The Plan Framework

Components of the Policy Framework

Goals

Land Use

Housing

Circulation

Quality of Life

Policies (Objectives)

Land Use

1. Land Use & Zoning
2. Commercial Development
3. Viewsheds and Natural Resources
4. Historic Preservation

Housing

1. Infill Residential Development
2. Housing Diversification
3. New Residential Development

Circulation

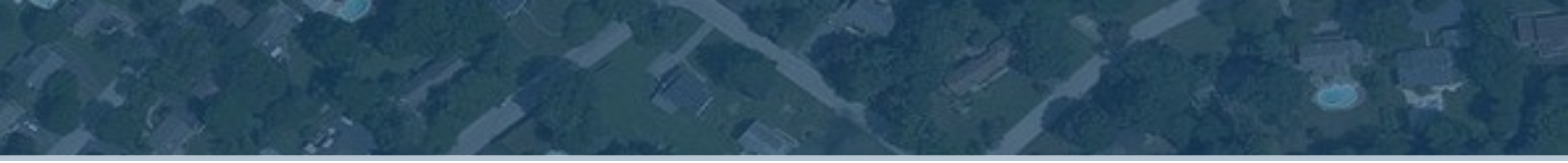
1. Roadway System
2. Complete Streets
3. Streetscape Amenities
4. Pedestrian/Bicycle Connectivity and Trail Network

Quality of Life

1. Open Space Network
2. Parks and Recreation Programming and Facilities
3. Open Space Preservation
4. Sustainable Design
5. Branding an Identity

Actions

Specific recommendations to be undertaken by the Township and its partners to achieve the overarching goals of the Whitemarsh community.



Land Use

GOAL Maintain and enhance Whitemarsh's character and quality of life by managing future growth and development.

Policy #1 – Land Use and Zoning: Use the Township's future land use to guide development, including the placement and mix of uses.

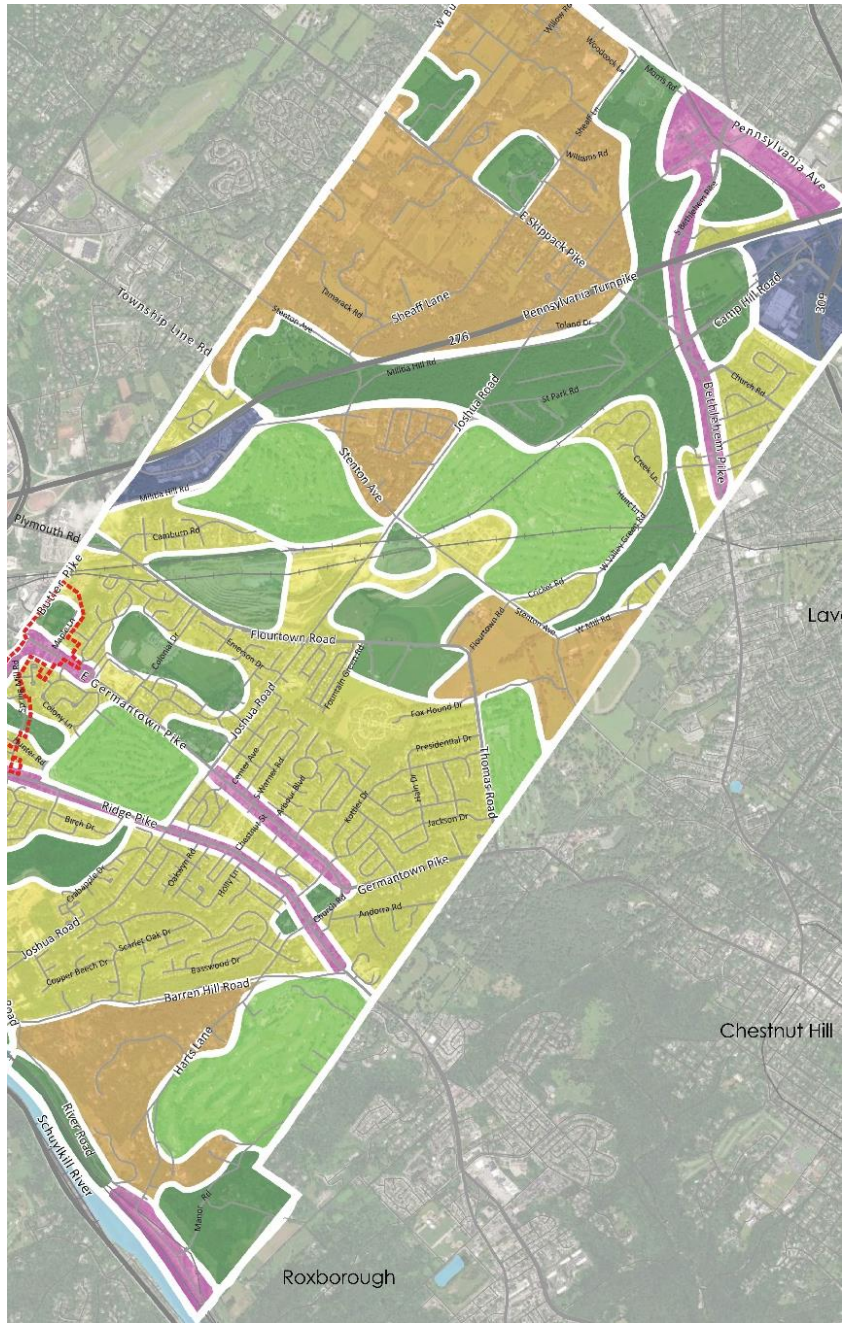
Policy #2 – Commercial Development: Ensure commercial development contributes to the Township's community character through high-quality design that accommodates all modes of transportation and creates a sense of place.

