prepare for the future residents and their specific needs.

Findings

Chester Heights Borough is primarily zoned residential, with two small business districts and an office/workforce district. The amount of residentially zoned land and the types of units and permitted development continually influence a community

makeup that differs from the neighboring Townships, including Aston, Concord, Middletown and Thornbury. The 2020 census revealed a population 2,897 people. Between 2010 and 2020, the population grew by 14.5%, which outpaced the neighboring townships. Additionally, renters make up 34% of the Borough's population, which is also greater than neighboring townships and Pennsylvania's average of 30%.

The majority (42%) of residents are between the ages of 35 to 64 years old, which is consistent with the Borough's neighbors. Interestingly, 10.5% of the Borough's population lives in a single parent household with children under 18, while single person households make up 34% of the Borough's population. These values are significantly higher than neighboring townships.

Chester Heights' average persons per household of 2.24, is less than all of the surrounding municipalities and the state average. Furthermore, approximately half of the Borough residents lives in "1 Unit Attached" housing, such as townhomes and rowhomes. This is significantly greater than neighboring townships and the state overall.



Conclusions

Chester Heights Borough’s demographics reveal a community of renters, small households and a middle-aged population. Naturally, we also find that the community features an abundance of townhouses and similar housing stock. Of course, not every individual resident falls into this category, but it appears that enough residents fit the description that it should

influence decision making related to parks, recreation, open space and trails. This population appears to support the Borough’s current park and recreation system, which features only one large active recreation facility, and instead focuses on gathering places, small spaces and conservation of natural resources. The demographics may also suggest a need for more trails and places for simple activities like walking, teaching kids to ride bikes, dog walking and running.

03 inventory of natural and historic features

Background

A community's natural features can often provide information about how and why that community developed the way it did. Soils for instance, whether they are rocky and steep, or flat and fertile, largely determine where agriculture is established. Landscapes dominated by networks of streams and tributaries, accompanied by wet soils, may not have been suitable for agriculture and remained forested. These wooded landscapes may have hosted an abundance of mills or other manufactories instead. Agriculture and industry also necessitated, or grew from, the establishment of transportation facilities like highways and railroads.

In many places, historic and natural features influence the recreational programs and facilities of today. Land that was suitable for farming is typically also suitable for flat fields. Unfortunately, it's also sometimes too valuable, leaving parks to be established instead in the undevelopable and vulnerable floodplains. These remaining woodlands and stream corridors offer great opportunities for passive recreation in nature. Historic buildings and ruins can be the centerpieces of educational programs and add beauty and interest to our parks. Abandoned railroads can be reborn as trails. We study a community's natural and historic



resources to understand how they have shaped a community and how they may contribute to modern parks and recreation.

Historic Resources

The historic resources in Chester Heights contribute to the Borough's charming character. The Chester Heights Historical Society is the only formal historic preservation organization in the community. They are a private organization made up of community members who are passionate about preservation of historic resources. The Borough does not currently have a Historical Commission or Historical Architectural Review Board (HARB). Historic resources are not substantially addressed in Borough ordinances. Therefore, it will be difficult for the Borough to protect most existing historic resources in the path of development.

The National Register of Historic Places does include a few sites in Chester Heights Borough. Additional

historically significant sites may exist in the Borough which have not been formally recognized. Chester Heights Camp Meeting Historic District was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2001. The site consists of dozens of nineteenth and twentieth century camp style architecture buildings associated with Methodist camps. Stonehaven, a historic home built in 1799 by mill owner John Lungren, is located on Baltimore Pike and was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1996. The Chamberlain-Pennell House, built in 1722, was added to the National Register in 1977.

These outstanding examples are well preserved and well known through their establishment on the National Register. However, the Borough is home to more history, such as the ruins on the Darlington Tract, that could be incorporated into parks, activities and programming.



Natural Resources

Like most communities, the natural resources have strongly influenced how Chester Heights has developed. The Chester Creek provides a boundary to the east. Its tributaries stretch across the Borough to the west. Where the associated soils are too wet, woodlands and wetlands remain undeveloped. Where the soils are better, including some Prime Agricultural Soils, smaller tributaries have fed farm ponds for generations. The rolling hills, wooded hillsides, and flowing streams have created the Borough's charm and character. Now they can contribute to parks, recreation and open space, maintaining that character and beauty, while serving the residents.



Hydrology

Chester Heights is located within the Chester Creek watershed, and the Chester Creek flows along the border of Chester Heights and Middletown Township. The West Branch Chester Creek flows from Concord Township, through the southern corner of Chester Heights, and then into Aston Township. Land along the creeks is located within the 100-year floodplain and these properties are known to flood. Severe storm events have also caused erosion and sedimentation, and associated water quality issues. Unlike most older communities, Chester Heights Borough has done well to keep development out of the floodplains.

According to the PADEP 2024 Pennsylvania Integrated Water Quality Report, the Chester Creek has a designated use for Trout Stocking and is impaired for Aquatic Life at a Category 5. The impairment is caused by siltation from urban runoff/storm sewers and is considered a High TMDL Development Priority. This means that too much sediment is entering the stream through local stormwater systems. This additional sediment changes the water chemistry and the shape and functionality of the stream channel.

The West Branch Chester Creek also has a designated

use for Trout Stocking and is impaired for aquatic life at a Category 5. The impairment cause is eutrophication from urban runoff/storm sewers and is considered a Medium TMDL Development Priority. This means that parts of the stream may be “dead.” Eutrophication is a process in which nutrients (such as fertilizer or animal waste) enter the stream and support rapid and intense algae growth. The algae growth and eventual die off trigger a series of chemical reactions which result in a loss of dissolved oxygen and ultimately mass fish die off. As both streams are designated for trout stocking, their health should be prioritized as fishing is a popular form of outdoor recreation.

Additionally, hydric soils exist along the stream corridors. Five small wetlands are included on the National Wetlands Inventory within the Borough, but it is likely that more exist along the creeks. Wetlands are important to protect from development as they provide habitat, manage flood waters.

Steep Slopes

The topography of Chester Heights varies from steep slopes to flat fields suitable for farming. Most of the steepest areas, greater than 25% slopes, are found in the northern tip of the Borough within the Darlington

Woods Open Space. Land with slopes between 15-24% is generally scattered throughout the Borough and generally undeveloped. There are pockets of 15-24% slopes along Route 1 and along the two stream corridors. Erosion along the creeks due to these steep slopes can lead to poor water quality and flooding. The highest point in the Borough (+/-390 feet above mean high sea level) exists along Route 1 on the western edge of the Borough, while the lowest points are in the stream corridors.

Woodlands

Swaths of woodlands still remain in the Borough, with some protected by conservation easements. Others are deed restricted HOA open space, Borough-owned property or part of Natural Lands' Wawa Preserve. Other parcels are unprotected and have the potential to be developed. Some of the largest swaths of woodlands are near Route 1. These woodlands are important for the water quality of the Chester Creek and its tributaries. The woodlands in the southeastern portion of the Borough contribute to the health of the West Branch Chester Creek. Woodlands acting as riparian buffers reduce the amount of pollutants and sediment in streams, protect properties from damage due to flooding, and promote stormwater infiltration that improves water quality. A continuous canopy also provides shade to streams, which lowers water temperature thereby improving habitat for fish and amphibians. These factors contribute greatly to the health of the stream systems and the quality of the groundwater.

The forests in Chester Heights are typically Oak-Hickory communities. These forests are dominated by red, white and black oaks. They frequently feature bitternut and shagbark hickories, as well as black walnuts. These nut producing species are favorites of mammals like squirrels, and birds like blue jays. Other prominent species include tuliptrees, sweetgums, sassafras, hornbeams and elms.

It is important to protect forests as they help manage storm and flood waters by retaining and infiltrating

runoff, reducing erosion as mature root systems stabilize soils, filtering pollutants to improve water quality, creating a tree canopy to provide cooler temperatures and shade, and serving as a habitat and food source for birds and animals. All of these results contribute to passive and active recreation opportunities, including fishing, trail running, hiking, nature photography and environmental studies.

Soils

Chester Heights exists on a mixture of fertile soil and wet soil. Approximately 455 acres, or 32% of the Borough, contain Prime Agricultural Soils and approximately 373 acres, or 26% of the Borough, are considered Farmland Soils of Statewide Importance. The soils supported the Borough's agricultural history, including row crops, pasture and dairy farming. Unfortunately, much of the development in the Borough is located on prime agricultural soil or farmland of statewide importance. Chester Heights Borough also contains approximately 82 acres (5.8% of Borough) of hydric soils, located along creeks and undeveloped low-lying areas. Hatboro silt loam is the most common hydric soil in the Borough and frequently floods.

There are 41 different soil types within the limits of Chester Heights. The six most predominant soil types, their acreage and characteristics are listed on the facing page.

The Soil Survey of Chester and Delaware Counties, Pennsylvania (1963) found the predominant soils in the area are silt loam and a soil mixture due to fill from development. Since the study was prepared in 1963, even more development has occurred and it is likely that this soil mixture is the most predominant soil type in the Borough.

MUSYM Code	Soil Name	Acreage	Characteristics
GeC2	Gladstone gravelly loam, 8 to 15% slopes	207	The Gladstone component makes up 85% of the map unit, well-drained, not considered hydric, on hillslopes on piedmonts, parent materials are granite and gneiss, found in moist Piedmont upland – mixed oak, hardwood, conifer forest, considered farmland of statewide importance
GeB2	Gladstone gravelly loam, 3 to 8% slopes	197	The Gladstone component makes up 85% of the map unit, well-drained, not considered hydric, on foothills of piedmonts, parent materials are granite and gneiss, found in moist Piedmont, upland – mixed oak, hardwood conifer forest, considered prime farmland
GeC3	Gaila silt loam, 8 to 15% slopes	121	The gaila component makes up 85% of the map unit, well-drained, not considered hydric, common on hillslopes in northern piedmonts, parent material is muscovite schist, found in moist Piedmont, upland – mixed oak, hardwood, conifer forest, not considered prime farmland
GnB2	Glenville silt loam, 3 to 8% slopes	113	The Glenville component makes up 90% of the map unit, moderately well-drained, not considered hydric, common on drainageways in northern piedmonts, parent material is colluvium derived from metamorphic rock, found in moist Piedmont, upland – mixed oak, hardwood conifer forest, all areas are prime farmland
We	Hatboro silt loam 0 to 3% slopes, frequently flooded	61	The Hatboro frequently flooded component makes up 95% of the map unit, poorly drained, frequently flooded soil, considered hydric, common in floodplains on northern piedmonts, parent material is loamy alluvium from schist and/or phyllite and/or quartzite and/or greenstone, found in the hydric Piedmont, riparian zone, swamp meadow shrub forest, not considered prime farmland
Mn	Neshaminy gravelly silt loam, 8 to 25% slopes, very stony	50	The Neshaminy, very stony component makes up 90% of the map unit, well-drained, not considered hydric, common on hillslopes in northern piedmonts, parent material is residuum weathered from diabase, found in moist, high base-saturation, upland – mixed oak, hickory conifer forest, not considered prime farmland

[\(Web Soil Survey\)](#)

04 public involvement and awareness

Creation of this plan relied on the opinions and comments, needs and wants of the residents of Chester Heights Borough. The process of collecting community input included a variety of methods, to allow residents to provide their input on their terms, at their convenience. The combination of Citizen Task Force meetings, public meetings, key person interviews and a public opinion questionnaire afforded residents of all ages, genders, and abilities the opportunity to contribute to creation of the plan.

Public Meetings

Two public meetings were held at the Borough office. They were publicized by Borough Staff and the Task Force. The public meetings included presentations by the consultant team and facilitated exercises, including mapping and scorecards, to collect public opinions. The first public meeting focused on gathering input from the public to help establish priorities and goals. The second public meeting solicited feedback on draft recommendations. More detailed summaries of each public meeting are included in the appendix of this plan.

Key Person Interviews

These individualized interviews give some residents that have specialized knowledge or a unique background the opportunity to provide their input directly to the consultant team. Their knowledge was often valuable and worthy of follow up questions and more in depth discussions. We collected information through key person interviews with:

- Former & Current Elected Officials
- Borough Staff
- Fire Company Staff
- Long-Time Residents
- Grandparents, Parents & Caregivers
- Landowners of large properties
- Owner of a Registered Historic Home

While every interviewee had different responses and opinions, the following key themes emerged in their responses:

- Connect and expand the existing trail system to connect communities, recreation facilities and community resources
- Provide more sidewalks and safe places to walk
- Increase awareness about community facilities

Online Public Questionnaire

Natural Lands utilized an online questionnaire to gather opinions from the public regarding the current status and future planning for parks, recreation, open space and trails in the Borough. The questionnaire yielded 63 responses. A complete results summary can be found in the Appendix.

The following common themes were discerned from the results:

- About half of respondents only visit Parks/Open Space in Chester Heights **seasonally**.
- Respondents enjoy visiting Community Park most.
- Most respondents utilize cars to access the Chester Heights parks or open space.
- Respondents stated that Ridley Creek State Park, Newlin Grist Mill and Concord Township Park are the three parks outside of Chester Heights that they visit the most.
- Paved trails, bathrooms and benches were the most important amenities to respondents.
- Of the 8 DRAFT Parks, Open Space and Trail Objectives – “Protecting land for residents to use and enjoy” was ranked the highest (First Choice for 41.3%)

- Of the 4 DRAFT Recreation Objectives – “Enhance passive recreation opportunities for adults and seniors (walking, bird watching, picnicking)” was ranked the highest (First Choice for 51.7%)
- 86% of respondents said they would likely access the Powell Property via car.
- The top three activities that respondents would like to see at the Powell Property are Walking, Socialization (Pavilions or Picnic Tables), and Dog Walking.

Conclusions

The public meetings were well attended, and the participants appeared to represent diversity in age, lifestyle and home geography within the Borough. The in-person meetings, online questionnaire, key person interviews and task force meetings provided an abundance of information. All methods consistently provided evidence that the public wants more trails, better pedestrian connections and safer places to walk.



05 critical actions

The remaining chapters of this plan provide details and more in-depth information about the Borough’s existing parks, open spaces, trails and recreation facilities. Those details are important for better maintaining the parks, expanding the trail systems, improving unused spaces and generally providing for better parks and recreation.

This chapter provides the big ideas.

What follows, are the most important things the Borough can do. These are the starting points. These are the actions and improvements that will take the Borough’s existing park and recreation system from solid to impressive. These recommendations came from the Task Force, from Borough Council, from key person interviews and the consultant team’s experience in other communities. And they were supported by the public. These are the most critical actions.

1. Establish Boards and Commissions to Assist Implementation of this Plan and Provide Ongoing Support and Recommendations in an Advisory Capacity

Chester Heights Borough’s leadership has long been a lean but capable and efficient group with a DIY work ethic. However, as the Borough’s population grows and demands more services, programs, and facilities, like parks, trails and open spaces, the Borough Council, staff and Planning Commission shouldn’t feel that they must handle the growing workload themselves. The Borough should establish additional boards and commissions to support the implementation of this plan, which may include, Parks and Recreation Board, Shade Tree Commission, and an Environmental Advisory Council. The Borough may wish to consider establishing other boards and commissions not related to this plan, which could include a Historical Commission, Human Relations Commission, and Civil

Service Commission.

A Parks and Recreation Board could assist in organizing programs and events, coordinating park maintenance, rentals and field use, as well as setting rental fees. They could also play a vital role in master planning for all of the parks. A Shade Tree Commission (STC) can acquire and plant trees in the parks and open spaces, as well as review regulatory issues including tree removal permit applications. They may also play a role in reviewing land development plans where tree removal is proposed or landscaping is required. Environmental Advisory Councils (EAC) may focus on any environmental issue important to the Borough. Some EAC’s focus on recycling programs, while others may drive energy efficiency. Still others focus on natural features protection.

This Mini-PROS plan includes many recommendations, all of which require time, effort or funding, and most require all three. Boards and Commissions, with members appointed to set terms, by Council, can assist by providing their time and expertise. They can also prepare grant applications to support projects recommended in this plan.

Like Borough Council, the best boards and commissions are diverse in age, gender and lived experience. It is important that each body include one or two people that are subject matter experts or are heavily involved in the boards main focus area. For instance, an STC should include someone with tree related expertise, such as an arborist, landscape architect, or horticulturist. But the other members may have other specialties that are vital to a functional commission. A well organized individual, good with spreadsheets and data management may be the perfect member to manage volunteers. An artist or graphic designer could serve by preparing graphic materials to publicize events. Someone who is adept at communications, especially social media, can help share those materials online and connect with the public. Capable boards



and commissions can help the Borough achieve more of their goals while taking some burden off the Council and staff. However, they also need to be managed properly, and like Council, must abide by the laws of the Sunshine Act, prepare agendas and minutes, and properly take action on expenses and major decisions by vote.

2. Powell Property – Master Plan and Conversion to Public Open Space

In March 2025, the Borough achieved a huge win by acquiring the Powell Property to become public open space for its residents. The former farm contains all the resources and the character that epitomize Chester Heights Borough – rolling hills, agriculture turning to meadows, mature trees and views of the West Branch Chester Creek. The acquisition was challenging and expensive, which makes it even more important that the property be made available to the public soon, but also designed properly, to last a lifetime.

To balance the need for expedited access and long term success, the Borough could undertake a 3-phase process, described below:

Phase 1 – Early Access

The Borough would work with the Borough engineer and a landscape architect to prepare a plan that addresses the most important issues, primarily safety, access and boundaries. The plan would include a (potentially) temporary parking area and access drive to bring people into the site. Hazard trees and any remnants from the sites past should be identified and removed. Site boundaries should be identified and marked to keep visitors from inadvertently trespassing. One main trail loop could be established along existing tractor paths and other access ways. This early access plan would get people into the site quickly, without committing fully to any of the early decisions.



Phase 2 – Master Plan

The Borough would apply for a grant (most likely from DCNR and/or DCED) to support creation of a master plan. A full-fledged master plan would build off the findings of this Parks and Recreation plan, and would take a much closer look at the existing conditions on site, recreation needs that can be accommodated there as well as potential for programming and events. Trails would be sited and designed based on topography and soils. Gathering areas, as informal as a cluster of benches or a designed pavilion could welcome guests and act as an outdoor classroom. Parking would be designed to accommodate expected visitorship and types of vehicles. Reforestation and restoration, establishment of native meadows and removal of invasive species would be coordinated to support our native animals while providing visitors with the opportunity to connect with nature.

