



Borough of Conshohocken

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May 5, 2011

Charles L. Guttenplan, AICP
Director of Planning and Zoning
Whitemarsh Township
616 Germantown Pike
Lafayette Hill, PA 19444-1821



Re: Riverfront Open Space Plan
Written Comment Request

Dear Mr. Guttenplan:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment of the draft of Whitemarsh Township's Riverfront Open Space Plan. You are to be commended on both the process and content of the plan. The comprehensiveness of the Plan should serve the Township well for many years to come.

Following are comments on the Plan as it relates to Conshohocken Borough.

1. There are general and specific comments throughout the Plan regarding a boat launch in the vicinity of the apartment complex – Riverwalk at Millennium. This launch is the property of Conshohocken Borough and was installed as a requirement for the development of the apartments by O'Neill Properties Group as the Developer of that project. It was designed for use by the Conshohocken Fire Department, and was intended for drafting water in the event of a fire along the Schuylkill Riverfront. There is a steep incline and it is possible only to launch a canoe or kayak that can be carried around barriers to the launch installed at the request of the Fire Department.
2. Any negotiations for improvements or changes to the boat launch at the river end of Cherry Street should be conducted with the Borough rather than with the management or owners of Riverwalk at Millennium.
3. The Plan indicates that a review of Conshohocken's Zoning Ordinance requires a 100 foot wide area along the riverfront. This is not true of the entire riverfront in Conshohocken. West of the Matsonford Bridge a ten (10)

foot wide walking path is required along the riverbank. Access to the trail by easement dedicated to the Borough and trail amenities also are required. The Specially Planned – 3 Zoning District also provides for height bonuses for developers who provide specific riverfront amenities.

4. In Chapter 4 - Goals and Objectives under the last point (page 22); the referral should be to Riverwalk at Millennium rather than to “Riverfront” at Millennium. Again, the ramp facility in the vicinity of Riverwalk is the responsibility of the Borough.
5. In Chapter 4 – Goals and Objectives (page 23) the text indicates that the trail at the end of the Riverwalk property is at the Borough boundary. There may be a small portion of the old C & D Technology property, which is in the Borough.
6. The “Water Use” section of the Recommendations chapter suggests a partnership with Riverwalk for the improvement of the boat launch. Any such partnership should be with the Borough.
7. In developing additional parking for the riverfront, the Township should be aware that the Borough has negotiated easements for riverfront access and shared parking agreements with developers along its riverfront and will continue to do so in the future, as additional development occurs.

Conshohocken hopes to have the opportunity to partner with Whitmarsh Township in the development of a seamless transition of the riverfront trails, access and amenities between the two (2) communities for the mutual benefit of their respective residents and workers.

Sincerely,



Christine M. Stetler
Community Development and Zoning
Officer

Cc: Borough Council
Mayor
Borough Manager
Borough Solicitor
E. Lankenau, Borough Planner



MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

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May 6, 2011

Mr. Charles L. Guttenplan, Planning Consultant
Whitemarsh Township
616 Germantown Pike
Lafayette Hill, PA 19444-1810



Re: MCPC #11-0042-001
Riverfront Open Space Plan
Whitemarsh Township

Dear Mr. Guttenplan:

We have reviewed the above-referenced riverfront open space plan in accordance with Section 302 of Act 247, "The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code," per your request received March 31, 2011. We forward this letter as a report of our review and recommendations.

Background

This submission, titled Riverfront Open Space Plan for Whitemarsh Township, was written to provide township officials with a vision for the entire Schuylkill River frontage. According to the document itself the plan is intended to help determine the best mix of amenities along the riverfront and provide information that will help township officials to choose the locations best suited to host them. Of the amenities presented in this plan, the most significant is the proposed multiuse trail - a riverfront walkway intended for leisurely use. Specific recommendations in the plan are found in Chapter 6 and are grouped into nine categories. These are: Trail Related, Amenities, Water Use, Public Safety, Environmental, Circulation, Signage, Landscaping, and Service Uses.

We offer the following comments.

Comments

1. Design of the Proposed Riverfront Trail – The plan specifies that the intended use of the riverfront trail is leisure, as opposed to the faster-paced commuter-intended use of the parallel Schuylkill River Trail (SRT). While the plan clearly states the low-intensity intention of the trail, a simple statement of its purpose isn't likely to dissuade cyclists from diverting off the SRT and on to the proposed riverfront trail in search of a more scenic

riverfront ride. To ensure that the proposed trail is used as intended, we suggest amending the plan to include specific design criteria (such as surface treatments, bollards, and tight curves) that would physically prevent high-speed cyclists from disturbing the communal atmosphere of the riverfront trail.