Policy #3 – Viewsheds and Natural Resources: Protect and enhance Whitemarsh's viewsheds and natural resources.

Policy #4 – Historic Resources: Protect and enhance Whitemarsh's historic and cultural resources.

Land use and Zoning

- **Review and update the Township Zoning Ordinance** to facilitate implementation of the Future Land Use Plan.
- **Simplify the Zoning Code** to ensure that it is user-friendly, understandable and consistent.
- **Focus high density development** in areas of the Township that already have adequate infrastructure to support growth, consistent with the Future Land Use Plan.
- **Focus new commercial and mixed-use development** within and near established commercial areas.



Commercial Development

- Hold developers accountable to adopted **design standards** that ensure high quality design.
- Install **pedestrian-oriented amenities**, particularly lighting, within commercial and mixed-use areas.
- Consider the creation of a **community development position** to assist with business attraction, retention, marketing, and outreach.
- Implement a **marketing campaign** to encourage and draw businesses into the Township.

Commercial Development

- Offer **incentives** to existing business owners to make improvements to their properties. Educate building owners and landlords about the benefits of investing in their property.

- Where parking lots are located between commercial buildings and streets, require a designated **pedestrian path connecting** from the street or sidewalk (where applicable).

Viewsheds and Natural Resources

- Develop a **Scenic Resources Inventory** to identify existing resources and ensure key viewsheds and natural areas are identified for future protection.

- **Review and update ordinances** to ensure viewsheds, riparian corridors and hillside development standards are adequately addressed.

- **Strengthen and simplify the existing conservation district overlay**, to facilitate cluster development that protects scenic and natural resources.

Viewsheds and Natural Resources

- Ensure **new development** limits grading, **preserves natural topography**, and preserves ridgelines.
- Implement recommendations from the **2015 Gambone Property Natural Area Stewardship Plan.**
- **Preserve key open space areas** of the township, including but not limited to the riverfront, existing parklands and Erdenheim Farm, consistent with the Future Land Use Plan.

Historic and Cultural Resources

- Continue to preserve and **protect locally, state or federally designated properties and districts.**
- Develop and **enforce design and development standards for historic properties** and districts that allows for adaptive reuse and encourages retention, as they are irreplaceable resources directly linked to the Township's character.

Historic and Cultural Resources

- Promote the social and economic benefits of historic resources through **interpretive signage and brochures.**
- Consider **additional individual listings** of significant historic sites and properties in the Township.

Housing

GOAL Encourage diversification of housing stock that will meet the needs of existing and future residents, while preserving the character and value of existing neighborhoods.

Policy #1 – Infill Residential Development: Ensure that infill residential development is compatible with surrounding housing stock and land uses.

Policy #2 – Housing Diversification: Promote neighborhoods that allow a diverse mix of residents and housing types, and respond to changing lifestyle preferences and market trends.

Policy #3 – New Residential Development: Ensure zoning is adequately addressing residential build-out in the community so as to limit negative impacts on the Township, including safety, walkability, and traffic.

Infill Residential Development

- **Simplify cluster development** regulations to make the option more attractive for developers.

- Ensure **cluster regulations** are effectively meeting their **intended goals** including the size and configuration of open space.

- Develop **residential design requirements** for all new housing developments to ensure high quality building design and context-sensitive site layout (promote individuality/avoid cookie-cutter appearance).