Phase 3 – Implementation

With additional grant support, the Borough would implement the Master Plan in accordance with included schedules and budgets. DCNR, Delaware County and other funders may provide support for implementation of trailheads, signage and access amenities. Other funders, providing smaller amounts, may help underwrite reforestation and restoration efforts. A mix of volunteers and contractors would bring the property into a new life.

3. Expand Existing Trail Network to Connect Important Places and Provide Places for Recreation

The public input process highlighted the importance of trail connections throughout the Borough so residents can access important places or simply have a place to go for a nice walk. A potential framework for an expanded trail system is starting to come into focus. The Borough owns Community Park, the Powell property, DiSalvo park and a segment of abandoned rail line, all fit for trails, trailheads or connections. Another

short trail segments exists nearby in HOA owned land. The Chester Creek Trail is just outside of the Borough. Private properties under easement include trail easements which could accommodate future trails. And many of these elements come together near the intersection of Valleybrook, Smithbridge and Llewelyn Roads.

Population centers including Valleybrook, Madison Glen, Brookfield and Darlington Woods all front on or are close to Valleybrook Road. Many small pockets of residences, many on culs-de-sac, also connect to Valleybrook Road. With so many people, so many parks, a few trail segments and more opportunities all in this area, its obviously the place to create a core trail system. This plan includes a trail plan depicting a proposed trail system, focused on the Valleybrook, Smithbridge and Llewelyn

4. Maintain, Steward and Upgrade the Existing Parks and Open Spaces

Ribbon cuttings are exciting. Maintenance is not. But its absolutely necessary to keep parks attractive, safe and usable. Its important to take care of what the Borough already owns.

The Borough has limited resources and already contracts out much of the necessary park maintenance work, such as mowing. The parks are generally clean and well kept. However, other park specific maintenance must also continue to be prioritized. Tasks may include playground inspections, reapplication of mulch play surfaces, routine tree care and more. And when equipment or amenities are outdated, or no longer safe, they should be replaced in a timely manner. The Borough makes it work with a combination of contractors and volunteers and can continue this approach as long as it works.

5. Increase Visitation and Awareness

In nearly every meeting in every community, it seems

that a resident stands up with a variation on the same question – why didn't I know about this? Whether the topic is parks, development, trails or budgets, the community always wants to know more. But most municipalities are already doing more than ever to share information. Many still rely on traditional methods such as printed newsletters. Some offer weekly email blasts and facebook posts. Most post important information on their websites. But there is frequently a disconnect between municipalities and their residents.

The public process made it clear that the same issue exists in Chester Heights Borough. Many residents are not aware that the Borough's parks and open spaces exist. The Borough should continue to share information through modern print and digital materials. But sometimes the information that is being shared also matters. Residents can become numb to the same announcements every month, leading them to stop opening email blasts or ignoring online posts. Diversity in messaging, programming, activities and events is important. When residents want to know what is happening next in their parks, they are more likely to read the announcements. If they expect the same things over and over, they'll stop paying attention.

Concerts, special events, educational offerings and summer recreation programs can get peoples' attention and draw a more diverse population to the parks beyond the typical active park users. Programs and events are a good way to engage with more of the population and to bring them outdoors. Additionally, developing a plan to expand programming, create partnerships with surrounding communities and organizations, contracting out some events and revenue generating services could help Chester Heights with increased awareness and visitors. Friends of the Parks & Trails could also help spread the word and connect people with the outdoors.



6. Form Friends of the Parks & Trails

The Borough doesn't have a large Public Works or Parks and Recreation maintenance department, so they contract out as much maintenance as possible. To take the parks forward, the Borough needs a Friends group or other resident-based group or organization to care for and advocate the parks. The Borough is doing a good job maintaining the parks, but more hands are needed to move past the status quo of simply maintaining, and into improvements like tree plantings, restoration projects and simple but large projects like refreshing mulch or planting new gardens. Friends groups build constituency around parks. They help to take care of the parks, but also take some

ownership. They keep an eye on things. And they feel more empowered to use the parks and activate them by organizing activities and programs.

Fortunately, Chester Heights Borough does not need to figure this out from scratch. The Philadelphia Parks & Recreation Department, in partnership with the Fairmount Park Conservancy, work collaboratively with more than 120 Park Friends groups across the city. This collaborative partnership is called the Park Friends Network. They have created a Friends Group Toolkit to provide potential park stewards with information on how to begin and grow a Park Friends Group. The Borough can use this document as a guide to set up a Park Friends Group to assist in stewarding their parks. The document can be found here:
<https://www.phila.gov/media/20200129153259/Park-Friends-Toolkit-2020.pdf>

Comprehensive Plan Objectives

In addition to the critical actions described above, the consultant team reviewed the 2013 Comprehensive Plan as it also contained relevant goals and objectives. Chapter 8: Parks, Recreation & Open Space of the Comprehensive Plan identifies the following overarching goal, which is relevant to this plan: “To preserve current levels of open space in key areas of the Borough in order to maintain the character of the community and provide a high quality of life.” Within this goal, five objectives were identified by the Comprehensive Plan. Of these five objectives, Natural Lands has identified three that remain applicable to the mini-PROS plan. These objectives are:

8-1

To provide Chester Heights Borough residents with adequate recreational facilities which are accessible, safe, attractive, and suitable for a range of activities.

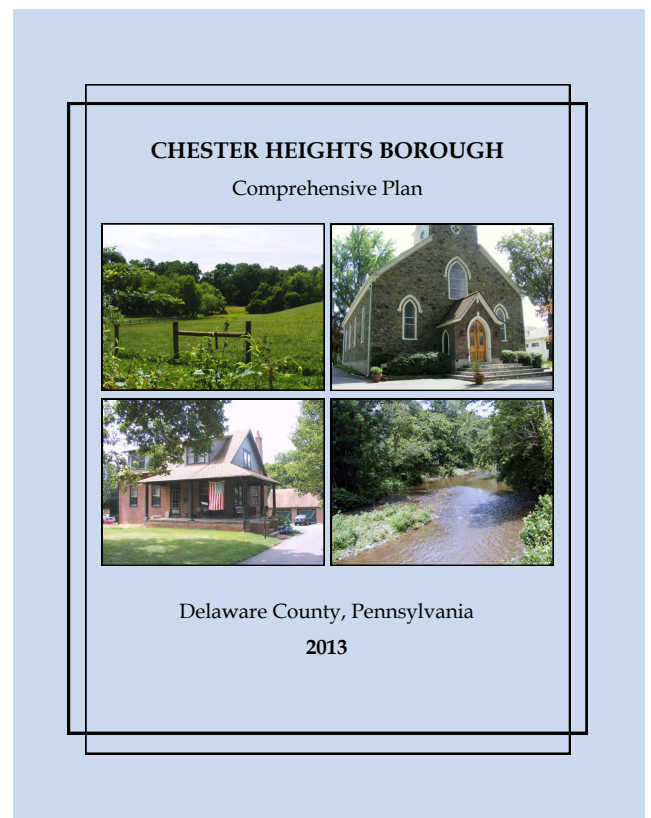
8-3

To protect Chester Heights’s remaining undeveloped private open space from development.

8-5

To set aside greenways to preserve connections between parklands and open spaces, increase pedestrian access to parks and other destinations, and conserve and provide access to stream corridors.

These three objectives are still relevant and can be considered as guiding principles applicable to every decision the Borough makes about Parks and Recreation.



06 inventory and needs assessment

Introduction

Chester Heights Borough already offers many different recreation opportunities to its residents. Coupled with private recreation providers, gyms, instructors and nearby academies, residents can find most of what they're looking for. But this plan also seeks to find what may be missing and what the residents want. So the public was asked, through the online questionnaire and in person at meetings, to share information about where they recreate, what amenities they love and what they want more of.

Inventory

Chester Heights owns approximately 68.5 acres of land, spread across seven parcels, home to Chester Heights Community Park (2), Darlington Tract, DiSalvo Park, the Powell Property, Lenni Road Park and an abandoned railroad corridor. These properties represent the places residents already visit and love. They also include sites that are yet to be developed, but envisioned for improvements soon. And the rail bed offers a unique opportunity to extend and important regional trail, right through the heart of the Borough.

Homeowners Associations also own land that, while privately owned, also provides recreation opportunities to some residents. The Brookfield-Miller Open Space includes an asphalt walking trail that connects to the adjacent neighborhood via the sidewalks. A flat lawn is also used for community events and informal sports and games. Down the street, the Valleybrook HOA owns a basketball court, playground and pool as part of their open space. These amenities are located along Bishop Drive in their community.

To the far north, the Darlington Woods HOA maintains two tennis courts, two pickleball courts and a pool as part of their recreational amenities. The open space owned by the HOA consists of 65 acres of paths and trails in a mostly wooded setting. While these amenities are not open to the public, they offer

recreation to their own residents, helping to meet the Borough's needs.

Recreation Programs and Facilities

Several private or otherwise for-fee recreational programs are available to Borough residents. Some are located within the Borough and some are nearby in neighboring Townships. Residents don't seem to mind leaving the Borough to meet their recreational needs. The table below lists the recreation programs and facilities that Borough residents have indicated they use.



Organization	Recreation Program(s)	Location in Borough?
St. Thomas the Apostle – CYO Leagues	Football, Soccer, Field Hockey, Volleyball, Cross Country, Basketball, Cheer, Baseball, Softball, Track and Field	The Church is located within Chester Heights, but most games and practices are outside of the Borough.
Marple Zone Sports Institute	Field rentals for baseball, lacrosse, field hockey, flag football and soccer leagues	No
Aston-Middletown Little League	Baseball	No
Brandywine Youth Club	Baseball, softball, football, lacrosse, wrestling, hockey	No
Garnet Valley School District	Various sports and recreation programs	No
Ascent Athlete	Baseball, Softball	No
East Coast Karate Institute	Karate	Yes
Garnet Valley Gymnastics	Gymnastics	Yes
Ancient Wayz Kung Fu	Kung Fu	Yes
Rocky Run YMCA	Swim, Gymnastics, Dance, Martial Arts, Basketball, Flag Football, Lacrosse, Pickleball, Soccer, T-Ball	No
Natural Lands – Wawa Preserve	Walking Trails	Partially (Trails are not, but property is)
Thornbury Township – Thornbury Park	Disc Golf, Tennis, Soccer, Basketball, Baseball, Walking Trails, Playground, Yoga, Storytime	No
Concord Township – Concord Township Park	Beach Volleyball, Dog Park Trail, Playground	No
Concord Township – Concord Township Municipal Complex	Pickleball	No
Newlin Grist Mill	Trail, Blacksmith Class, Bird Walks, Cooking Demonstrations, Archaeology Program, Fly Fishing	No
Martin Park – Thornbury Township	Trail	No
Clayton County Park and Golf Course	Golf	No

Questions and Answers

With this understanding of the programs and facilities available to the residents, it is also important to try to understand what may be missing. The questionnaire and facilitated exercises conducted at the public meetings attempted to draw out information that made it clear what the residents want. The information that was gathered revealed the following key points:

1. They have the facilities they need...

The public process did not reveal any glaring major needs. There was no constituency supporting more fields, or a decriing a lack of a pool or a splash pad or a dog park. The residents are either satisfied with the existing active recreation facilities and opportunities, or they don't feel strongly that they need more within the Borough.

2. ...Except for Trails and Places to Walk.

The meetings and questionnaire consistently yielded responses supporting the establishment of more trails and places to walk. Residents want places where they can go to walk (like parks and open spaces) and they want to be able to walk to places they already go (like schools, churches and parks). When asked to rank amenities most important to them, paved trails was the #1 answer.

3. There's room to improve

While the residents believe the parks are generally adequate, they also support upgrading them. They want more amenities that support gathering, socialization and passive recreation. They want more shade and benches, or pavilions. And they want bathrooms.

4. Conservation is Key

When asked to rank objectives related to parks, recreation, open space and trails, the residents overwhelmingly chose "Protect land for residents to use and enjoy," as 41% of respondents ranked it as

their #1 answer. This aligns with the desire for more trails and passive recreation spaces. It also makes sense considering the residents own view of Chester Heights as a rural community in a natural setting. The acquisition of the Powell property was a big win for the Borough. They can currently afford to approach future conservation similarly, based on opportunity.

5. Recreation for Grown Ups

When asked to rank recreation objectives, the public favored, "Enhance passive recreation opportunities for adults and seniors." This is consistent with the other key points, as fewer adults and seniors participate in group sports or group active recreation, so fields and facilities are not a priority. Additionally, the Borough's demographics revealed a middle aged to senior population, so it makes sense that these same age groups would show up in the questionnaire results.

Conclusions

Together, the inventories of parks, open space, facilities and programs, coupled with the information received at meetings and through the questionnaire, revealed that the residents are generally pleased with the variety of recreational uses that the Borough provides. However, the residents believe that the parks they have could be improved and modernized. They want more trails and open space. And they want facilities and programs aimed at the predominant demographics of the Borough, middle aged to senior residents. With no major holes in the parks and recreation system, the Borough can focus on improving their existing parks, developing their vacant park spaces, and enhancing their open space and trails systems.

Organization	Recreation Program(s)	Location in Borough?
St. Thomas the Apostle – CYO Leagues	Football, Soccer, Field Hockey, Volleyball, Cross Country, Basketball, Cheer, Baseball, Softball, Track and Field	The Church is located within Chester Heights, but most games and practices are outside of the Borough.
Marple Zone Sports Institute	Field rentals for baseball, lacrosse, field hockey, flag football and soccer leagues	No
Aston-Middletown Little League	Baseball	No
Brandywine Youth Club	Baseball, softball, football, lacrosse, wrestling, hockey	No
Garnet Valley School District	Various sports and recreation programs	No
Ascent Athlete	Baseball, Softball	No
East Coast Karate Institute	Karate	Yes
Garnet Valley Gymnastics	Gymnastics	Yes
Ancient Wayz Kung Fu	Kung Fu	Yes
Rocky Run YMCA	Swim, Gymnastics, Dance, Martial Arts, Basketball, Flag Football, Lacrosse, Pickleball, Soccer, T-Ball	No
Natural Lands – Wawa Preserve	Walking Trails	Partially (Trails are not, but property is)
Thornbury Township – Thornbury Park	Disc Golf, Tennis, Soccer, Basketball, Baseball, Walking Trails, Playground, Yoga, Storytime	No
Concord Township – Concord Township Park	Beach Volleyball, Dog Park Trail, Playground	No
Concord Township – Concord Township Municipal Complex	Pickleball	No
Newlin Grist Mill	Trail, Blacksmith Class, Bird Walks, Cooking Demonstrations, Archaeology Program, Fly Fishing	No
Martin Park – Thornbury Township	Trail	No
Clayton County Park and Golf Course	Golf	No

07 parks assessments

Chester Heights Community Park

snapshot

Type: Neighborhood Park

Location: 9 Valleybrook Rd, Glen Mills, PA 19342

Size: 6.8 acres

Uses: Active and Passive Recreation

Facilities:

Parking Lot

Playground

Picnic Tables and Benches

Flat Field (Soccer)

Veterans Memorial

Little Free Library

Gravel Walking Loop

Lawn Areas

Woodland Trails

overview

Community Park offers residents a little bit of everything. The flat field provides practice space to local leagues, and a place for residents to throw, kick or a hit a ball around. The playground and nearby picnic tables cater to young families. The recently constructed walking path leads visitors through a wet woodland. The veterans memorial honors residents of the past.

The park is centrally located and is a true community gathering space. Residents go there for events, sports, to walk or enjoy some quiet time, sampling the Little Free Library. Some walk the path, with or without dogs, to enjoy nature and watch birds. Kids sometimes use the path and parking lot to ride bikes and scooters.

The park serves the residents well, but it would benefit from many small upgrades. The playground could be modernized and improved for safety and comfort. More benches and tables, or even a pavilion could better host neighborhood events or family gatherings. The landscaping could be improved and more trees and shrubs would beautify the park, while also feeding and providing homes for birds and other animals.

Pollinator gardens would add color. Other amenities, like the memorial, could be made more accessible and easier to see if they were relocated. All of these small changes would be best managed and coordinated through creation of a new park master plan.

summary of existing conditions and facilities

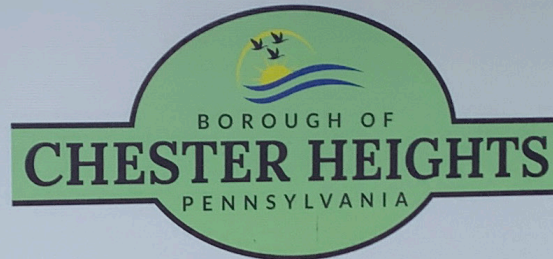
- The existing parking area features 28 spaces (including 2 accessible spaces) and offers opportunity for expansion.
- A walking trail, roughly 1/3 mile in length, provides a scenic woodland experience for passive recreation.
- The flat field is primarily used for soccer, but can accommodate other sports informally. This is the only active recreation facility in Borough parks.
- The playground is well used. Upgrades to the equipment, improvements for comfort and safety, and additional maintenance for accessibility would be wise investments.
- The landscaping could be enhanced and modernized to feature native species, to provide shade, buffering and screening, to act as boundaries, to provide food and habitat and to add beauty to the park.

strategies for improvement

1. **Reorganize and Master Plan.** The park contains many elements that appeal to a variety of visitors. The playing field, playground, picnic tables and port a potty are all essential to the park. The little free library, veterans memorial, flagpole, benches and loop trail appear to be later additions that add even more charm, interest and things to do. However, the elements don't all work well together. The flagpole, memorial, library and bench are within the parking island green space,

CHESTER HEIGHTS COMMUNITY PARK

A Public Recreation Area Provided By



Funding Assistance From Keystone Recreation Park and Conservation
Fund Administered by the Bureau of Recreation and Conservation PA
Department of Conservation and Natural Resources 1996.

surrounded by a driveway, separated from the livelier sections of the park. More seating nearer to the playground would benefit caregivers. The port a potty could be closer to the playground, so small children don't need to cross the driveways and parking to get to it. Improvements may draw more visitors, requiring expanded or redesigned parking areas. Aside from rearranging and modernizing the elements already there, the park also has potential to include space for food trucks, larger gathering areas, and flexible spaces to accommodate more and bigger events.

2. **Beautify Entrance.** The Borough has already taken steps to beautify the entrance, but more can be done to make the site look more park-like from the road. Currently, the park's identifying sign is within the park, rather than near the road. Visitors may not know they are at the park driveway without some signage there. The existing trees could be supplemented with more native plantings.
3. **Connect the Park.** Community Park is by far the most visited park in the Borough. However, nearly every visitor has to travel by car to get there. With so many people living in such close proximity, it would benefit the entire community to make the park more walkable. While none are quick and easy fixes, there are opportunities to build trails to connect to the park using the rail corridor and existing rights of way along Valleybrook Road, to connect to Powell, DiSalvo Park, Brookfield HOA and the Post Office. Should the Borough pursue a new master plan for Community Park, trail connection feasibility should be included in the scope.
4. **Plan to Update and Upgrade Playground.** The playground equipment appears to be well maintained and in generally good condition. However, the playground could be improved and integrated into a park master plan design.