2. Maps – Contained within the plan are four (4) maps: Map 1 – an aerial map of the study area; Map 2 – illustrates previously planned open space within the study area; Map 3 – identifies previously planned trails; and Map 4 – a summary of all recommendations made in the plan text.
 - a. We believe Map 1 has greater potential to illustrate more detail. Specifically, we suggest adding a border to clearly delineate the study area, as well as information to identify ownership of key parcels and linkage goals present in the text of the plan.
 - b. On Map 2, we suggest that the area known as “East 33” be identified by name. The property is referenced several times in the text and yet no resource within the plan itself identifies its size and location in context to the other elements discussed here.
 - c. Map 3 indicates a “Proposed, Bicycle Route,” and refers to the bike lanes described in the “Feasibility Study for the Township-wide Pedestrian and Bike Network” noted on page 8. We recommend augmenting the text with details about the nature and design of this bike route, such as whether it’s physically separated from traffic, whether marking or signage will be placed along the roadside or sharrows in the roadway, etc. Also on Map 3, a line that appears to identify the riverfront trail is labeled “Proposed, YTBD.” We are unclear as to what “YTBD” refers to and suggest clarification, either in the text or on the map itself.
3. Civic Gathering Space – A retaining wall, left over from the Schuylkill Canal system, is visible along the river on the F&H Paint Factory property adjacent to the Whitemarsh Boat Club. This feature is a physical reminder of the rich historical heritage along the river that’s in danger of being lost. We believe visibility of the wall could be increased and made into a part of the civic gathering space as a way to highlight the area and draw attention to the historic legacy of the canal.
4. PECO Footpath – As depicted on Map 3, the proposed PECO footpath does not appear to connect to any specific location or tie into any existing trail. We suggest including greater detail on Map 3 as a means of illustrating the entire concept of the proposed footpath.
5. Schuylkill River Trail (SRT) – The scenic overlook sites suggested on page 27 (and illustrated in Figure 3 on page 30) would require coordination with County personnel and would have to be done in conjunction with any widening of the SRT. While we commend the township for suggesting ways to capitalize on the majestic views provided by the higher elevations in this area, site constraints may require a closer examination of the trail to assess where these overlook sites might best be installed.

We would also like to respond to a comment made on page 32 of the plan suggesting that lighting improvements along the river, required under the provisions of the Riverfront Development District (RDD) Overlay District might be installed along the SRT. As of this writing, the County has no plans to provide lighting of any kind along the trail. According to County policy, the trail is open only from dawn to dusk.

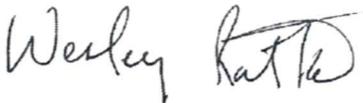
Recommendation

We commend the township for preparing this plan, which so comprehensively details a vision for development along the riverfront in Whitemarsh Township. As such, we recommend approval of the submitted riverfront open space plan given the above-mentioned review comments are addressed to the satisfaction of the township.

Please note that the review comments and recommendations contained in this report are advisory to the township and final disposition for the approval of any proposal will be made by the municipality.

We ask that you forward a final draft copy of the Whitemarsh Township Riverfront Open Space Plan upon its formal adoption.

Sincerely,



Wesley Ratko, Transportation Planner
610.278.3734 – wratko@montcopa.org

- c: Bruce Horrocks, Twp. Manager
- J. David Shula, Chrm., Whitemarsh Twp. Planning Commission
- Sean Kilkenny, Esq., Twp. Solicitor
- James C. Sullivan, P.E., Twp. Engineer



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May 18, 2011

Charles L. Guttenplan, AICP
Whitemarsh Township
616 Germantown Pike
Lafayette Hill, PA 19444

RE: RIVERFRONT OPEN SPACE PLAN

Dear Charles:

I reviewed with much interest your Riverfront Open Space Plan. My only comment is to say "Well Done." I wish Whitemarsh Township success in securing grant money and implementing the Plan.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Karen B. Weiss".

Karen B. Weiss
Manager

KBW/II
AD/riverfrontopensplan.ltr



Charlie Guttenplan

From: Leswing, Chris [CLeswing@lowermerion.org]
Sent: Thursday, May 19, 2011 9:55 AM
To: Charlie Guttenplan
Subject: FW: Whitemarsh riverfront open space plan

Hi Charlie,

We reviewed the Draft Whitemarsh Township Riverfront Open Space Plan that you provided us. Well done, a very thorough and well thought out plan. I look forward to seeing the plan implemented.

LMT doesn't have any concerns with the plan. Lindsay Taylor points out that you may want to provide the PA Fish and Boat Commission with a copy if you already haven't.

Good luck with the plan and thanks for making our little section of the river more interesting.

Chris

From: Taylor, Lindsay
Sent: Wednesday, May 18, 2011 4:04 PM
To: Leswing, Chris
Cc: ATM(Ryan)-MGR(Cleland); Duncan, Robert
Subject: RE: Whitemarsh riverfront open space plan

Hi Chris;

The group that really may want to look at the plan is the PA Fish & Boat Commission. The lack of public access to the river has been an ongoing issue to F & B. The majority of people that launch from our ramp are – at least right now – non-residents, so if anything it could be a minor revenue drop. We have sold 48 permits to date at \$25 each.

From: Leswing, Chris
Sent: Wednesday, May 18, 2011 1:36 PM
To: Taylor, Lindsay
Cc: ATM(Ryan)-MGR(Cleland); Duncan, Robert
Subject: Whitemarsh riverfront open space plan

Lindsay,

I recently reviewed a draft copy of the 2011 Whitemarsh Township Riverfront Open Space Plan that Doug provided me with.

The Plan is generally consistent with Lower Merion's current Open Space and Parks and Recreation Plans in that it promotes public connections to the river where feasible.

Of note, the plan calls for upgrades to the SRT between Conshohocken and Philadelphia and also proposes to run a multiuse trail closer to the river where it is currently is separated from the river by the SEPTA Norristown Line. The increased capacity of the SRT trail through Whitemarsh will benefit Township residents once the Manayunk Bridge is opened and residents can directly connect to the SRT in Philadelphia.

The plan also proposes three new public boat launches, two by Conshohocken and one opposite the VFW on River Road in LMT. You may want to evaluate how the additional river traffic from the boat launches may impact boat usage from Flat Rock Park. Do you think this is worth commenting on to Whitemarsh?

I have the document in digital form. The document is quite large. I am attaching a copy of the recommendations map. If you would like the CD just let me know and I will drop it off.

Chris

Christopher Leswing, PP, AICP
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