Housing Diversification

- Update residential standards and zoning to allow for a **variety of housing types and sizes.**

- Promote inclusivity by permitting and promoting **mixed-income neighborhoods**, through implementation of the above action.

New Residential Development

- Ensure new **neighborhoods are interconnected** through greenbelts, pathways, or sidewalks to surrounding development centers.

- Require **landscape buffers** along roadways, associated with new residential developments, to preserve open space and green corridors.

Circulation

GOAL **Develop a balanced and efficient transportation system that provides choices, supports the Township's land use goals, protects neighborhoods from adverse transportation impacts, and reinforces livability.**

Policy #1 – Roadway System: Maintain and improve the Township's roadway system to be consistent with the future land use map, ensuring safe connections and routes for multiple transportation needs.

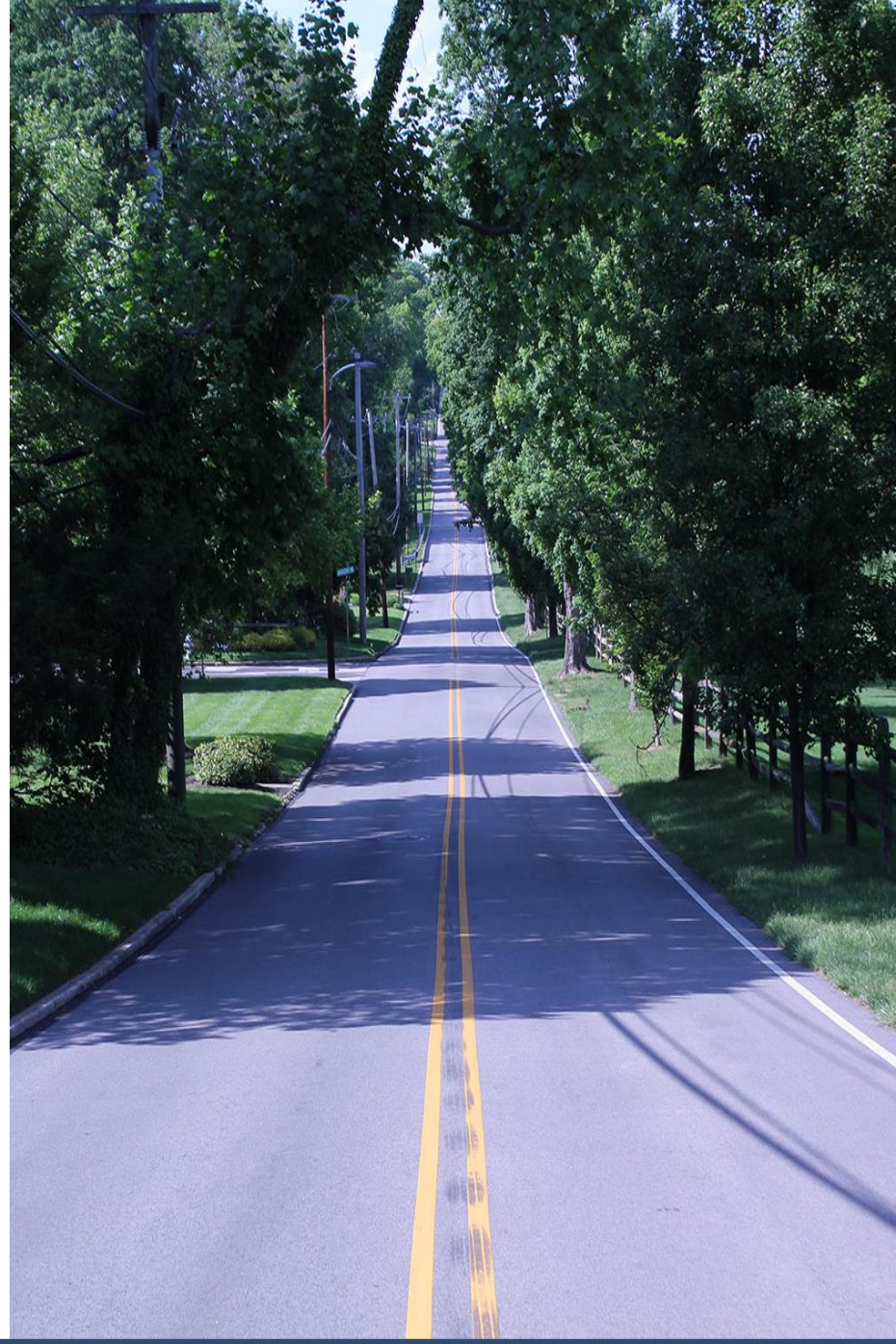
Policy #2 – Complete Streets: Develop and implement a Complete Streets policy.