The playground could feature more modern equipment designed into the site to ensure universal accessibility. More plantings could better define the space and provide shade, beauty and interest. Fencing could better contain younger children and keep them from running towards the parking area. An integrated design could create a better interface between the playground, picnic area and other elements in the park.

5. **Trail System Enhancements.** Since its construction, the Borough has done a good job monitoring and upgrading the loop trail. They should continue to watch for erosion near the trail and consider improvements to better manage stormwater. Additionally, the trail could be further activated by relocating some existing park elements to the sides of the trail. These could include the memorial, little free library, benches and more.
6. **Site Furniture.** As the Borough considers improvements at Community Park and other sites, they should choose standard site furniture. Community Park currently features multiple different benches. These appear to be mismatched and give the appearance that decisions about the park are not carefully planned. A coordinated selection of site furniture would make all of the parks look better. A coordinated selection is also easier to maintain. When all the parks feature the same benches, maintenance staff will always know how to maintain them and which tools are necessary. They can also see when one bench is starting to fail and know that its time to maintain or plan for replacement for all of them.
7. **Mulch Management – Playground.** The mulch in the playground should be inspected and maintained at least annually. As it settles, it creates uneven surfaces and has led to the mulch surface sinking a few inches below the edge of the paved entrance path. The surface needs more layers of

mulch added and compacted until the mulch level is even with the path and at correct levels to serve the playground equipment.

8. **Mulch Management - Landscaping.** The existing trees are over-mulched, with “volcanos” piled over their root systems and burying the lower trunks. Too much mulch, like in this situation, suffocates the surface roots, which help the trees breathe. Suffocation will stunt the trees growth and ultimately kill them.
9. **Turfgrass Management.** The multi-use field should be properly maintained to provide a safe and playable surface. This may include aeration, topdressing, overseeding, fertilization, mowing, and proper watering. The Borough may explore extending additional fees or responsibilities to the leagues that use the space to fund more field maintenance.
10. **Natural Area Stewardship.** The woodlands in Community Park face the same issues as most of the woodlands in southeastern Pennsylvania. They have been ravaged by the Emerald Ash Borer, leaving standing dead trees. Too many deer eat the native tree saplings, stunting forest regeneration. The plants that do grow, unpalatable to the deer, are non-native and invasive species, which provide very little benefit to our native ecosystem. The site would benefit from a Stewardship Assessment, Stewardship Plan and a Hazard Tree Assessment. The Stewardship Assessment and Plan would provide a detailed study of the natural areas and provide recommendations for restoring and maintaining the ecosystems. A hazard tree assessment would identify standing dead trees in proximity to trails, parking areas and other places we’d expect people to be, and recommend steps to ensuring safety for all.



Powell Property

snapshot

Type: Open Space

Location: 229 Valleybrook Road

Size: Approximately 40 acres

Uses: Passive Recreation

Facilities: None

overview

Natural Lands recently assisted the Borough with the purchase of the Powell Property, to be conserved as open space for public use. The site features open fallow fields, hedgerows, sparse woodlands and rolling hillsides. The West Branch Chester Creek is just off the property on a neighboring parcel owned by an HOA, but there are no physical boundaries or structures to impede access. The property has frontage on Valleybrook Road, though site distances are challenging for establishing an access in any location other than the existing entry lane.

strategies for improvement

Phased Approach: A multi-phased approach is described in detail in Chapter 4: Critical Actions. The phases include early actions to permit public access safely as quickly as possible. A second phase would undertake a proper master planning process, with implementation in a third phase. A diagram of potential improvements is included in the appendix.

Phase 4: Continued Conservation. While it is not a critical action included in chapter 4, the fourth phase of development of the Powell property would include continued conservation of properties adjacent to the site to expand the nature preserve and improve access and connections to other conserved lands.



DiSalvo Park

snapshot

Type: Neighborhood Park

Location: 9 Valleybrook Rd, Glen Mills, PA 19342

Size: 3.87 ac.

Uses: Passive Recreation

Facilities: None

overview

DiSalvo Park is an open space grassy area near the intersection of Valleybrook Rd and Llewelyn Rd. The park is adjacent to Chester Heights Fire Company Station 71. The site currently has no active recreational uses, and consists only of some landscaping, a flag pole, and educational signage. The park is undeveloped but has potential to become a gathering space, particularly in association with the nearby fire hall, an important trail connection, or a small space use like a memorial or amphitheater. Some combination of multiple uses is likely the best approach to activating this space. While the site is listed as nearly 4 acres in size, it is functionally much smaller, as the firehouse parking lot infringes on the property, cutting off the wooded hillside from the rest of the property.

summary of existing conditions

- Flag pole with landscaping
- Educational signage

strategies for improvement

- **Master Plan.** As the site is functionally small, it is tempting to skip the master planning process. However, a small space requires even more careful consideration as minor mistakes can render the site uncomfortable or even unusable. The Borough should undertake a comprehensive master planning process.

- **Part of the Big Picture: Trails.** DiSalvo Park has the opportunity to play a major role in the formation of a local trail system. As it sits central to Community Park, Brookfield, Powell and a potential future Rail Trail, DiSalvo Park could be the keystone. This property is relatively unencumbered by natural features or other constraints. The Borough owns it and it is in a highly visible location. This site can accommodate a stretch of trail to connect the fire house (events, parking) to the community of Brookefield and the intersection.
- **Create a Small Community Space.** This small space could provide facilities to host smaller events, but it needs a focal point and some organizing feature. The veterans memorial currently located at Community Park could be relocated here to provide that central feature. The community has also discussed creating a small amphitheater. The site could likely accommodate both.
- **Beautify Site.** The park is in a central, visible location in the Borough and, regardless of what other improvements are implemented, would benefit from additional plantings to beautify the site. The dead trees located on the property were removed, therefore it currently lacks landscaping and looks bare. Both Valleybrook Rd and Llewelyn Rd are used as thoroughfares for visitors entering from Aston Township and the area should be made more welcoming to visitors.
- **Borough Complex.** Should the Borough wish to think big about a new home, this site in combination with the fire hall could house a new Borough office complex. The front of the site, located between the fire house property,



Valleybrook Road and Hunters Lane, contains approximately one acre. This is likely too small to accommodate a new Borough building on its own. However, if the fire house property next door could also be part of a joint venture, the combined sites could potentially house a combined Borough Hall and Fire Company, parking and a small park or trail connection.

Darlington Tract

snapshot

Type: Natural Area/ Open Space

Location: Intersection of Darlington Rd and Baltimore Pike (Route 1)

Size: 11.93 acres

Uses: Passive Recreation

Facilities: Informal Nature Trails

overview

Chester Heights Borough purchased the the Darlington Tract using grant funding provided by the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources through a Keystone Grant. The funding stipulates that the property's use adhere to three principles: maintain and enhance trees and natural landscaping, connect people to nature and manage stormwater naturally (riparian buffers, wetlands, provide access to

creeks). The site is currently following those principles, but the site can be improved for better access.

The site is very wet, as the Chester Creek forms one boundary and Hamanassett Creek and other tributaries flow through. One wet meadow also exists, though the site is mostly wooded. Access is the primary obstacle, as it appears difficult to establish parking on site. It will also be challenging to provide pedestrian access. The site can still be improved to allow nearby residents to enjoy nature there. Natural Lands produced a conceptual use plan in 2020 which recommended creation of a few loop trails, connections to the neighboring open space in Middletown Twp and natural resource restoration. The Powell Property has rightfully taken precedence over improving Darlington, but the conceptual use plan should be revisited in the future.



summary of existing conditions

- Keystone grant signage
- Informal nature trails
- Natural features: mixed age woodlands, riparian areas, streams

strategies for improvement

- **Accessibility.** The site is currently very difficult to enter. Low cost trailheads could be established near the end of the guardrail near the vehicular bridge and across from Indian Springs Drive.
- **Litter Cleanup.** Engage volunteers, potentially including law enforcement or emergency management, to clean up the litter along Darlington Road.
- **Revisit the Master Plan.** For now, the conceptual use plan may continue to sit on the shelf, as the Borough should prioritize development of the Powell Property. However, the plan should be reconsidered in the future. The following recommendations are included:

Nature trails. The plan recommends establishment of a simple network of nature trails, some of which can follow existing deer paths. It is important to follow the plan to keep trails out of hydric or otherwise sensitive soils.

Parking. The site is not currently served by dedicated parking. The plan recommends connecting to and sharing parking with Middletown, considering a new parking area on site or keeping the site accessible only by foot.

Invasive Species Management and Natural Area Stewardship. The woodlands are in poor condition, like most in our area. A detailed stewardship assessment and plan

would benefit the site and create a path forward to restoring the forest. The woodlands should be assessed for hazard trees, most notably standing dead ash trees.

Volunteer Engagement. Activities such as cleaning up litter and removing invasive species are more financially attainable with the help of volunteer groups.

Site Amenities. The site has no furnishings, other than one piece of signage. Once a nature trail is established, additional benches could be installed on site.



Lenni Road Park

snapshot

snapshot

Type: Pocket Park

Location: 495 Lenni Rd

Size: 0.9 acres

Uses: Passive Recreation

Facilities:

Riverfront

Paved Loop

overview

Lenni Road Park seems to be a forgotten little treasure. This Borough Park, less than one acre in size offers access to Chester Creek in a quiet, shaded corner of

the Borough. Nestled between the Creek and Westlake Plastics, close to an auto repair shop and a SEPTA station, this small property is easy to overlook, but offers an opportunity for quiet reflection, restoration and stream access.

strategies for improvement

- **Master Planning.** This small site would benefit from creation of a master plan. While it seems easy to simply add some amenities and plantings, a small site offers less margin for design error. Further study leading to a master plan would help ensure that the site is properly designed and improved.



- **Welcome to Chester Heights.** The Chester Creek, which provides a property line, is also the Borough’s boundary line. Travelers moving west on Lenni Road are entering Chester Heights Borough as they pass the park on their right. The park frontage could be dressed up with native plantings and a sign welcoming visitors to Chester Heights Borough.
- **Accessibility.** The site frontage features sidewalks, which could be connected to neighboring properties, helping visitors walk to the park. However, much of the sidewalk is depressed as a curb cut, allowing vehicular access to the park. The curb cut leads to a remnant loop driveway, accompanied by no parking signs. While access may be required for maintenance vehicles, the curb cut should be reduced to 10 to 12’ in width.
- **Driveway Removal.** The driveway should be removed, as the Borough does not want vehicles entering the site. Additionally, with the asphalt removed it could be replaced with lawn for a gathering area, landscaping for beautification, or naturalized plantings to restore the site. If access is required for maintenance vehicles, a portion of the driveway could be replaced with grass pavers.
- **Naturalization and Restoration.** The park borders the Chester Creek, making it important as a natural area which can manage storm and flood

waters, protect the creek and its inhabitants, help control erosion and sedimentation and give residents access to the water. The site is already somewhat wooded, but as a riparian corridor site, more native trees would benefit the health of the stream. Cooler, shaded water would benefit the fish population, important to keep in mind as Chester Creek is stocked seasonally. The Borough could facilitate all of these benefits by planting more native trees and shrubs here. This small site could also be a great location for volunteers to improve and maintain.

- **Amenities.** The park could be improved to accommodate visitors by adding a few simple, low cost, temporary amenities, like picnic tables or benches. Then, the employees at Westlake Plastic or the residents of the nearby neighborhoods could enjoy lunch or a snack by the side of the creek. A master plan process could provide more input towards what residents want at this site, but temporary improvements could fill an immediate void.
- **Raise Awareness.** The Borough could hold small events here or offer the site as a location for other organizations to host events focused on water quality or similar topics. Right now, with little access and no amenities, it doesn’t make sense to invite residents to come use the park unless there is some programming or other reason to visit.

Brookfield-Miller HOA

snapshot

Type: HOA Private Property

Location: Brookfield HOA – Intersection of Valleybrook Rd and Hunters Ln

Size: 6.5 ac +/-

Uses: Active and Passive Recreation

Facilities:

- 0.75 mile trail/sidewalk loop
- 1.5 ac +/- lawn

overview

The open space created in the Brookfield Miller development is private property. However, as it encompasses approximately 6.5 acres, including a

1.5 acre lawn and a .75 mile trail and sidewalk loop, it is significant enough to include in this plan. The open space and trail serve a community that contains 77 units. As noted in Chapter 1, an average of 2.24 persons live in each household in Chester Heights, so we can assume that the recreation amenities here serve approximately 172 people, or roughly 6% of the Borough’s population.

These amenities are also important due to their proximity to Community Park, the Powell Property and the Octararo rail bed. The open space in the community could be used to make connections to the surrounding parks and trails, to benefit the residents of the HOA.



summary of existing conditions

- Paved walking trail
- Large lawn space consisting of mowed grass

strategies for improvement

- **Use the lawn more.** The existing lawn area consists of manicured grass and is not frequently used. The area could host events, sponsored by the HOA or the Borough.
- **Reduce the lawn.** Expansive lawns are recognized as a drain on the environment, as they provide no habitat or food sources for native animals or insect species. They also contribute to stormwater flows similar to paving, as short rooted turf grass doesn't drink up much water, and the associated soil is typically heavily compacted, impeding infiltration. The turf lawn could be eliminated and replanted with a meadow, which would require less frequent mowing, thereby using less fossil fuels and saving on maintenance costs. Meadow would provide food and habitat and better manage stormwater. A portion of the lawn could be removed in favor of meadows or native plant gardens, leaving some lawn for events and informal recreation.
- **Enhance existing trail.** The existing trail could be extended to connect to proposed trail connections to the east and west. Additionally, the trail appears plagued by standing water. Its clear that stormwater puddles on the paving, as evidenced by discoloration and sediment, as well as the impromptu stormwater management trenches dug to allow water to flow into the rail bed and basins. By implementing stormwater management techniques to resolve these issues, the trail will become more inviting to users.
- **Stormwater Basin.** The existing stormwater basin adjacent to the paved walking trail is currently mowed short. The HOA could retrofit the basins with native vegetation, such as native grasses and flowering perennials to better manage stormwater and encourage infiltration. Planted stormwater basins can improve water quality, assist in erosion control, create wildlife habitat, and enhance the aesthetics of the open space.



Octoraro Trail Corridor

snapshot

Type: Trail Corridor

Location: West to East through Borough

Size: 4.7 ac

Length: 0.3 miles

Uses: Future Trail

Facilities: Abandoned Railbed

overview

Chester Heights Borough owns a parcel adjacent to Community Park to the south, which previously held the Octoraro Railroad line. Delaware County and The Circuit have both proposed the Octoraro Trail be extended along the old rail corridor. The piece of the corridor owned by the Borough stretches from Valleybrook Road west to the Borough boundary with Concord Township. This segment could be developed as a standalone trail, connecting into Community Park. But it holds greater potential as an important segment of a future Circuit Trail that can cross the Borough and connect to the Chester Creek Trail.

summary of existing conditions

- Overgrown railbed, very thick in some areas
- Pooling water supporting invasive wetland plants like phragmites

strategies for improvement

- **Create a short trail connected to Community Park.** The parcel could accommodate a trail approximately 1/3 mile long. While this isn't very long, it could still serve the residents who currently have very little access to trails. Even a short trail could provide people with a safe place to walk or run, or teach young children how to ride bicycles. Additionally, a short trail could connect to Community Park and the ¼ mile long trail that exists there. In combination, two loops around Community Park and an out and back on the Octoraro Trail segment would add up to a mile.

- **Begin a Cross-Borough Trail.** The Borough could build a trail on their property, meeting Circuit standards of 8-10' in width and paved in asphalt. This could be the first step in a major trail project. The rail corridor travels beneath Valleybrook Road, potentially proving a safe underpass. The Smithfield-Miller HOA owns the segment of rail bed northeast of Valleybrook Road, which could potentially be purchased. While the rail bed essentially disappears, power lines continue across the landscape, providing a clear path across the Borough, to the Chester Valley Trail. Conservation easements, accompanied by trail easements, could also convey a future Octoraro Trail.



08 plan for open space

summary of existing protected lands

Chester Heights Borough contains over 100 acres of permanently protected lands. However, only Natural Lands' Wawa Preserve, which features approximately 15 acres within Chester Heights, is publicly accessible. The lands were donated by the founders of Wawa Dairy. The portion of the preserve within Chester Heights doesn't offer much in terms of trails or recreation opportunities, but it provides additional connected habitat, an offshoot of the hundreds of acres of forests and streams to the north and east.

Conservation easements protect another 122 acres in the heart of the Borough. Conservation easements eliminate the possibility of a property being developed. The eased properties remain in private ownership but typically offer some public benefit such as a trail easement. Two significant properties in Chester Heights are protected by conservation easements – the Wood/Wawa Home Farm preserves agriculture, while the Miller Easement protects the woodlands off of Lenni Road.

There are several HOAs within Chester Heights Borough, many of which have designated open spaces. These include Brookfield, Darlington Woods, Hamanassett, The Highlands, Rolling Heights Estates, Valleybrook, Rose Hill, Madison and Glen Mills. These open spaces are typically protected through deed restrictions or other language embedded in the land development plans, agreements and other documents. While this protected land may contribute to the parks and recreation system, feedback gathered at public meetings indicated that most of the HOA's are not interested in connecting their lands or permitting any public use. These properties still conserve natural resources and contribute to Chester Heights scenic character.

Chester Heights Borough owns a few properties, Powell and Darlington, which may be considered open space. However, for the purpose of this plan, they

have been included in the parks and facilities chapter.

strategies for improvement

1. Update the Comprehensive Plan for Consistency.

Chester Heights is preparing an update to the Comprehensive Plan. That plan may include chapters or recommendations related to open space. That plan should be made to be consistent, or supportive, of the open space recommendations included here.

2. Continue working with community members to conserve priority landscapes.

Chester Heights has managed to conserve the Powell property and other parcels without dedicated funding for open space. The Borough has been able to work with landowners on an as-needed basis. The public has indicated through this plan process that they support additional open space conservation with a focus on the large parcels along Baltimore Pike, Valleybrook Road and within the central part of the Borough. The Borough should consider conserving more of this land on an as-needed and opportunistic basis.