Policy #3 – Streetscape Amenities: Implement unique amenities to support multi-modal transportation.

Policy #4 – Pedestrian/Bicycle Connectivity and Trail Network: Build upon the existing trail, path, and sidewalk network to create an uninterrupted system throughout the Township.

Roadway System

- **Monitor traffic volumes** on all arterial and major collector roads to understand potential impacts of new development.
- Consider the **impacts of traffic** when any new project is considered for development. Require a short- and long-term impact analysis as part of the approval process.



Complete Streets

- **Strengthen key intersections** to improve pedestrian safety and create a more welcoming environment.
- Update the **2009 Pedestrian and Bicycle Network Plan.**
- Use the **Walk Montco Walkability Study** as a guide when considering pedestrian improvements in the Township.

Complete Streets

- Ensure all new sidewalks are ADA compliant. Upgrade existing sidewalks for **ADA compliance** where possible, beginning along key connector corridors and pedestrian centers, such as Germantown Pike.

- Consider **traffic calming elements** in dense, mixed-use areas in order to promote increased walkability (Germantown Pike).

Streetscape Amenities

- Incorporate **streetscape amenities** including decorative street lights, grass verges, street trees, landscaping, decorative fences, and signage where possible.

- **Provide bike racks** at key destinations and commercial nodes.

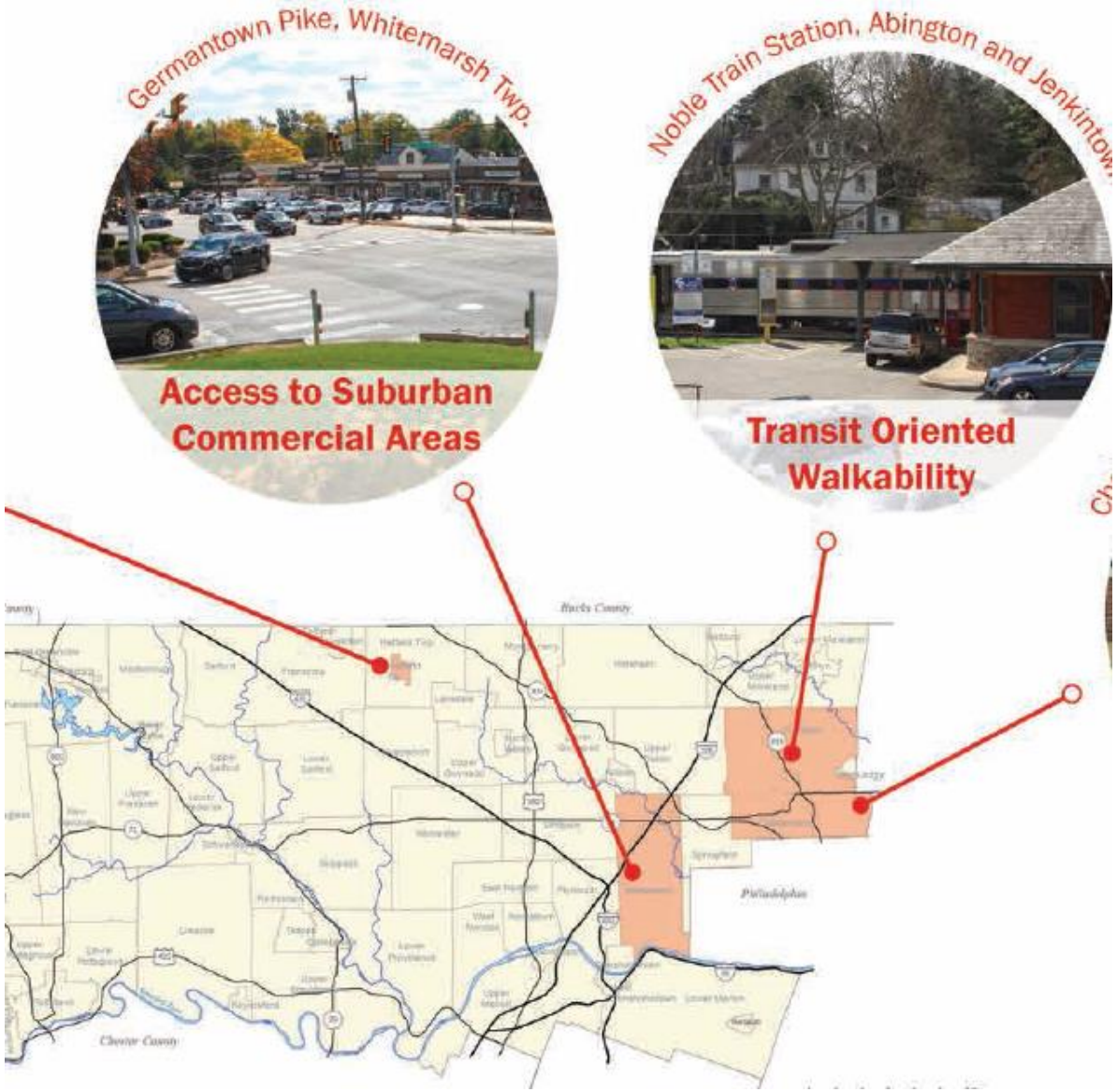
- Work with commercial property owners to sponsor **bus stops** in order to promote use of public transportation.