3. Steward Existing Parks and Open Spaces.

When major opportunities arise the Borough may spend on additional conservation, but until then, the Borough should focus on stewarding, maintaining and caring for the parks and open spaces they already own. Transforming the Powell property into a great public space would provide wonderful opportunities for residents to get out into nature. On a smaller scale, the Darlington Tract could be restored to better serve people as well as our native animals, especially birds and aquatic species. The Borough's open spaces are ready for their makeovers to become great public spaces.



09 plan for trails

summary of existing conditions

Chester Heights Borough residents are well served by miles and miles and trails...if they leave the Borough. The neighboring communities of Aston, Thorndale and especially Middletown, feature extensive trail systems. Their trails take residents through woodlands and meadows and along the Chester Creek. A segment of the Circuit, the Chester Creek Trail, runs along the border with Middletown and could someday connect Chester Heights to the rest of the regional trail system.

The Borough does feature a few trails and sidewalks. Community Park features a new trail loop that takes visitors around the park, through the woods and over many small tributaries. The Brookfield open space features a trail and sidewalk loop that gives those residents a safe place to walk. Other apartment and townhouse communities feature sidewalks too, but they are disconnected from the rest of the Borough.

potential future trails

The residents want more trails and safe places to walk, run or ride bicycles. They want trails for recreation and for transportation. They want to be able to walk or ride to and from the places that they currently have to drive. The typical patterns of suburban sprawl are visible in Chester Heights. Older suburban neighborhoods were built as spurs off of main roads. These smaller neighborhoods were created to landlocked, to keep traffic out, while residents got in their own cars any time they wanted to leave. These neighborhoods are all disconnected, but trails could bring them together in the future.

The Borough has the opportunity to create a community core connected by trails. Major population centers, parks, open spaces, and community hubs all exist near the intersection of Smithbridge and Valleybrook Road. A trail under Valleybrook Road could connect the residents of Brookfield safely to Community Park. From there, a trail along Valleybrook Road could allow them to walk down to the Powell Property or north



to the businesses along Baltimore Pike. Darlington Woods residents could use the same trail to ride bikes south to DiSalvo Park or the firehouse for events.

A core of connected community amenities is an exciting prospect, but another, greater opportunity has also presented itself. The Octararo Trail, currently just a line on the Circuit map drawn to follow an abandoned rail bed and active electric lines, could realistically be constructed to cross Chester Heights. This trail would allow residents to start at Community Park on a stretch of railbed owned by the Borough and travel west to connect to the existing Chester Creek Trail. From there, they could travel north and get on Middletown's expansive trail network, or travel south to Linvilla Orchards.

strategies for improvement

1. Design and implement a trail system along Valleybrook Road to connect important community destinations. Community Park, DiSalvo Park, Powell Property, the Firehouse and multiple townhouse developments are all clustered near the intersection of Valleybrook and Smithbridge roads. A network of trails in this area would make the community far more walkable and make all of these community amenities more accessible.

2. Explore development of the Octoraro Trail. The historic railbed that housed the Octoraro railroad line still remains, undeveloped, crossing the Borough from east to west. A utility right of way diverges from the rail bed in the center of the Borough, heading to the north and east. Each of these corridors could accommodate a Circuit level trail. The Borough also owns a stretch of the former rail bed between the western Borough border and Valleybrook Road. This parcel is directly south and adjacent to Community Park. The Borough owned parcel could be developed as a pilot project, to provide a resource to Borough residents. It could also connect beneath the road to provide a safe pedestrian crossing tunnel under the road. A fully developed Octoraro trail would cross the most beautiful parts of the Borough and would be a valuable amenity for Borough residents. It could provide recreation opportunities and active transportation, allowing residents to walk or ride to the Wawa Train Station, Community Park and a future network of trails providing access to the rest of the Borough.

3. Design and implement a protected walkway along Baltimore Pike to connect Valleybrook intersection with the Wawa Train Station. The public has indicated a strong desire to be able to walk or ride a bicycle across the Borough, generally following the path of Baltimore Pike. Darlington Woods and Madison Glen Mills are large residential developments on the western side of

the Borough, near Baltimore Pike. A trail crossing the Borough would provide these residents the ability to walk or ride to Wawa Station.

A trail that follows this route should not be envisioned as a simple sidewalk. And it likely would not run directly alongside Baltimore Ave. A trail following this route would need to be separated from the road, either by some distance, significant grade change or structural barriers. Additionally, the route may not be as straight as the road. Finding a feasible route could take a proposed trail far from the road and could include some large curves.

4. Explore creation of a trail along Valleybrook Road from Baltimore Pike south towards Community Park. A trail could be installed to generally follow the route of Valleybrook Road, connecting the northern section of the Borough all the way down to the Powell Property and beyond. The western side of Valleybrook Road appears able to accommodate a trail, potentially within the right of way. An additional feasibility study should be performed, but the Borough may be able to construct a trail here with no additional land acquisition. Valleybrook Road appears to have a right of way as wide as 45’.

A trail generally following Valleybrook Road could also veer from the roadside. There may be an opportunity to provide a trail through Madison Glen Mills to Lydia Hollow Drive to connect to Wawa and the intersection there. Additional divergences and spur trails could also be identified through a feasibility study.

10 ordinance review

This section outlines how local land use regulations, such as the Zoning and Subdivision & Land Development Ordinances, can augment acquisition and development in the Borough. The Borough SLDO Ordinance was adopted in 1997 and somewhat updated in 2001. The 1983 Zoning Ordinance includes several subsequent amendments. It is understandable that an essentially developed Borough would not have recently updated the Zoning and SLDO Ordinances. However, the opening of the Wawa station may place unforeseen development pressure on the Township. This review offers suggestions on how the SLDO and Zoning Ordinances can be updated to conserve natural features such as steep slopes, trees, and streams as development occurs.

a critical topic for both SLDO and Zoning

One of the more critical issues that is typically addressed in Zoning and SLDO, that is not addressed in Chester Heights Borough regulations, is the issue of conserving natural areas as development occurs. While these standards have been in place in Zoning since the late 1980's, now more than ever, it is critical to retain areas to infiltrate stormwater and reduce flooding, to require developers to install plantings that shade and help mitigate drought and hot weather, and to preserve stream quality and prevent erosion by prohibiting development on steep slopes, "steep" being those slopes that exceed 25%, or a 4:1 height to width ratio. Specific suggestions for conserving natural resources are outlined below.

subdivision and land development ordinance (SLDO) observations and suggestions

The SLDO standards apply to new development – those that require subdivision or land development approval by Borough Council. The SLDO outlines the procedure for filing and reviewing development plans, as well as the content or information to be shown on the plans. In addition, a SLDO establishes specific design standards

for new development, such as road widths, whether street trees and sidewalks are required, landscaping of new parking lots, etc. Relief from the SLDO may be granted as a "waiver" by the Borough Council, upon satisfactory justification by the applicant. Borough Council also has the authority to grant Conditional Use approvals, uses that are presumed to be allowed upon demonstration by the applicant that the development meets certain criteria contained in the SLDO.

1. Public Land Dedication and Fee In Lieu.

The state enabling legislation for planning, The PA Municipalities Planning Code (Act 247), Section 503 (11) allows municipalities to require developers to provide parkland for new developments. Municipalities may also offer developers the option to instead pay fees, construct facilities, or establish private parkland. If the Borough wishes to enact such provisions, now is the time to address the need in the PROS plan, which is the basis for justifying the park dedication or fee. Upon adoption of the PROS plan, the requirement for public land dedication and fee in lieu may then be adopted in the SLDO.

2. Sketch Plans.

While Section 162-13 allows nonbinding sketch plans, Natural Lands suggests that the Borough strongly encourage this practice, both in the SLDO and at the counter, when a potential applicant inquires about a subdivision or land development application. This approach enables discussion between the Borough and applicant before the applicant incurs great costs of detailed, final engineering, at which point applicants are understandably hesitant to revise plans.

3. Adding a requirement for a site visit.

Because it is impossible to completely understand a site only by examining a two-dimensional paper document inside a municipal building, it is essential that Planning Commission members walk the property, ideally during the Sketch Plan phase, with

the Existing Resources and Site Analysis Plan (see d., below) in hand, to take the full measure of the proposed development site. Such visits really help provide a much better understanding of the best locations for potential conservation areas on site and their potential linkages to natural or cultural features, including trails, on adjacent properties that might be developed sometime in the future. Such inspections constitute informal outdoor work sessions of the Planning Commission, conducted for information-gathering purposes only, at which no formal decisions are made. The meeting is duly noticed and advertised in the normal manner, as required for any meeting of the Commission.

4. Plan Content

Section 162-14. D. indicates the features to be shown on Preliminary Plans. Beyond the requirement to show topography, there is an absence of natural features analysis including wetlands, floodplains, scenic views from public roads, historic structures, trees over 12-inch caliper by species, vegetation cover types, soil types, and indications of rare or endangered species. Only at the Final Plan stage, Section 162-14. D., does the Borough require documentation of natural resources, eliminating the ability for the Planning Commission and Council to consider these important features at the outset of the development review. Since the developer has to provide this information anyway, having it upfront is no additional cost to the applicant and would provide the necessary information to the Planning Commission and Council, upon which to make informed decisions about how the land is developed. Natural Lands has a model ordinance section, "Existing Features and Site Analysis Plan" and we strongly encourage the Borough to require this information on subdivision and land development plans, the earlier the better.

5. Street Widths

The Borough requires a minor street cartway width of

30 feet, overly wide for new residential development, resulting in 1) higher speeds that are more dangerous for pedestrians and 2) produce more stormwater runoff that furthers Borough MS4 obligations and costs. For perspective, the Pennsylvania Turnpike lanes are 12 feet and your minor street width of 30 feet, means each lane is paved to 15 feet! We rely on recommendations in Residential Streets, 3rd edition, published by the Urban Land Institute, American Society of Civil Engineers, National Association of Homebuilders and Institute of Traffic Engineering. They advise that on most local streets, a 24-to-26-foot pavement is the most appropriate width, providing two parking lanes and a traffic lane. For lower-volume streets with limited parking a 22-to-24-foot pavement width is adequate. Wide streets make for both unattractive settings for houses and more important, encourage higher, unsafe speeds. To the extent the Borough takes responsibility for new streets, the cost of plowing and repaving is higher than for narrower streets.

6. Sidewalks

Section 162-31 states: "where required, sidewalks shall be a minimum of four feet in width. Where required, snow strips shall be three feet in width and shall be grassed." In a borough where walking is desired and especially in a community with a new train station, sidewalks should nearly always be required.

7. Street Trees and Landscaping

Section 162-54 requires retaining trees, as possible, when development occurs, specifically those with a caliper of six inches or greater. Sections labeled "Shade Tree" as this section is, usually require deciduous shade trees along all new streets and in new commercial development and redevelopment. In addition, the Borough would benefit from greening standards that require landscaping of parking lots, replacement planting when more than 25% of trees are removed by the development and the submission

of a natural resource inventory and conservation plan, early in the development review process (ie at the optional Sketch Plan or mandatory Preliminary Plan). Providing applicants with a list of native trees and shrubs, suitable as street trees and for landscaping, further ensures that the Borough tree canopy is replenished as development occurs.

zoning ordinance observations and suggestions.

Zoning standards apply to individual parcels, unless otherwise exempted. The zoning ordinance establishes the uses that are permitted in the various zoning districts. The Zoning ordinance also establishes area and bulk limitations, such as the required front yard setback, or permitted height. The intensity of development, usually expressed as density, such as one dwelling per acre, is regulated within Zoning. Standards such as number of required parking spots and “net outs” or deductions of environmentally constrained lands, all belong in a Zoning Ordinance. Where required, relief from the Zoning Ordinance must be obtained from the Zoning Hearing Board, a quasi-judicial body, appointed by Council, that has the authority to grant special exceptions and variances.

1. Natural Resource Protection

The most important step that the Borough can take to retain natural areas as development occurs, would be to adopt a Natural Resource section in the Zoning Ordinance. These standards typically apply to: 1) all new subdivision and land development applications, 2) special exception and variance requests that involve disturbance to natural features; 3) permit applications that trigger a stormwater management permit. In other words, if a landowner needs Borough approval anyway, the natural features protection standards apply. The standards typically set limits on disturbance to floodplains, wetlands, riparian buffers, woodlands, specimen trees, steep slopes (those slopes over 25%) and threatened and endangered

species and their habitats. While natural resource protection requirements are most effective when they are included in Zoning, which applies to all parcels, it is also possible to place these standards in the SLDO thereby limiting the requirements to subdivision and land development applications. We recommend the Zoning approach, with a threshold, such as that outlined earlier in this paragraph.

2. Determining density and impervious cover, based on site capacity, or “net outs.”

All development sites are not created equal. Logic follows that a steeply sloping, wet site is not as suitable for development as a flat, well-drained one. While case law in Pennsylvania has frowned up large lot residential zoning (requiring fewer than one home per two acres) except where true agricultural uses are involved, the courts have upheld “net outs.” A net out approach, as upheld in the Upper Mt. Bethel vs. Reimer case, deducts a high percentage of environmentally constrained land from the total, or “gross site area.” The resulting acreage is then used to determine the maximum number of homes and the maximum amount of impervious cover. This approach bases development intensity on the carrying capacity of the land, with unconstrained sites resulting in more homes and impervious cover than those encumbered by very steep hillsides and wetlands.

3. Impervious Cover

The Borough regulates building coverage, but not impervious cover. Natural Lands recommends that impervious cover, or the total amount of the site that will not infiltrate water, is the more critical of the two limits. Establishing total impervious cover is also critical to borough planning for stormwater and flooding impacts.

4. Planned Residential Development (“PRD”) and Multi-family and Commercial Development

The Borough Zoning Map designates Darlington Woods and the Village of Valleybrook, as PRD districts. It appears that the two developments were built under the standards in Article XI, PRD. However, in reading the PRD requirements, it appears that tracts of 50 or more acres, served by public sewer and water, and designated in the Comp Plan, are eligible for this form of development. Because the Borough already has a high percentage of attached homes, it makes sense to revisit these standards. Many communities we work with are replacing older PRD standards with mixed-use developments, in locations where they are most appropriate, such as along major thoroughfares,

and near public transit. In Chester Heights, the Route 1 corridor is zoned Business (“B”) and Planned Laboratory Office (PLO). Smithbridge Road also carries the B zoning district designation. When one looks at uses in the B District, uses in all previous districts (R-1-1/2, R-1, R-3/4) are also permitted, such as farming and single-family homes. The B District also permits retail, restaurants, series, officers banks, accessory uses, as well as a long list of special exception uses and life care, by conditional use.

Regarding the Route 1 zoning, it may be time to take a careful look at how the Borough sees future development occurring. How this corridor evolves will be critical to the quality of life for Chester Heights Borough, as well as to the tax base. As stated by the



Long, linear commercial districts can be avoided by rezoning land to nodes and centers, as shown on the right. (Illustration copyright Randall Arendt, 2015.)

Urban Land Institute Senior Fellow Ed McMahon, “The era of strip development is coming to an end. ...it is becoming increasingly clear that strip retail is retail for the last century. The future belongs to town centers, main streets, and mixed-use development.” (McMahon, Edward T., “The End of the Strip.” Planners Web April 24th, 2011. <http://plannersweb.com/2011/04/the-end-of-the-strip/>).

While Route 1 warrants the highest density development in the Borough, wall to wall commercial development is unattractive and undesirable. Ideally the Borough’s major commercial corridors could evolve

from continuous linear commercial “strips” to “nodes” or crossroads. Where small community open spaces are desired, or trail connections (such as connecting to the Wawa Station) an Official Map can help to set the development pattern before redevelopment occurs. Where more intensive development is desired, new street patterns can also be plotted on parcels intended for redevelopment.

The Borough might consider eliminating the PRD and replacing some of the B and PLO District with mixed-use development that could both absorb some development pressure, related to the Wawa



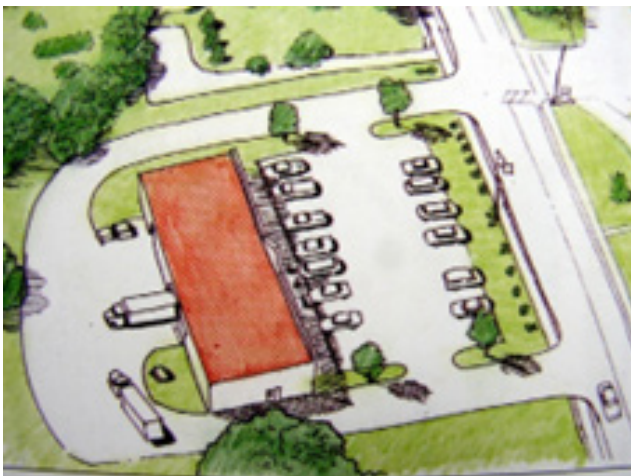
The above photos show the same site at completion and a year later. The parking lot island includes a notched cut that allows parking lot runoff to drain to a stormwater management system that both filters pollutants and infiltrates runoff. (Photo, copyright Randall Arendt, 2015.)

Station, and reshape the commercial uses, requiring landscaping and other “greening” elements. A few of the standards that are typically included in these mixed-use, or “village” standards, are shown below:

- Parking lot landscaping requirements, lowers temperatures in parking lots and includes places for stormwater management that infiltrates stormwater runoff into the ground.
- The Borough should consider requiring that the majority of parking spaces are located to the side or rear of buildings. Requiring a maximum (versus minimum) front yard setback, helps to encourage this development pattern.

- Green spaces, in the form of plazas, village greens and other small open spaces should be required for larger-scale redevelopment, such as 50,000 square feet or more of new construction, about the size of a medium-scale grocery store.

Encouraging growth around Route 1 and transit is ideal. Although not walkable for most borough residents, the new rail station, in nearby Middletown Township is only 2 to 3 miles from most of the Borough, making the Borough an even more desirable location in which to live.



The illustrations, above, show the impact of a maximum building setback, on the right, versus a more traditional minimum setback as shown on the left. Combining maximum setbacks, with the requirement to locate parking to the side or rear of the front façade, creates a more inviting and walkable street frontage. (Image copyright Randall Arendt, 2015.)

Summary

Communities that successfully conserve land and natural features employ several techniques including documenting community resources, setting reasonable goals for conservation and development, and establishing a sound zoning and procedural framework. No conservation review would be complete without mentioning that Chester Heights Borough’s efforts at working with landowners and

selectively using public funds to purchase open space are also vital to conserving community character. By combining selective acquisitions or donations with development regulations that conserve natural areas, the Borough can continue to grow and redevelop while maintaining a high quality of life for residents.

11 implementation strategies

The Chester Heights Borough Mini Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan sets forth a vision that complements the Borough’s success in open space preservation and provides the framework for improving and expanding the public parks and recreation system; connecting the community with safe places to walk and bicycle; and creating more access to the Powell property and providing opportunities for citizens to engage in active healthy living and to experience nature in Borough parks.

The public engagement process found that the majority of citizens in the Borough think that parks and recreation is important to the community. They believe that they have access to most of the recreation opportunities they need, but they want to be able to walk and ride safely in the Borough and want the

existing facilities to be upgraded. They also want more programming and events.

The Implementation Strategy that follows collects the recommendations included in the plan and organizes them by priority and timeframe. It provides a schedule for improving the parks and recreation system over time, using a mix of public and private funding to develop the parks and recreation facilities. Every incremental success, no matter how small, will advance Chester Heights’ vision for the future. The intent of this implementation strategy is to chart a course of action that is pragmatic and achievable and that also allows for larger scale initiatives should the opportunities emerge. Responsible parties and potential partners, a suggested timeframe, and resources, are outlined for each recommendation.



Year One					
Item	Chapter	Strategy	Lead Party	Assistance	Potential Partners/Funding
a	4-CA	Establish a Parks & Recreation Board, to assist in implementing the many recommendations in this plan and to support the Borough in all matters related to parks, open space, trails and recreation.	Borough Council	Staff, Solicitor	
b	4-CA	Expedite access to the Powell property, by working directly with Borough consultants to implement temporary accommodations, including parking and trails. Conduct safety related preparations including hazard tree assessments and removals and dump site removal.	Borough Council	Engineer, Landscape Architect	DCNR, DCED, Delaware County Conservation District
c	4-CA	Continue to maintain, steward and upgrade the existing parks and open space with renewed focus in accordance with this plan, including mulch management, turf management and stewardship of natural areas.	Borough Council	Borough Staff	Contractors
d.	4-CA	Form Friends Groups to support the Borough's growing parks, recreation, open space and trails network.	Borough Council	Borough Staff	
e	7-OS	Update the Comprehensive Plan to reflect the priorities identified in this Mini-PROS plan.	Borough Council	Planning Consultant	Task Force, Other Consultants, Public
f	9-LU	Amend the SLDO to require public park land dedication and to permit a fee payment in lieu of dedication.	Planning Commission	CPRP Consultant, Borough Council	

Years One to Five					
Item	Chapter	Strategy	Lead Party	Assistance	Potential Partners/Funding
a	4-CA 6-PA	Prepare a Master Plan for the Powell property. Engage with professional designers, the public and a project Task Force to create a plan to guide the long term creation and operation of new public open space.	Borough Council	Borough Staff, Landscape Architect, Engineer	DCNR (Funding) Citizen Task Force
b	4-CA	Implement the Master Plan for the Powell property. Continue to engage with the design team to prepare detailed plans. Implement the plans through a bid process to hire a construction company to implement improvements.	Borough Council	Borough Staff, Landscape Architect, Engineer	DCNR, DCED, PECO Green Region, Delaware County Conservation District
c	4-CA 6-PA 8-T	Expand the Borough wide Trail Network in conjunction with the development of the Powell property. Focus on connecting Community Park, Powell, HOA's, DiSalvo Park and Firehouse.	Borough Council	Borough Staff, Landscape Architect, Engineer	DCNR, DCED, DVRPC, PennDOT, The Circuit
d	4-CA 6-PA 8-T	Create a pilot segment of the Ocatararo Trail to connect to Community Park and the Brookfield Miller HOA through the tunnel under Valleybrook Road.	Borough Council	Borough Staff, Landscape Architect, Engineer	DCNR, DCED, DVRPC, PennDOT, The Circuit
e	4-CA	Increase visitation and awareness of the parks, recreation, open space and trail network, through a diversity of events, messaging, programming and activities. The opening of the Powell property could be a springboard.	Borough Council	Borough Staff, Friends Groups	

Years One to Five					
Item	Chapter	Strategy	Lead Party	Assistance	Potential Partners/Funding
f.	9-LU	Amend the SLDO to include provisions regarding the land development application process, to include sketch plans, site visits and updated plan content requirements. Prepare revisions in accordance with updated Comprehensive Plan.	Planning Commission	Borough Council, Borough Staff, Planning Consultant	
g.	9-LU	Amend the SLDO to strengthen or improve sections regarding sidewalks, street widths and landscaping, to enable walkability, reduce impervious surfaces and protect habitat and water quality. Prepare revisions in accordance with updated Comprehensive Plan.	Planning Commission	Borough Council, Borough Staff, Planning Consultant	
h.	9-LU	Amend the ZO to include a Natural Resource Protection standards, potentially through creation of an overlay. Prepare revisions in accordance with updated Comprehensive Plan.	Planning Commission	Borough Council, Borough Staff, Planning Consultant	
i.	9-LU	Amend the ZO to strengthen regulations regarding density, impervious cover and site capacity, potentially overhauling the existing PRD, Multi-Family and Commercial Development regulations.	Planning Commission	Borough Council, Borough Staff, Planning Consultant	
j.	4-CU	Establish additional boards and commissions to support implementation of this plan and other Borough initiatives. Commissions and Boards may include Parks and Recreation, Shade Tree Commission, Environmental Advisory Council and more.	Borough Council	Staff, Solicitor	

Years Five to Ten (and Beyond)					
Item	Chapter	Strategy	Lead Party	Assistance	Potential Partners/Funding
a	6-PA	Prepare a Master Plan for Community Park to guide future growth, development, connections and reorganization, to potentially include the following elements:			DCNR, DCED
		-Enhanced/beautified entrance			
		-Connections to nearby trails and communities			
		-Enhanced/upgraded loop trail			
		-Modern site furniture, consistent across park system			
		-Upgraded, modern playground			
b.	6-PA	Prepare a Master Plan for DiSalvo Park, to potentially include:			DCNR, DCED
		-A trail network central hub			
		- Gathering space such as a pavilion, benches or a dedicated space like an amphitheater			
		- Beautifying the site with landscaping and site furniture			
		- Consideration of big picture improvements, including the potential for a new Borough Hall in the area			
c.	6-PA	Revisit the Master Plan for the Darlington Tract, consider whether it still meets the needs of the community or should be revised.	Borough Council	Natural Lands	PECO Green Region

Years Five to Ten (and Beyond)										
Item	Chapter	Strategy	Lead Party	Assistance	Potential Partners/Funding					
d.	6-PA	Prepare a Master Plan for Lenni Park, potentially to include:			DCNR, DCED					
		-Access to Chester Creek								
		-Welcome to Chester Heights sign								
		-Removal of driveway								
		-Naturalization and restoration								
		-Addition of Site Amenities								
e.	4-CA 6-PA 8-T	Create the Octararo Trail, crossing the Borough to connect Community Park to the Chester Creek Trail. Follow a combination of utility rights of way, trail easements and Borough property. Partner with and/or acquire land from Brookfield Miller if necessary.	Borough Council	Borough Staff, Landscape Architect, Engineer	DCNR, DCED, DVRPC, PennDOT, The Circuit					
		f.				4-CA 8-T	Design and implement a trail system along Valleybrook Road to connect important community destinations.	Borough Council	Borough Staff, Landscape Architect, Engineer	DCNR, DCED, DVRPC, PennDOT, The Circuit
		g.					4-CA 8-T			
h.	4-CA 8-T	Explore creation of a trail along Valleybrook Road from Baltimore Pike south towards Community Park.	Borough Council	Borough Staff, Landscape Architect, Engineer	DCNR, DCED, DVRPC, PennDOT, The Circuit					

Ongoing					
Item	Chapter	Strategy	Lead Party	Assistance	Potential Partners/Funding
a.	4-CA	Increase visitation and awareness of the parks, recreation, open space and trail network, through a diversity of events, messaging, programming and activities. The opening of the Powell property could be a springboard.	Borough Council	Borough Staff, Friends Groups	
b.	6-PA 7-OS	Continue to protect and conserve land surrounding the Powell property, to expand the public open space, and/or to enhance the habitat and natural features.	Borough Council	Natural Lands	DCNR
c.	6-PA	Continue to keep the parks and their surroundings clean through organized litter cleanups, with a focus on Darlington Road.	Borough Council	Borough Staff, Friends Groups	
d.	4-CA 6-PA	Maintain contact with HOA's to identify opportunities to partner on events, messaging and communications and sharing spaces.	Borough Council	Borough Staff, HOA's	
e.	7-OS	Work with community members to conserve priority landscapes and parcels.	Borough Council	Borough Staff, Natural Lands	DCNR, DCED
f.	6-PA 7-OS	Steward existing parks and open spaces to improve habitat, manage ecosystems, control invasive plant species and beautify these public spaces.	Borough Council	Borough Staff, Contractors	


appendix

Maps	54
Approved Plant List	64
Public Meeting Results	70
On-Line Questionnaire Results	76
Key Person Interviews Summary	78



2018 Aerial Photography

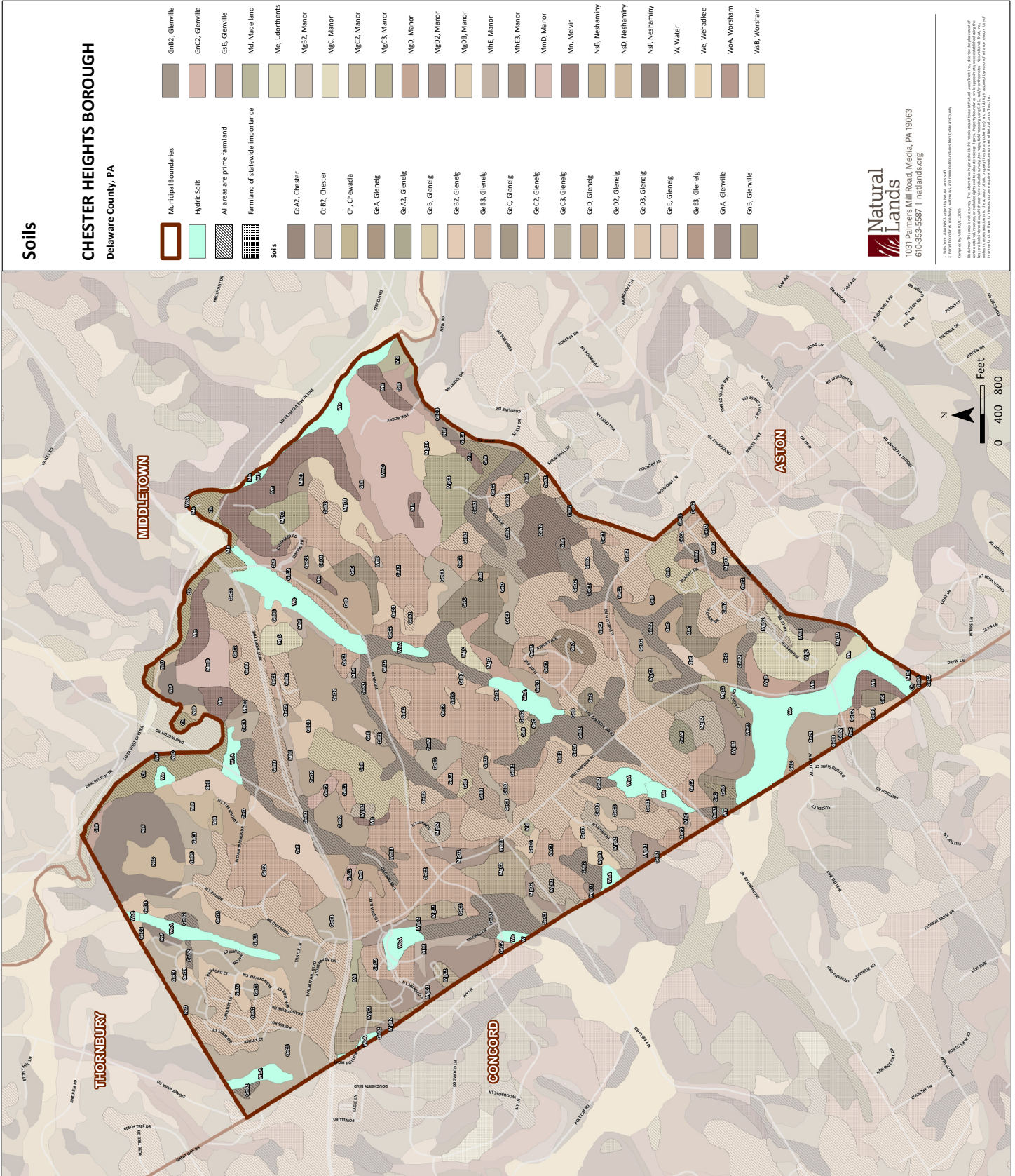
CHESTER HEIGHTS BOROUGH
Delaware County, PA

-  Waterways
-  xxxNLT_GIS.NLT_ADMIN...
-  Municipal Boundaries
-  MASK
-  Municipal Boundaries
-  Parcel Boundaries



© 2018 Natural Lands Institute, Inc. All rights reserved. This map is a representation of the current state of the land and is not a warranty of any kind. The map is provided for informational purposes only and should not be used as a basis for any legal or financial decision. The map is subject to change without notice. For more information, please contact us at 610-353-5557 or naturlands.org.





Natural Lands
1031 Palmyrs Mill Road, Media, PA 19063
610-363-5587 | natallands.org

1. Soils data courtesy of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, Bureau of Soil Conservation. 2. Prime farmland, important farmland, and unique farmland data courtesy of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, Bureau of Soil Conservation. 3. Hydric soils data courtesy of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, Bureau of Soil Conservation. 4. Farmland of statewide importance data courtesy of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, Bureau of Soil Conservation. 5. Municipal boundaries data courtesy of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, Bureau of Soil Conservation. 6. All areas are prime farmland data courtesy of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, Bureau of Soil Conservation. 7. This map was prepared by Natural Lands for the Chester Heights Borough. All rights reserved. No warranty is made by Natural Lands for the accuracy or completeness of the information presented on this map. The user assumes all liability for any use of the information presented on this map.


Topography


CHESTER HEIGHTS BOROUGH
Delaware County, PA

 Municipal Boundaries

 Contours (5ft interval)

Slopes

 < 15%

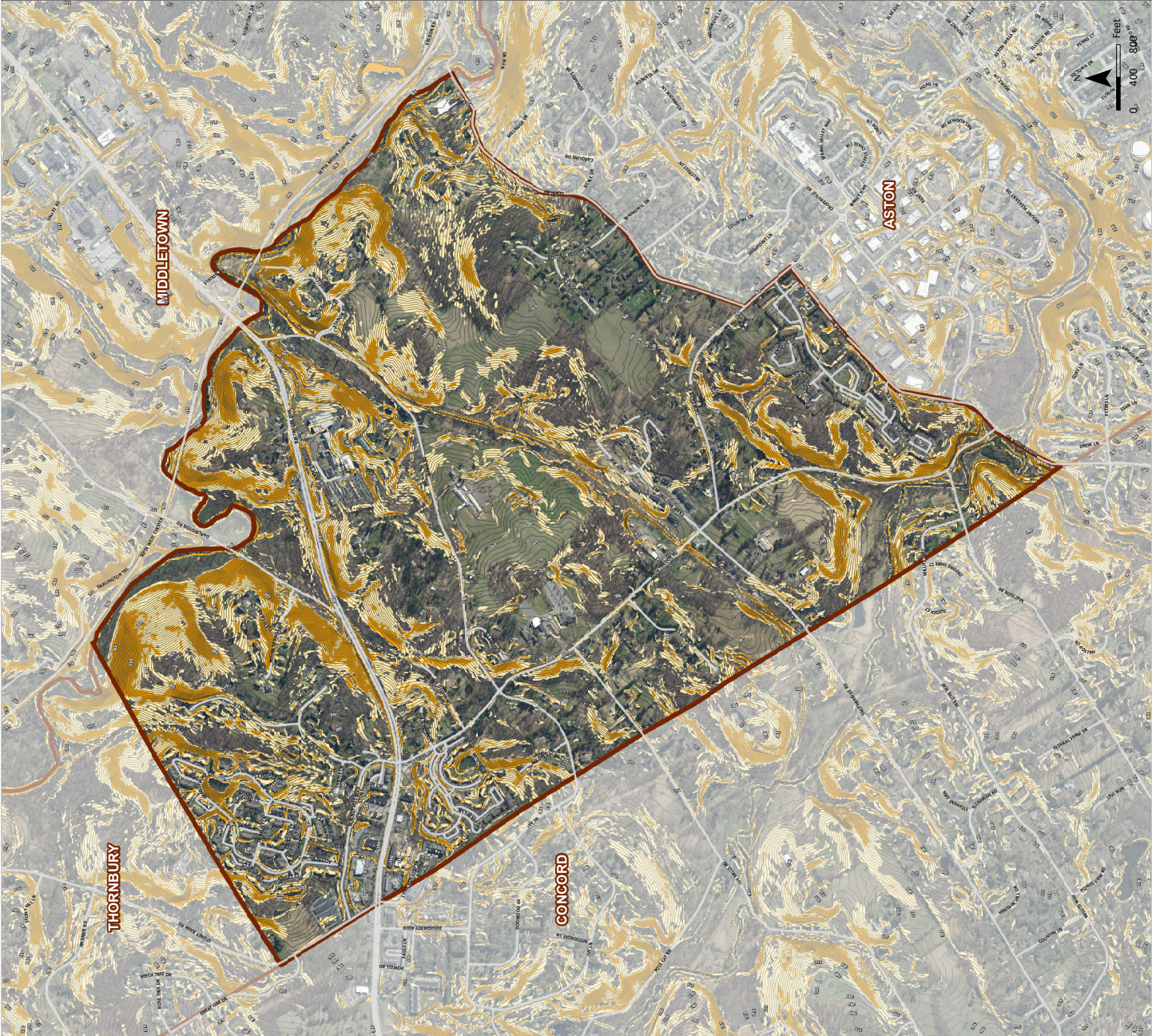
 15% - 25%

 > 25%








1031 Palmers Mill Road, Media, PA 19063
610-353-5387 | natilands.org

© 2018 Natural Lands Inc.
All Rights Reserved. This map is a derivative work of the original data provided by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. The information contained herein is for informational purposes only and does not constitute a warranty of any kind. The user assumes all liability for any use of this information. The information is provided "as is" without any warranty of accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose. The user agrees to hold Natural Lands Inc. harmless from and against all claims, damages, and expenses, including reasonable attorneys' fees, arising out of or in connection with the use of this information.