Streetscape Amenities

- Incorporate **electric car charging stations** on municipally owned lands throughout the Township.
- Explore **bike sharing options** and consider implementing a system in the Township.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Connectivity

- Ensure that all public recreational facilities can be reached through **safe routes** for bicycling, walking, and public transportation.
- **Identify priority trail connections** to the Schuylkill River and regional trail system in order to create an integrated system.
- Develop a phasing and funding strategy to **implement trail connections**. Apply for implementation funding to complete connections.



Pedestrian and Bicycle Connectivity

- **Implement bike lanes** and routes throughout the Township, where possible.
- Require all new development to include **sidewalks or side path** connections to surrounding mixed-use/commercial centers, recreation facilities, and neighborhoods.
- **Implement sidewalks or side path** areas on Germantown Pike, Bethlehem Pike, Pennsylvania Avenue and other important corridors, as possible.
- Ensure safe pedestrian and bike passage is provided between **SEPTA stations and surrounding development/neighborhoods.**

Quality of Life

GOAL **Promote healthy living opportunities and preserve the Township's unique sense of place through open space preservation and sustainable development practices.**

Policy #1 – Open Space Network: Preserve, maintain, and expand the Township's extensive network of open spaces.

Policy #2 – Parks and Recreation Programming and Facilities: Monitor needs and expand park and recreation facilities and programming as necessary.

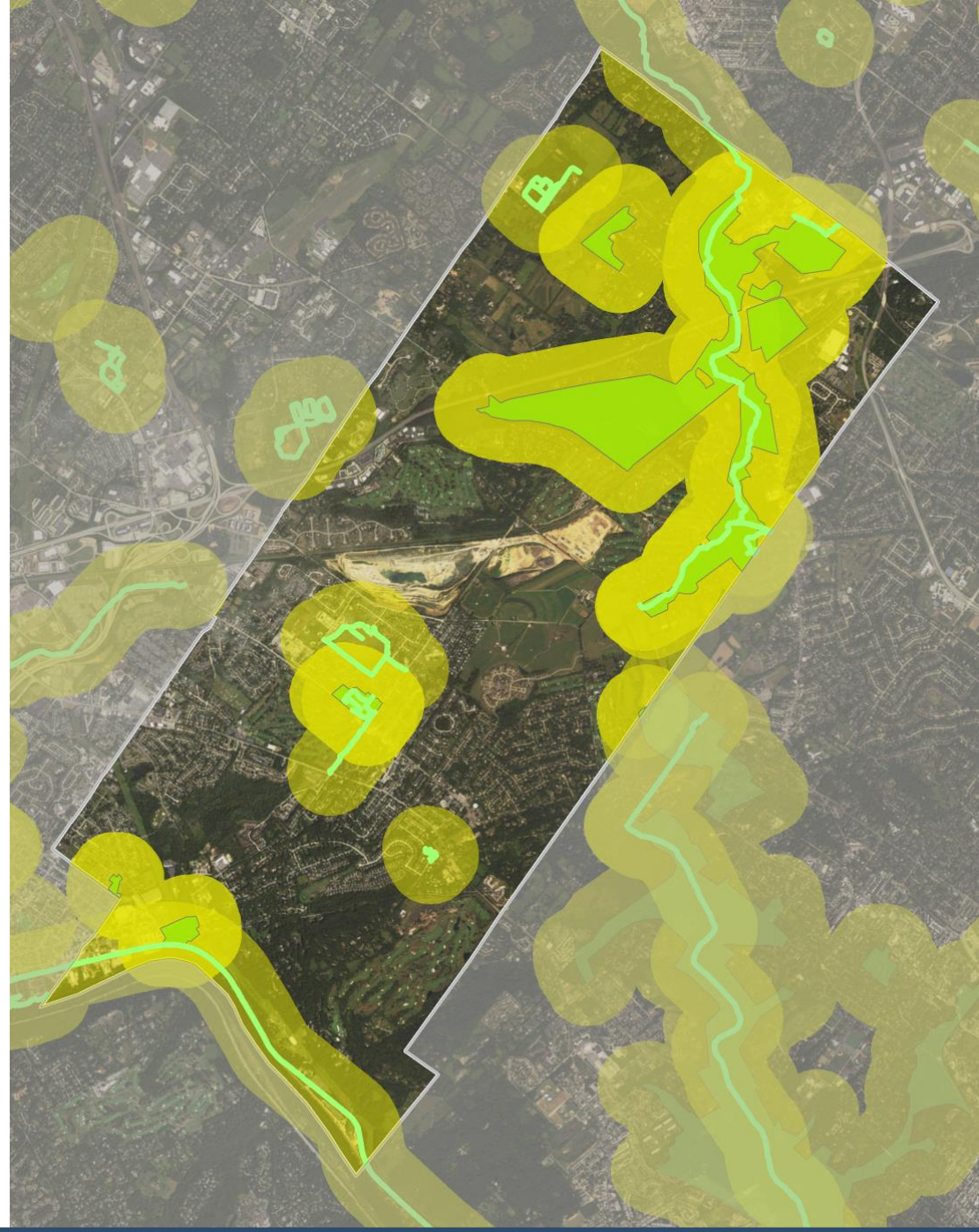
Policy #3 – Open Space Preservation: Preserve green spaces associated with existing golf courses in the Township.