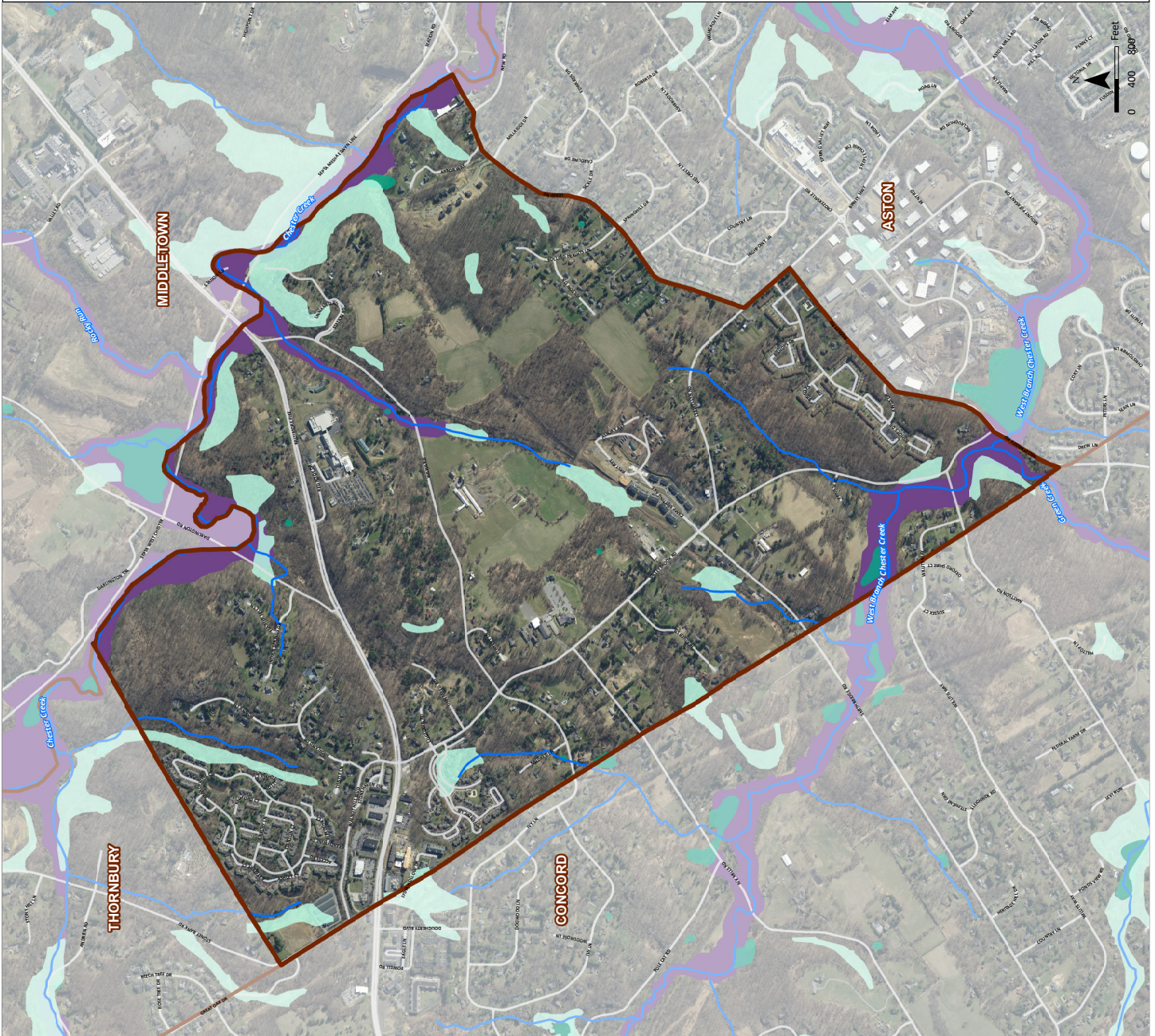
Hydrology

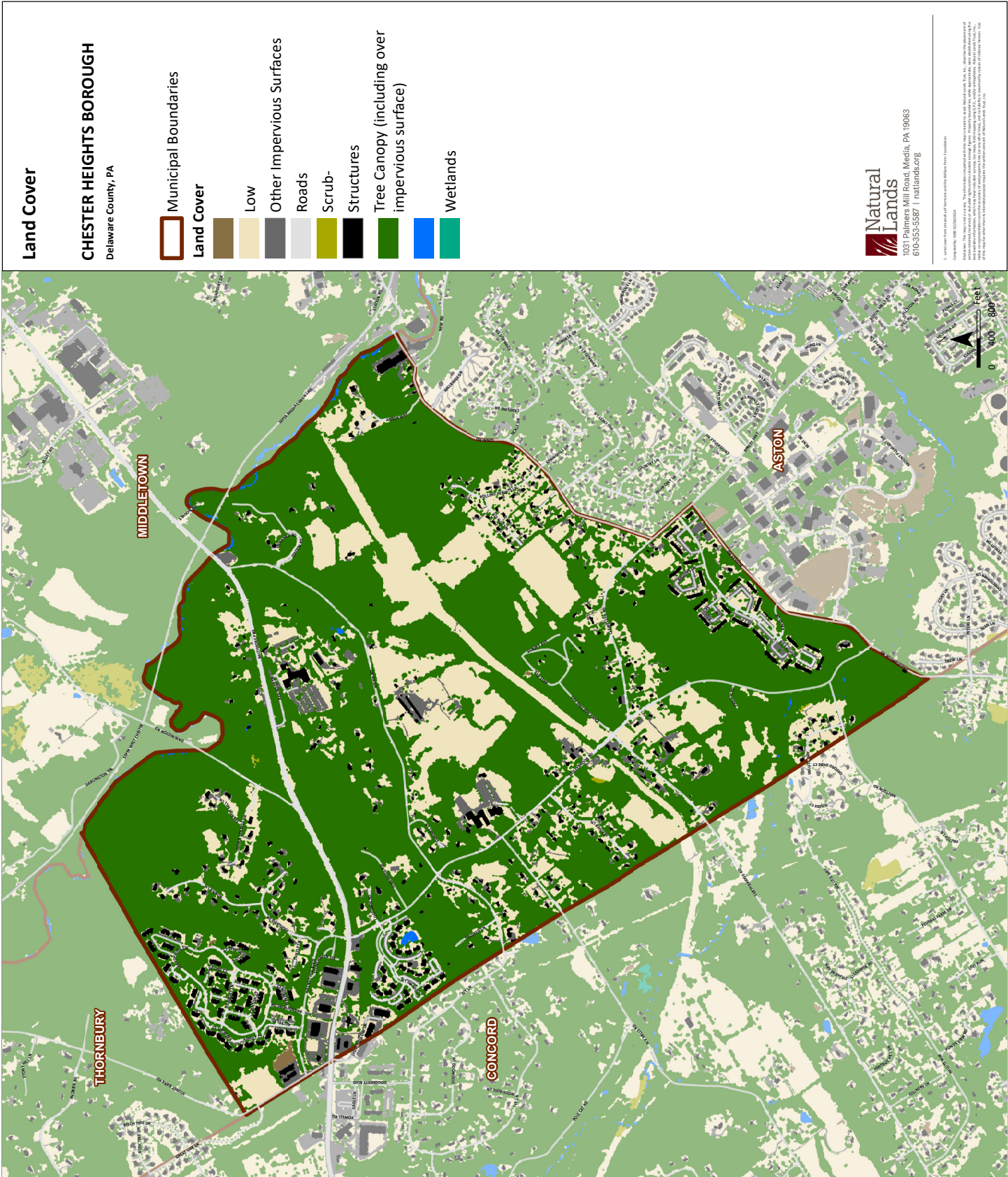
CHESTER HEIGHTS BOROUGH
Delaware County, PA

-  Municipal Boundaries
-  Waterways
-  Hydric Soils
-  National Wetland Inventory
-  Floodplains

Natural Lands
1031 Palmers Mill Road, Media, PA 19063
610-353-5387 | natulands.org








1. Prepared by: Natural Lands Institute
2. Prepared for: Chester Heights Borough
3. Project Name: Chester Heights Borough Mini-Pros Plan
4. Project ID: 1801-001-0001
Copyright © 2018 Natural Lands Institute





Conservation Priorities

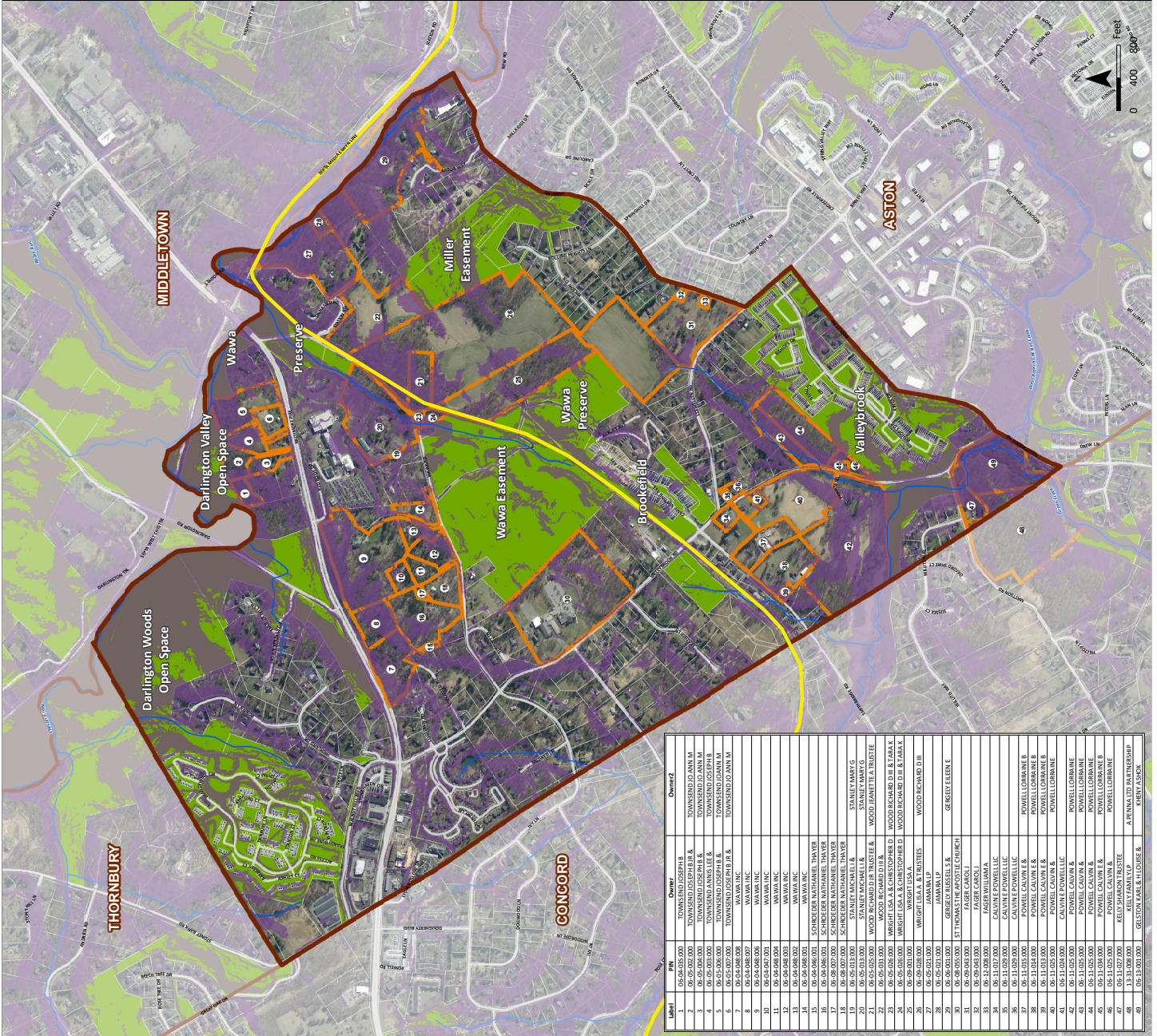
CHESTER HEIGHTS BOROUGH
Delaware County, PA

-  Parcel Boundaries
 -  Municipal Boundaries
 -  Planned Octoraro Trail (DVRPC Circuit Trails)
 -  Waterways
 -  Unprotected Lands > 10 acres
 -  Existing Protected Lands
 -  Primary Conservation Lands
- Primary Conservation Lands are 100-year floodplains, wetlands, and slopes > 25%.












1031 Palmers Mill Road, Media, PA 19063
610-353-5387 | natilands.org

1. Parcel boundaries, waterways, and waterways were derived from the Delaware County GIS data. 2. Municipal boundaries were derived from the Delaware County GIS data. 3. Planned Octoraro Trail (DVRPC Circuit Trails) were derived from the Delaware County GIS data. 4. Unprotected lands > 10 acres were derived from the Delaware County GIS data. 5. Existing protected lands were derived from the Delaware County GIS data. 6. Primary conservation lands were derived from the Delaware County GIS data. 7. Primary conservation lands are 100-year floodplains, wetlands, and slopes > 25%.



Parcel #	APN	Owner	Owner's Address
1	05-05-00100	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
2	05-05-00200	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
3	05-05-00300	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
4	05-05-00400	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
5	05-05-00500	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
6	05-05-00600	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
7	05-05-00700	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
8	05-05-00800	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
9	05-05-00900	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
10	05-05-01000	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
11	05-05-01100	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
12	05-05-01200	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
13	05-05-01300	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
14	05-05-01400	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
15	05-05-01500	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
16	05-05-01600	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
17	05-05-01700	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
18	05-05-01800	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
19	05-05-01900	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
20	05-05-02000	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
21	05-05-02100	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
22	05-05-02200	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
23	05-05-02300	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
24	05-05-02400	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
25	05-05-02500	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
26	05-05-02600	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
27	05-05-02700	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
28	05-05-02800	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
29	05-05-02900	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
30	05-05-03000	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
31	05-05-03100	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
32	05-05-03200	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
33	05-05-03300	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
34	05-05-03400	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
35	05-05-03500	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
36	05-05-03600	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
37	05-05-03700	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
38	05-05-03800	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
39	05-05-03900	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
40	05-05-04000	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
41	05-05-04100	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
42	05-05-04200	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
43	05-05-04300	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
44	05-05-04400	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
45	05-05-04500	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
46	05-05-04600	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
47	05-05-04700	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
48	05-05-04800	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER	TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER

- Trail Possibilities**
Chester Heights Borough
-  Municipal Boundaries
 -  Parcel Boundaries
 -  Waterways
 -  Existing Protected Lands
 -  Trail Status
 -  Existing
 -  Potential Circuit Trail Route
 -  Proposed
 -  Public trail on a private conservation property



Natural Lands
1000 Walnut Street, Suite 200
P.O. Box 1000
Chester, PA 19380
Tel: 610-336-1111
www.natural-lands.com

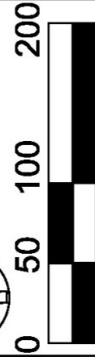
1. Parcel boundaries and address from Delaware County.
2. 2021 Aerial Imagery from ESRI.
3. Existing protected lands from Delaware County and Wiconowville.
4. Existing parcel boundaries from DNREC.
5. Trails from DNREC, Natural Lands, and Delaware County.

Completed by: MB 12/08/2025

Disclaimer: This map is not a warranty. The information provided with this map is intended to assist Natural Lands, Inc. (NL) in its efforts to identify and describe the placement of potential trails. NL does not warrant the accuracy of the information provided. Property boundaries, while approximate, were established using the best available information and may have included errors, such as missing, overlapping, or mislabeled information. NL is not responsible for any errors or omissions. NL is not liable for any damages or loss of property (including but not limited to) arising from the use of this map. NL is not responsible for any other than the information provided on this map. NL is not responsible for any other than the information provided on this map.

Darlington Tract
Chester Heights
Borough
Delaware County

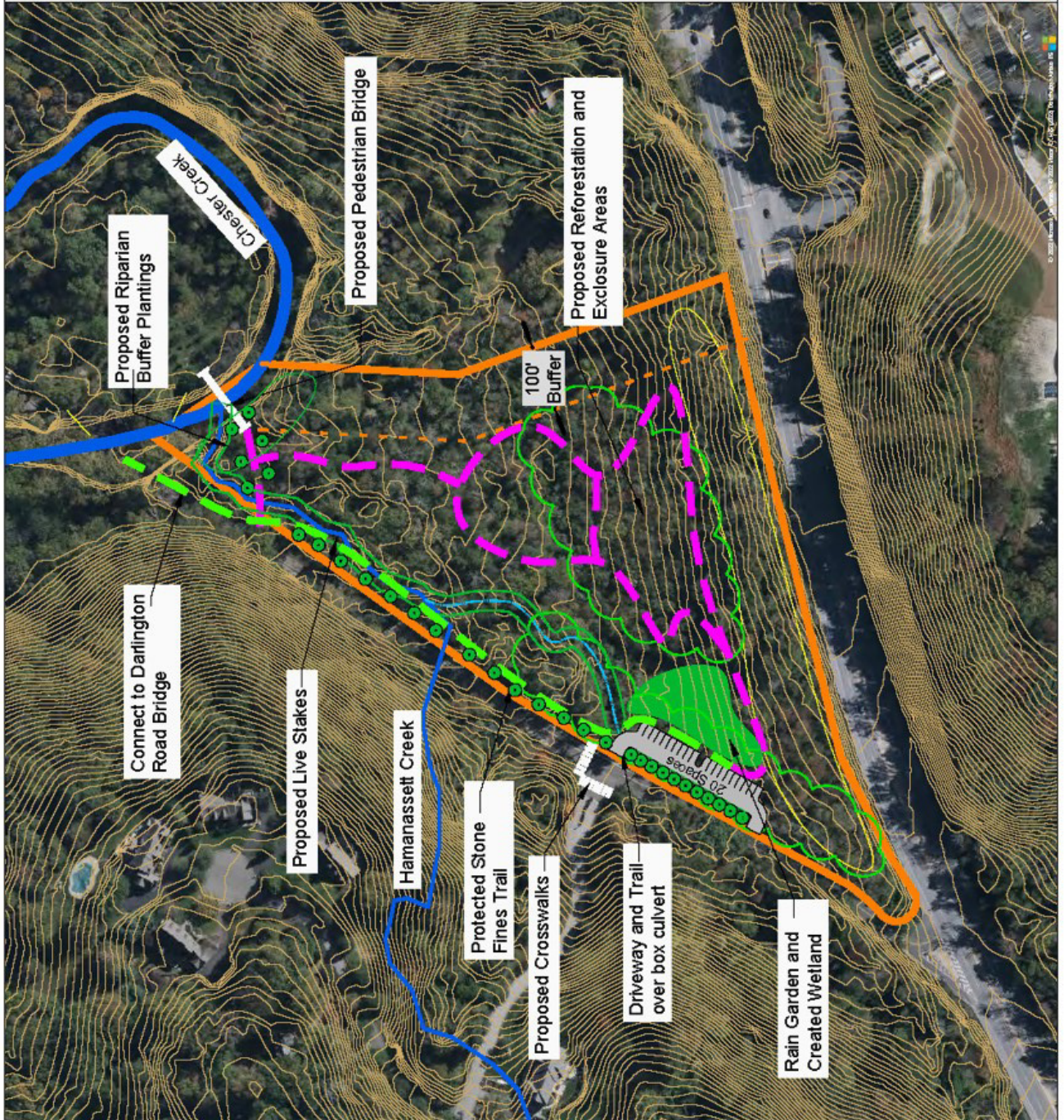
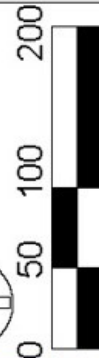
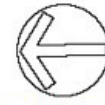
Site Analysis
August 22, 2022

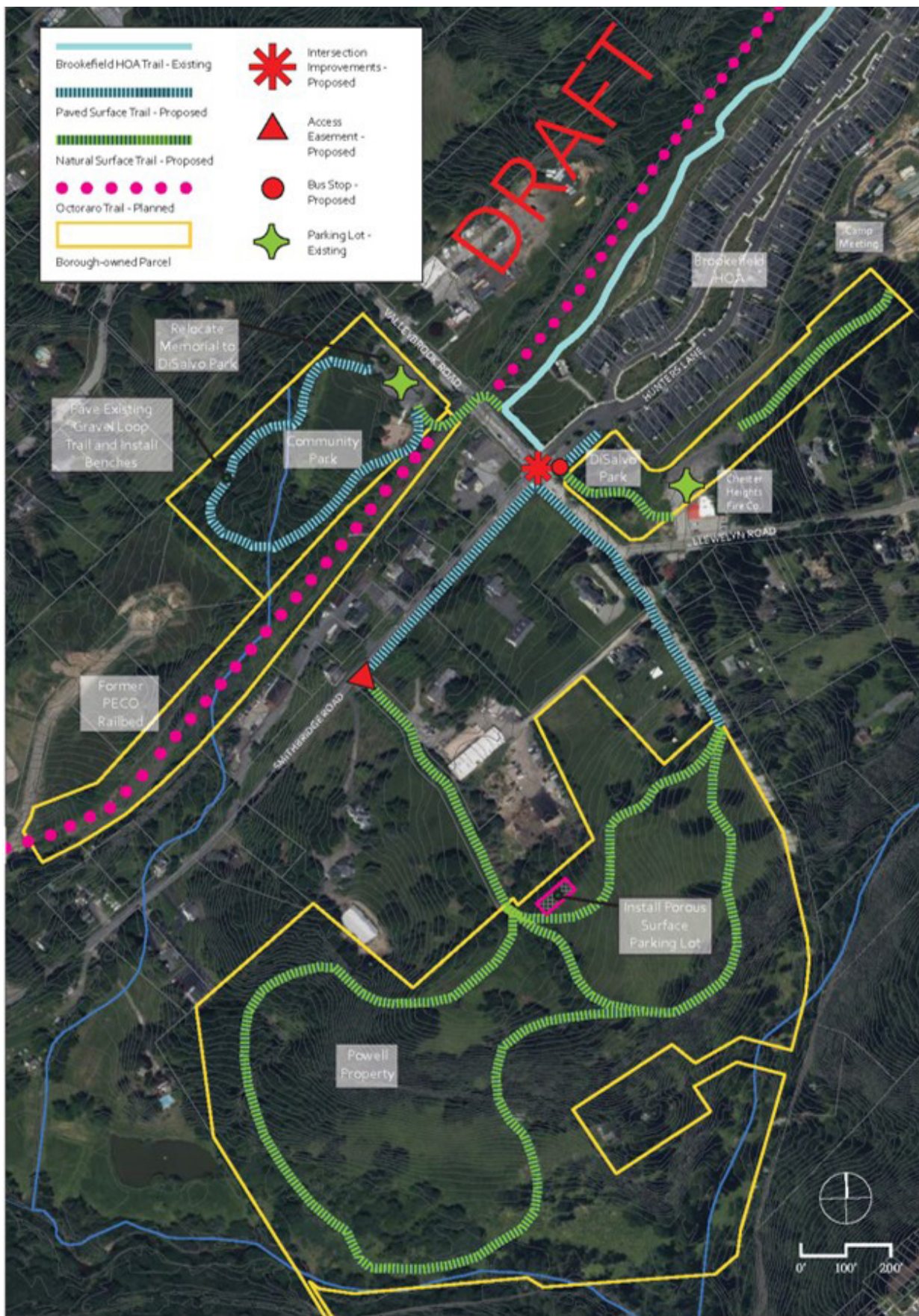


Darlington Tract
Chester Heights
Borough
Delaware County

Conceptual Landscape Plan

August 22, 2022





Chester Heights Borough Recommended Plant List – September, 2024

Approved Plant List

The Borough Council may permit other native species if they are suitable to the area, not subject to blight or disease and of the same general character and growth habit as those listed below. The following sizes listed for shade trees, evergreen trees, ornamental trees, deciduous shrubs, evergreen shrubs and ground cover are the minimum acceptable sizes at the time of installation.

- A. Shade trees: minimum 2.5-inch caliper, 14 to 18 feet high, eight feet minimum spread, clear trunk to seven feet zero inches above the ground and full branching structure.

Acer rubrum – Red Maple
Acer saccharum – Sugar Maple
Carya glabra – Pignut Hickory*
Carya ovata – Shagbark Hickory*
Carya tomentosa – Mockernut Hickory*
Celtis occidentalis - Hackberry
Fagus grandifolia – American Beech*
Gleditsia triacanthos var. ‘inermis’ – Thornless Honeylocust**
Gymnocladus dioicus – Kentucky Coffeetree*
Juglans cinerea – Butternut*
Liquidambar styraciflua – Sweetgum, including var. ‘Rotundiloba’
Liriodendron tulipifera – Tulip Poplar*
Magnolia acuminata – Cucumber Magnolia
Nyssa sylvatica – Blackgum**
Platanus occidentalis – American Planetree
Quercus alba – White Oak**
Quercus bicolor – Swamp White Oak
Quercus borealis – Northern Red Oak
Quercus coccinea – Scarlet Oak*
Quercus falcata – Southern Red Oak
Quercus imbricaria – Shingle Oak**
Quercus laurifolia – Laurel Oak
Quercus macrocarpa – Burr Oak
Quercus palustris – Pin Oak*
Quercus phellos – Willow Oak
Quercus prinus – Chestnut Oak
Quercus rubra – Red Oak**
Quercus velutina – Black Oak
Quercus stellata – Post Oak
Tilia americana – American Linden
Ulmus Americana – American Elm (Dutch Elm Resistant Cultivars Only)**

*NOTE: Not to be used as a street tree; shade tree only

**Species considered to be salt tolerant

- B. Evergreen trees: minimum eight feet high, four foot minimum spread*, single leader, symmetrically branching to the ground.

Chester Heights Borough Recommended Plant List – September, 2024

Ilex opaca – American Holly
 Juniperus virginiana – Eastern Redcedar**
 Pinus echinata – Shortleaf Pine
 Pinus resinosa – Red Pine
 Pinus rigida – Pitch Pine**
 Pinus strobus – White Pine
 Pinus virginiana – Virginia Scrub Pine**
 Pseudotsuga menziesii – Douglas Fir**
 Tsuga canadensis - Eastern Hemlock

*NOTE: Spread may be less than four feet for upright or columnar varieties.
 **Species considered to be salt tolerant

C. Ornamental/flowering trees: minimum eight feet high, five feet minimum spread, symmetrically branched to within four feet from the ground.

Acer pennsylvanicum – Striped Maple
 Alnus serrulata – Smooth Alder
 Amelanchier canadensis – Shadblow Serviceberry**, ***
 Asimina trilobum – Common Pawpaw
 Betula alleghaniensis – Yellow Birch
 Betula lenta – Sweet Birch
 Betula nigra – River Birch
 Betula papyrifera – Paper Birch
 Betula populifolia – Gray Birch
 Carpinus caroliniana – American Hornbeam***
 Cercis Canadensis – Eastern Redbud***
 Chionanthus virginicus – Fringetree
 Cornus alternifolia – Pagoda Dogwood***
 Cornus florida – Flowering Dogwood***
 Crataegus crusgalli – Cockspur Hawthorne**, ***
 Crataegus mollis – Downy Hawthorne***
 Crataegus phaenopyrum – Washington Hawthorne***
 Diospyros virginiana – Common Persimmon
 Larix laricina – American Larch**
 Magnolia acuminata – Cucumbertree Magnolia
 Magnolia virginiana – Sweetbay Magnolia
 Malus angustifolia – Southern Crabapple***
 Malus coronaria – Sweet Crabapple***
 Ostrya virginiana – Ironwood
 Oxydendrum arboreum – Sourwood
 Prunus pensylvanica – Pin Cherry
 Prunus serotina – Black Cherry
 Prunus virginiana – Common Chokecherry***
 Ptelea trifoliata – Wafer Ash
 Robinia pseudoacacia – Black Locust
 Salix nigra – Black Willow
 Sassafras albidum – Common Sassafras
 Taxodium distichum – Baldcypress

 Chester Heights Borough Recommended Plant List – September, 2024

**Species considered to be salt tolerant

***Species appropriate for planting under wires

- D. Deciduous shrubs: 30-inch minimum height, 24-inch minimum spread and symmetrically branched to the ground.

Aesculus parviflora – Bottlebrush Buckeye
Aronia arbutifolia – Red Chokeberry
Calycanthus florida – Sweetshrub
Ceanothus americanus – New Jersey Tea**
Cephalanthus occidentalis – Buttonbush
Clethra alnifolia – Summersweet Clethra**
Cornus amomum – Silky Dogwood
Cornus racemosa – Grey Dogwood
Cornus sericea – Redosier Dogwood
Corylus americana – American Filbert
Diervilla lonicera – Shrub Honeysuckle (18” minimum height)
Euonymus americana – Strawberrybush
Hamamelis virginiana – Witch Hazel
Hydrangea quercifolia – Oakleaf Hydrangea
Hypericum densiflorum – Shrubby St. John’s Wort (18” minimum height)
Ilex verticillata – Winterberry Holly**
Itea virginica – Virginia Sweetspire
Leucothoe racemosa – Sweetbells Leucothoe
Lindera benzoin – Spicebush
Myrica pennsylvanica – Northern Bayberry**
Rhododendron arborescens – Sweet Azalea
Rhododendron periclymenoides – Pinxterbloom Azalea
Rhododendron viscosum – Swamp Azalea
Rhus aromatic – Fragrant Sumac
Rhus copallina – Winged Sumac
Rosa blanda – Meadow Rose
Rosa caroliniana – Carolina Rose
Rosa palustris- Swamp Rose
Rosa setigera – Prairie Rose
Rosa virginiana – Virginia Rose**
Spiraea alba- Meadowsweet Spiraea
tomentosa- Steeplebush
Staphylea trifolia – American Bladdernut
Symphoricarpos albus – Snowberry
Vaccinium angustifolium – Lowbush Blueberry**
Vaccinium corymbosum- Highbush Blueberry
Viburnum acerifolium – Mapleleaf Viburnum
Viburnum cassinoides – Witherod Viburnum
Viburnum dentatum – Arrowwood Viburnum**
Viburnum lentago – Nannyberry Viburnum**
Viburnum nudum – Possumhaw Viburnum

Chester Heights Borough Recommended Plant List – September, 2024

**Species considered to be salt tolerant

- E. Evergreen shrubs: 24-inch minimum height, 18-inch minimum spread and symmetrically branched to the ground.

Ilex glabra – Inkberry Holly
 Juniperus communis – Common Juniper**
 Kalmia latifolia – Mountain Laurel (Including cultivars)
 Rhododendron catawbiense – Catawba Rhododendron
 Rhododendron maximum – Rosebay Rhododendron
 Taxus Canadensis – Canadian Yew*

*NOTE: Height and spread requirements may be reversed for spreading varieties of evergreen shrubs.

**Species considered to be salt tolerant

- F. Perennial Plants:

Heavily rooted plants provided in four-inch pots and spaced a maximum of 12 inches on center or as noted below:

Acorus americanus - sweetflag	Callirhoe involucrata - wine cups
Agastache foeniculum - anise hyssop	Caltha palustris - marsh marigold
Allium cernuum - nodding onion	Camassia quamash - common camas
Amsonia hubrichtii - threadleaf blue star	Camassia scilloides - eastern camas
Amsonia tabernae - Montana eastern bluestar	Campanula rotundifolia - harebell
Anemone canadensis - meadow anemone	Cassia marylandica - wild senna
Anemone virginiana - Virginia anemone	Caulophyllum thalictroides - blue cohosh
Aquilegia canadensis - wild columbine	Chelone glabra - white turtlehead
Aruncus dioicus - goat's beard	Chelone lyonii - pink turtlehead
Asarum canadense - wild ginger	Chrysogonum virginianum - green & gold
Asclepias incarnata - swamp milkweed	Chrysopsis villosa - golden aster
Asclepias purpurascens - purple milkweed	Cimicifuga racemosa - black snakeroot
Asclepias syriaca - common milkweed	Claytonia virginica - spring beauty
Asclepias tuberosa - butterfly weed	Coreopsis lanceolata - lance-leaved coreopsis
Aster cordifolius - blue wood aster	Coreopsis tripteris - tall tickseed
Aster divaricatus - white wood aster	Coreopsis verticillata - threadleaf tickseed
Aster ericoides - white heath aster	Delphinium exaltatum - tall larkspur
Aster laevis - smooth aster	Dicentra canadensis - squirrel corn
Aster macrophyllus - bigleaf aster	Dicentra cucularia - dutchman's breeches
Aster novae-angliae - New England aster	Dicentra eximia - wild bleeding heart
Aster novi-belgii - New York aster	Dodecatheon meadia - eastern shooting star
Aster oblongifolius - aromatic aster	Eupatorium coelestinum - blue mist flower
Aster puniceus - purple stemmed aster	Eupatorium dubium - 3-nerved joe-pye
Aster spectabilis - seaside purple aster	Eupatorium fistulosum - hollow joe-pye
Aster umbellatus - flat-top aster	Eupatorium hyssopifolium - hyssop-leaved joe-pye
Baptisia australis - wild blue indigo	Eupatorium maculatum - spotted joe-pye
Baptisia leucantha - false indigo	

Chester Heights Borough Recommended Plant List – September, 2024

Echinacea pallida - thin leaf coneflower	Phlox carolina - carolina phlox
Echinacea paradoxa - yellow coneflower	Phlox divaricata - wild blue phlox
Echinacea purpurea - purple coneflower	Phlox maculata - meadow phlox
Eryngium yuccifolium - rattle snake master	Phlox paniculata - summer phlox
Erythronium americanum - yellow trout lily	Phlox pillosa - prairie phlox
Filipendula rubra - queen of the prairie	Phlox stolonifera - creeping phlox
Gaultheria procumbens - wintergreen	Polemonium reptans - jacob's ladder
Gentiana andrewsii - bottle gentian	Polygonatum biflorum - solomon's seal
Geranium maculatum - cranesbill	Porteranthus trifolius - bowman's root
Senecio aureus - golden groundsel	Pycnanthemum muticum - mountain mint
Helianthus angustifolius - swamp sunflower	Ratibida pinnata - grey headed coneflower
Helianthus divaricatus - woodland sunflower	Rudbeckia fulgida - orange coneflower
Helianthus microcephalus - small wood sunflower	Rudbeckia hirta - black-eyed susan
Helenium autumnale - sneezeweed	Rudbeckia laciniata - green-headed coneflower
Heliopsis helianthoides - false sunflower	Rudbeckia lanceolata - cutleaf coneflower
Hepatica acutiloba - sharp-lobed hepatica	Rudbeckia maxima - great coneflower
Hepatica americana - round-lobed hepatica	Rudbeckia triloba - brown-eyed susan
Heuchera americana - coral bells	Ruellia humilis - fringe-leaved petunia
Heuchera villosa - maple-leaved alumroot	Sanguinaria canadensis - bloodroot
Hexastylis arifolia - arrow-leaved ginger	Saururus cernuus - lizard's-tail
Hexastylis shuttleworthii - mottled wild ginger	Scutellaria incana - downy skullcap
Hexastylis virginica - virginia wild ginger	Sedum ternatum - wild stonecrop
Hibiscus coccineus - swamp mallow	Silene caroliniana - wild pinks
Hibiscus moscheutos - swamp rose mallow	Silene virginica - fire pink
Hypoxis hirsuta - yellow star grass	Silphium perfoliatum - cup plant
Iris cristata - crested iris	Sisyrinchium angustifolium - blue-eyed grass
Iris verna - dwarf violet iris	Solidago caesia - blue-stem goldenrod
Iris versicolor - blue flag iris	Solidago flexicaulis - zigzag goldenrod
Jeffersonia diphylla - twinleaf	Solidago nemoralis - gray goldenrod
Liatris aspera - tall blazing star	Solidago odora - sweet goldenrod
Liatris microcephala - appalachian blazing star	Solidago ohioensis - Ohio goldenrod
Liatris spicata - spiked blazing star	Solidago rigida - stiff goldenrod
Liatris squarrosa - colicroot	Solidago sempervirens - seaside goldenrod
Lillium canadense - Canada lily	Solidago speciosa - showy goldenrod
Lillium superbum - turks cap lily	Solidago sphacelata - golden fleece
Lobelia cardinalis - cardinal flower	Spigelia marilandica - indian pink
Lobelia siphilitica - blue lobelia	Spiranthes odorata - fragrant ladies tresses
Marshallia grandiflora - barbara's buttons	Stylophorum diphyllum - celandine wood poppy
Meehanian cordata - creeping mint	Thalictrum dasycarpum - purple meadow rue
Mertensia virginica - virginia bluebells	Thalictrum dioicum - early meadow rue
Mimulus ringens - monkey flower	Thalictrum thalictroides - rue anemone
Monarda didyma - bee balm	Thermopsis caroliniana - carolina lupine
Monarda fistulosa - wild bergamot	Tiarella cordifolia - foam flower
Monarda punctata - dotted horsemint	Tradescantia virginiana - spiderwort
Oenothera fruticosa - suncups	Uvularia grandiflora - merrybells
Pachysandra procumbens - alleghany spurge	Verbena hastata - blue vervain
Penstemon digitalis - foxglove beardtongue	Vernonia fasciculata - smooth ironweed
Penstemon hirsutus - hairy beardtongue	Vernonia glauca - upland ironweed
Penstemon smallii - small's beardtongue	Vernonia noveboracensis - New York ironweed

Chester Heights Borough Recommended Plant List – September, 2024

Veronicastrum virginicum - culver's root
Viola labradorica - labrador violet

Viola pedata - bird's-foot violet
Zizia aurea – Golden Alexanders

Ferns in four-inch pots and spaced a maximum of 18 inches on center:

- Adiantum pedatum* - Maidenhair Fern
- Athyrium filix femina* - Lady Fern
- Dennstaedtia punctilobula* - Hay Scented Fern
- Dryopteris carthusiana* - Spinulose Wood Fern
- Dryopteris celsa* - Log Fern
- Dryopteris filix-mas* - Male Fern
- Dryopteris goldiana* - Goldie's Wood Fern
- Dryopteris marginalis* - Marginal Wood Fern
- Matteuccia struthiopteris* - Ostrich Fern
- Onoclea sensibilis* - Sensitive Fern
- Osmunda cinnamomea* - Cinnamon Fern
- Osmunda claytoniana* - Interrupted Fern
- Osmunda regalis* - Royal Fern
- Polystichum acrostichoides* - Christmas Fern
- Thelypteris noveboracensis* - New York Fern



Chester Heights Borough
 Mini-PROST Public Meeting 1
 April 10th, 2025

MEETING SUMMARY

- Total Attendees: 32 (+3 facilitators)
- Total Questionnaires Completed & Returned: 24
- Total Maps Reviewed by Public: 7

The brief questionnaire was distributed at the beginning of the meeting and asked the attendees to identify the location and type of outdoor recreation activities they enjoyed as children, the location and type of outdoor recreation activities they enjoy as adults, and their age range. The results varied greatly, however general themes were recurrent. The common recreation activities respondents participated in as children generally included typical youth recreation activities, such as recreating at playgrounds/parks and bike riding in neighborhoods. As adults, the respondents indicated that the top favorite recreation activities are walking (8), hiking (7), biking (3), running (3) and bird watching (3). Most respondents were either in the 65+ age range (8) or the 45-54 age range (7).