Policy #4 – Sustainable Design: Support renewable energy methods and sustainable design elements.

Policy #5 – Branding and Identity: Continue to promote the Township, its open space, parks, and trail facilities to residents and visitors.

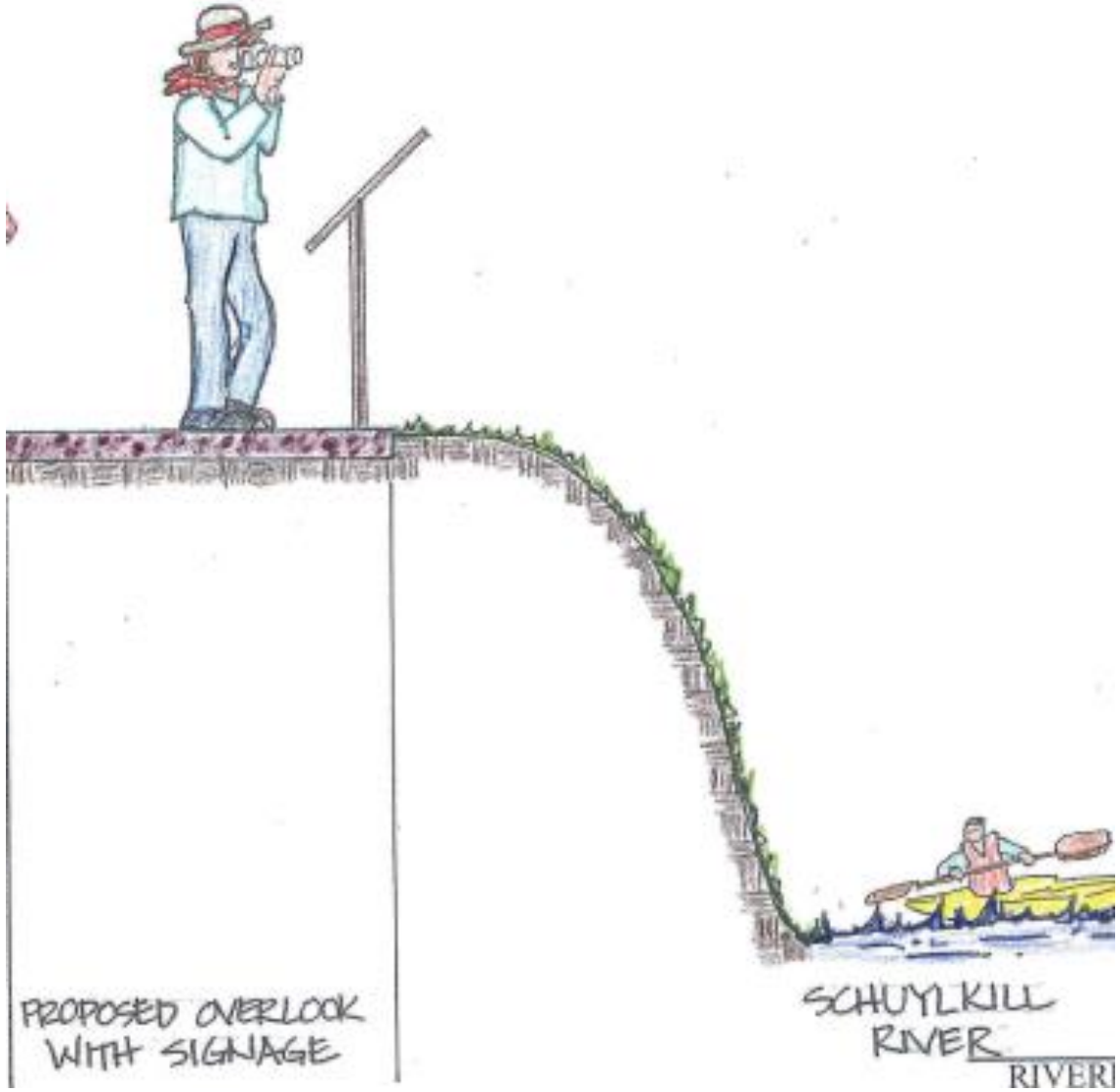
Open Space Network

- Prepare a **Municipal Park and Recreation Needs Analysis** to study available parks and recreation facilities against the needs of a growing, changing population.
- Identify areas in the Township that are not within a **10-minute walk** to a park or recreation area and consider additional amenities to fill these gaps.
- Annually **assess all existing park facilities** and identify any upgrades or programming needs. Review plans and **identify necessary updates** to reflect changing demographics, needs, and improvements.



Open Space Network

- Provide **amenities along the River** such as restrooms, fishing piers, non-motorized boat launches, and facilities for bike and boat rentals.
- Continue to focus on making **the riverfront a destination** with new and improved trails and increased connectivity to the waterfront.
- Consider formalizing **riverfront events and marketing coordination** to implement and promote activities, oversee sales of amenities/sponsorship, and manage community/public relations.



Programming and Facilities

- Consider incorporating **more active recreational fields and facilities** into existing Township-owned parkland and open spaces as needs are identified.
- Provide **diverse and unique outdoor recreation opportunities**, such as natural play areas, highlighting Whitemarsh Township's natural and historic resources.
- Implement an **environmental education program** to promote and enhance the Township's natural resources.