The mapping exercise was an interactive activity for the public to write comments on large maps and openly discuss their needs, concerns and comments about the various parks, trails, recreation and open space.

The responses of the mapping exercise are summarized below. Overall, most comments were regarding improvements to connectivity within the Borough.

Parks

COMMUNITY PARK

- Comments:
 - Would like connection to Brookfield HOA Trail
 - Would like pedestrian bridge from Post Office to Community Park
 - Needs more parking for larger events
 - Specifically, the Veteran's Memorial in the parking lot island needs to be improved
 - People like the coffee truck idea at Community Park

DARLINGTON PARK

- Comments:
 - If a trail is developed, would like to have lights on the trail
 - Would like to see a raised boardwalk at Darlington Park over the wetlands with access to Middletown Open Space and Trailhead Parking
 - Opportunity for litter cleanup
 - Would like to keep the park as open space
 - Would like more paved trails, would this be a good place for some?



DISALVO PARK

- Comments:
 - Expand parking behind firehouse
 - Add a community vegetable garden (x3 comments)
 - Opportunity for outdoor games to rent from community center (like cornhole)
 - Can fire house be used for events?
 - Connections to other nearby parks/trails

LENNI RD PARK

- Comments:
 - Site security is an issue
 - Constantly have illegal parking in driveway from apartment building across street
 - Would like fishing access, benches and opportunity for duck observation
 - Lack of parking on-site – opportunity for shared parking with Westlake Plastics
 - Options for camping and walking
 - Need to improve the overall curb appeal because it looks derelict
 - Are there historic elements that could be highlighted/developed? Industrial/Mill history?
 - Add trail lights
 - Would like connection to Chester Creek Trail – the current end of the CCT in Middletown needs more parking

POWELL PROPERTY

- Comments:
 - Would like to have live bird watching cameras set up to watch online
 - Ability for fishing and hiking
 - Bird houses (for bluebirds, purple martins, etc.) – Wild Birds Unlimited in Glen Mills may be willing to donate some
 - Pond for turtle and frog habitat
 - Bee apiary and wildflowers
 - Bird feeder for users to bring their own seed
 - Educational signage to help with identifying flora/fauna
 - Would like hammocks, gazebo/pavilion, benches, water fountain
 - Would like a trail connection from Powell to the Willits Way neighborhood

OTHER COMMUNITY AMENITIES

- Would like a dog park at Darlington Woods HOA
- Would like a walking trail around the edge of the Darlington Woods Community

Trails

OCTORARO TRAIL

- Comments:
 - “Less of a priority”



BROOKFIELD HOA TRAIL

- Comments:
 - Trail needs more shade

OTHER CONNECTIONS

- Comments:
 - Would like sidewalks on Llewellyn Rd and Valleybrook Rd, especially near Community Park, Powell, DiSalvo and Brookfield
 - Would like a multi-use path on Baltimore Pike to be able to walk or bike to the train station from the Valleybrook Intersection. If the path could continue down to Riddle Hospital in Middletown, that would be ideal. The path should be protected from traffic with some sort of barrier.
 - Would like an overpass walkway at the intersection of Baltimore and Valleybrook
 - Would like access to Martin Run Park from Darlington Woods HOA

Open Space

- 14 locations identified as “Unprotected Lands >10 acres” were marked by participants within the Borough as areas they would like to see protected from development
- The identified locations were mostly located within the center of the Borough

Other General Comments

- There is a private property in the bottom left of the Borough along the Chester Creek that allows fishing
- Need camping/events for opening day of trout season
- Dedicated bike lanes
- Concerns about skateboarding
- Many opportunities for litter cleanups along Baltimore Pike, including Darlington Park and the Valleybrook intersection
- Would like a community garden, a park for festivals, bird watching center, campground, petting zoo/animal observation area, somewhere for senior citizen activities and bird walks

Top Theme Amongst Responses

The most common response for improvements about all the amenities was for connectivity, whether to add sidewalks, multi-use paths, and pedestrian overpasses, connect neighborhoods to trails and other amenities, connect parks to nearby trails and other parks and amenities.

Chester Heights Mini-PROST Plan

Public Meeting #2 – 6/30/25

Scorecard Results Summary

Attendees: 15 (+2 facilitors)

Scorecards Completed: 14

Below is a summary of the scores from the attendees:

	Completely On Target	On Target	Somewhat On Target	Not On Target	Completely Off Target
1. Critical Actions	3	7	2		
2. Open Space	3	7	2		
3. Community Park	3	8	1		
4. DiSalvo Park	3	4	4		
5. Darlington Park		7.5	3.5	1	
6. Powell Property	3	6	2		
7. Lenni Road Park	1	7	2	1	
8. Trails	2	6	2		
TOTAL	18	52.5	18.5	2	0

Below are all the written comments on the scorecards for each category:

1. Critical Actions

- Darlington Cleanup
- I think its closer to completely on target but not seeing all details. Great job.
- Is Powell acquisition is enough?
- Would like to see draft (written) reviews for feedback & input prior to final reviews
- Explore & provide potential ways to pay for these proposals
- Hard to say without more details
- Walk/bike ability from Wawa train station to surrounding residential areas

2. Open Space

- Include conservation in Comprehensive Plan
- Needs more active collaboration with Comp Plan Task Force (needs much more there with consultants in my humble opinion)

3. Community Park

- Solar trees to provide cover & shade. Benches improve ADA needed
- Keep going, agree with better placement of featured items & tree care
- We get porta potty delivered & could adjust that immediately. Benches/tables used heavily. Some shaded.
- Offer more access means/support to get to Community Park
- Need handicapped walk path
- This park will become quite a draw. May want to consider parking demand
- Fine ideas, especially the gathering space
- Maybe plant more shade trees for playground
- Important for parents to be able to sit and watch kids (and socialize). Public restrooms via Conrad project connection to Aston

4. DiSalvo Park

- ?
- Great suggestions
- Suggest adding trees. Have ideas where to get them but you need fencing to protect from deer. Bernie Miller (doing it with St. John's on Concord Rd)
- This is the area we'll use for our Community Day
- Provisions for privacy & noise abatement, additional trees, etc
- A lot of vague ideas, so not much to assess
- Could trees/bushes/landscaping be used to cut down on noise?
- Good points. My one question is parking for events like concerts. This seems to be the limiting factor for Borough-wide participation. Partner with nearby lots for parking for big events and have bus transport to site for big event

5. Darlington Park

- Unresolved issues
- Darlington cleanup. Meet requirements with minimum \$ invest in Powell
- Community concern is that the first investment should be to clean up. The property is an eyesore. Next concern is how will this area be maintained annually? Cost & budget to maintain?
- Cleanup – Bare minimum spending on requirements (circled “not on target”)
- Ideas discussed concern community members differently

- Like the plan & you know the controversy
- I'd like to list some parks & the reasons why we can't do much with (Darlington)
- Update hydrology etc to make it useful as park (OR) make it a wetlands park & research center
- Cost eval for low maintenance
- It's nice that there's an actual plan
- Concerns on cost effectiveness/who is liable for trees and damage
- Sounds good. I am not really familiar with this park so can't really distinguish between A and B

6. Powell Property

- Beautiful!
- Great asset
- Hope to see even minimal access soon
- Good list/targets
- Needs more short term – 2025 – access and publicity & public awareness
- There is no plan. Some of the bullet points seem like nice ideas
- Houses? Hook up to Aston sewer. Is it big enough for tent camping or a state park? Have not been to this area, but sounds like a good start

7. Lenni Road Park

- Good to get more open space surrounding park
- Good discussion of potential options
- Increase access by different types (trains) opportunities for (co) sponsorship?
- How would someone who is not local assess the park?
- Kind of have to see what happens with Westlake Plastics to see what park features to emphasize.

8. Trails

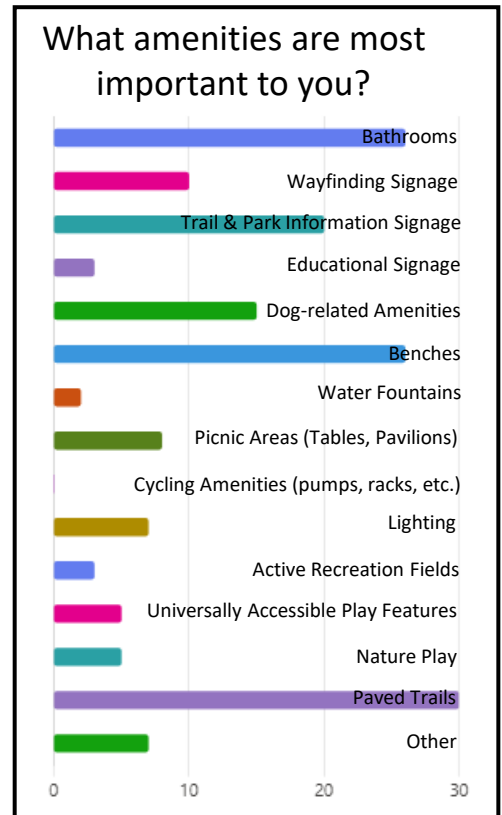
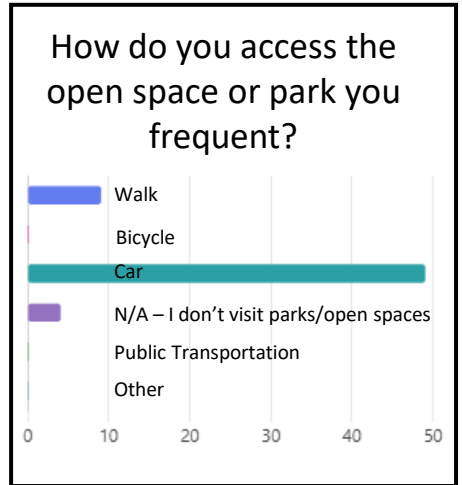
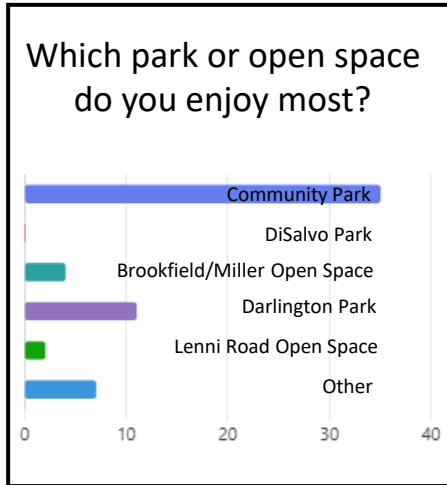
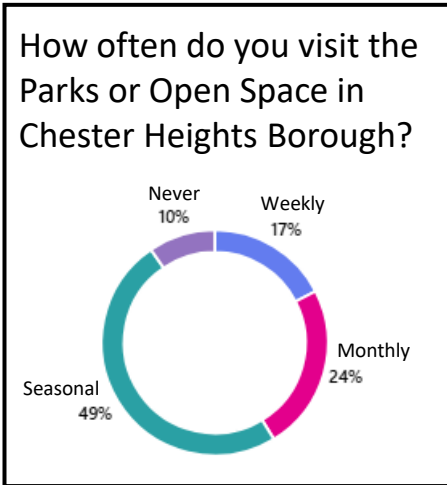
- Trails for Powell access good idea
- Overall great work, the dream of quicker trail connections we've learned isn't as possible as hoped
- Not high priority. Understand but very long term. Focus on others first.
- There may be some politically motivated reasons why we can't use part of Octoraro (Fred Woods)
- Public private partnership to build out? More multi-use access? More interconnection?
- Connect Darlington Woods
- For someday. Will take decades to connect to Community Park

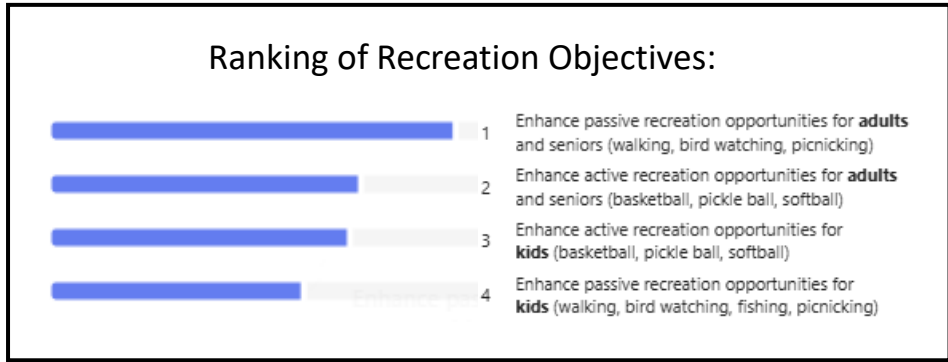
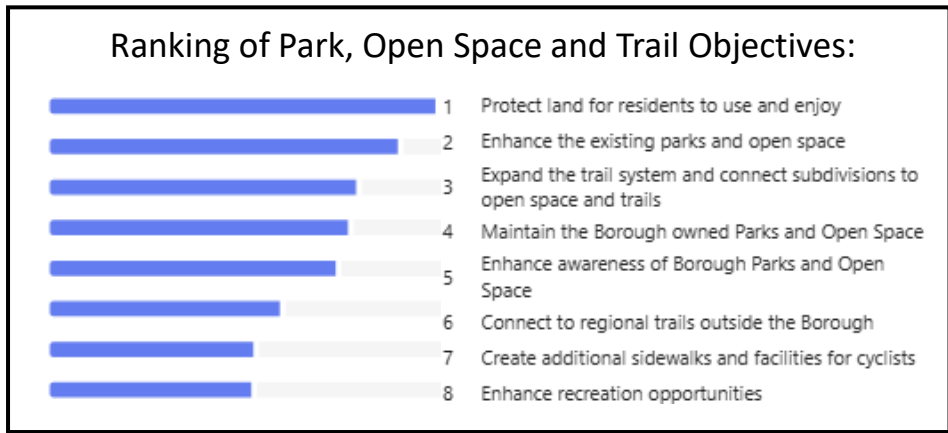
9. Additional Comments

- Handicapped Accessibility

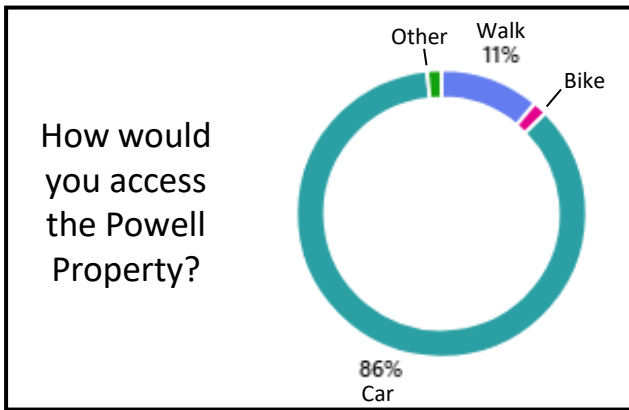
Chester Heights Mini-PROS Online Public Questionnaire Results

63 Total Responses





Powell Property



Chester Heights Mini-PROS Plan

Key Person Interviews - Summary

- Key Person Interview #1
 - On December 12th, 2024, Natural Lands interviewed a community member who has served on Borough Council, volunteered with the Borough Fire Company for many decades, grew up and raised children and grandchildren in the area, and still serves a part-time role with the Borough responding to emergency calls. A priority for the fire company is to receive a grant for a gator to access trails in emergency situations to ensure Borough safety. There was also an emphasis on trail connections, more sidewalks and facilities for cyclists.
- Key Person Interview #2
 - On January 21st, 2025, Natural Lands interviewed a long-time resident and Borough staff member. The top priority mentioned in the interview was more awareness about Borough parks and amenities. Additionally, connections between amenities and subdivisions were important to them.
- Key Person Interview #3
 - On January 29th, 2025, Natural Lands interviewed two community members, one of which is a Borough elected official and the other provided the perspective of a large landowner. Priorities include land preservation, connections between parks and Borough properties, and limiting recreation amenities that will draw residents of other municipalities to Chester Heights.
- Key Person Interview #4
 - On January 30th, 2025, Natural Lands interviewed a long-time Borough resident, owner of a registered historic home, and current elected official. Priorities include more awareness about Borough trails and parks, more amenities at parks, and the need for sidewalks and pedestrian connections.



Chester Heights Borough

Mini PROS Plan