Programming and Facilities

- Consider completing a **Community Center Needs Assessment**.

Open Space Preservation

- Pro-actively engage with private landowners to develop **long-term strategies for open space preservation**, trail connections, and easements.
- Ensure the intent and eligibility of projects for the **Township Open Space Fund** is clearly defined.
- Prepare a study that provides an in-depth analysis of options for the **long-term protection of golf courses**, including:
  - Strengthening of existing ordinances;
  - Conventional re-zoning;
  - Enhanced cluster regulations;
  - Conservation easements;
  - Incentive zoning; and
  - Transfer of development rights.

Sustainable Design & Environmental Stewardship

- Continue to preserve and **protect the Township's remaining natural resources**, including water quality, soil quality, wetlands, forest lands and wood lots, wildlife corridors, agricultural lands, and stream corridors/riparian systems, and manage them properly.
- Consider measures to **plant and maintain growth** appropriate to these biological systems and habitats, including native, pollinating and indigenous plants.

Sustainable Design & Environmental Stewardship

- Identify town-owned lands/municipal buildings that could be used for **solar energy collection installations** and confer with energy advisors and other Townships that have implemented such programs.
- Determine and incorporate strategies into municipal facilities and daily practices that guarantee **resource conservation** (e.g. energy) and **burden reduction** (e.g. waste water, solid waste, pollution), such as installing low-flow toilets or converting to hybrid electric municipal vehicles.

Sustainable Design and Environmental Stewardship

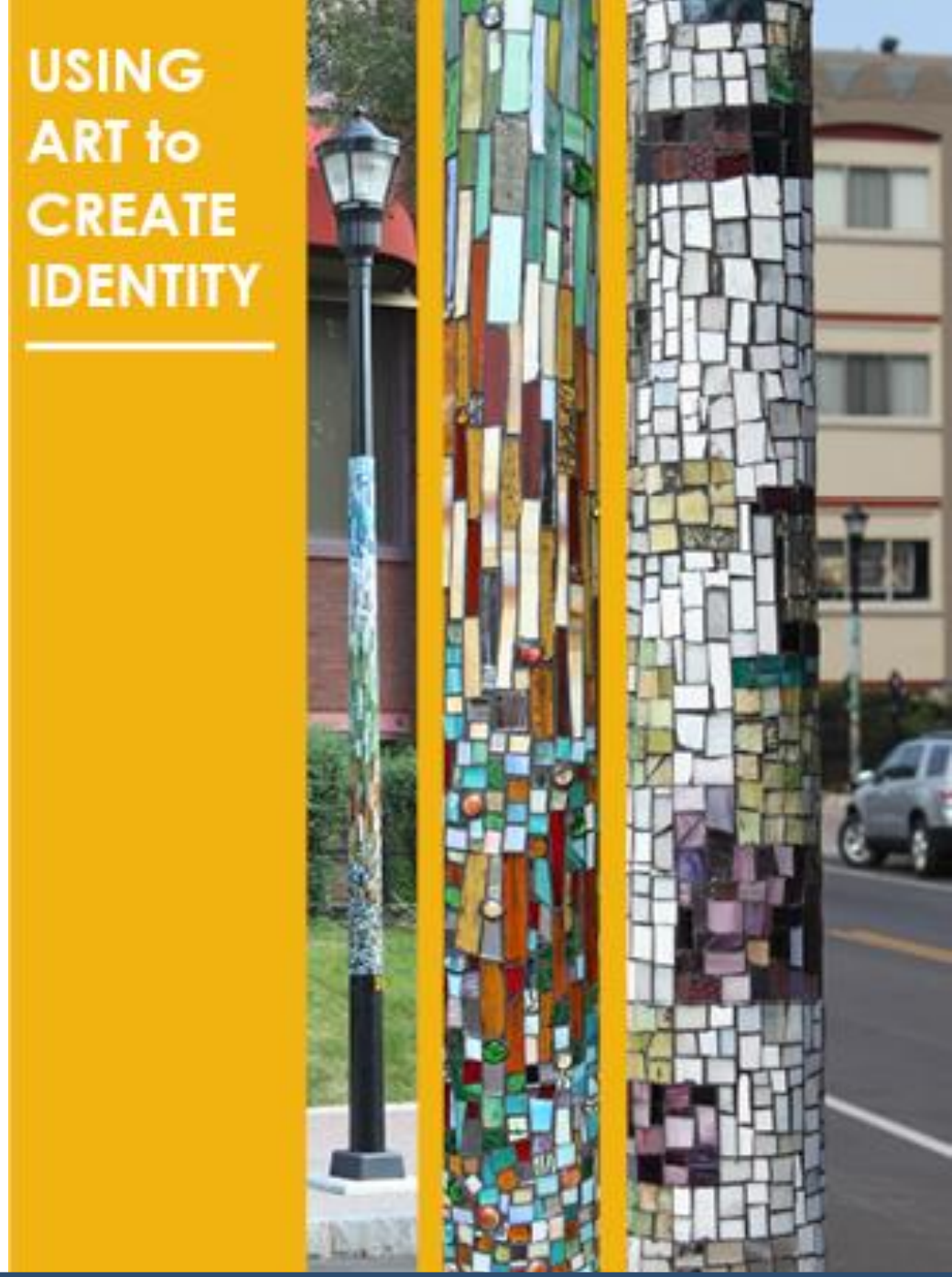
- Review the Township's existing ordinances and management practices related to **managing water resources**. Continue to monitor new strategies and technologies, building upon the Township's existing management practices.
- Encourage use of rain gardens, bioswales, and **green infrastructure in site development**.

Branding and Identity

- Establish a **Township-wide brand and identity**, with consistent, fonts, colors and logo, to use on signage, pamphlets and guides.
- Develop and **distribute pamphlets and brochures/guides** which share information about the Township to residents and visitors.

Branding and Identity

- Develop and install **educational and interpretive signage** at key Township sites and facilities.
- Use **art techniques** consistently throughout the Township to reinforce the unique brand. For example decorating existing light poles or pavement art.



Branding and Identity

- Implement a **wayfinding program** that directs people to key destinations, improves circulation/navigation and provides a sense of comfort/security to overall visitor experience.

Gateway Monument | Gateway Identification | Vehicular Directional | Pedestrian Directional | Major Kiosk | Minor Kiosk | Parking | Light Pole Banner