

APPENDIX A

1996 PLAN AUDIT

"We have spiritual needs, which are ultimately rooted in nature, the source of our inspiration and belonging."

*—David Suzuki with Amanda McConnell from *The Sacred Balance: Rediscovering Our Place in Nature**

1996 Whitemarsh Open Space Plan

Whitemarsh Township developed the previous Open Space Plan to serve as a guide for future open space preservation, through the use of Montgomery County Open Space funding and other sources in order to provide for the benefit of present and future generations living within the Township.

The 1996 plan set a high standard and positive direction for all subsequent open space efforts. A detailed review of the 1996 Open Space Plan was conducted by the Township Open Space Committee in 2004. Through the review process, it was determined that many of the previous goals and recommendations were accomplished, that there are some actions still ongoing, and that some actions were not fully accomplished.

The following plan audit details the accomplishments of the 1996 Whitemarsh Township Open Space and Environmental Resource Plan:



Victory Fields and McCarthy Park

APPENDIX A · PLAN AUDIT

· CHAPTER 9 · RECOMMENDATIONS ·

<i>Recommendation 1:</i>	<i>Audit Findings</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Purchase Silt Basin or continue leasing from Commonwealth	<p>Approximately ½ of the 109 acres of the Silt Basin site has been preserved as permanently protected open space; the rest is likely to be developed as age-restricted housing. Approximately 54 acres were donated to the Township by National Label Company, which purchased the Silt Basin from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. There are 290 homes proposed for the eastern portion of the Silt Basin property. The zoning ordinance has a 50% set-aside requirement, either development rights or open space easement. In total, approximately 75% of the site will be preserved as open space.</p>

<i>Recommendation 2:</i>	<i>Audit Findings</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Purchase 23.7-acre parcel “C”	<p>This property was purchased by Gambone Brothers Development Company. Although an office development plan was filed with the Township for the site, civic groups reached an agreement with the developer to construct a townhouse development instead. Any subsequently submitted development application in this area, parts of which fall within a flood plain, will be subject to the new Riparian and Tree Ordinance restrictions. A portion of Parcel “C” adjacent to Cedar Grove Park is currently leased by the Township for recreational purposes. This property will be donated to the Township and added to the park if the development is approved.</p>

<i>Recommendation 3:</i>	<i>Audit Findings</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seek right of first refusal for WFIL Radio Tower property, lease part of site for active recreation, obtain easements for trail linkages.	<p>In a joint effort between Colonial School District and the Township, this property was preserved: 17 acres as a public park and 29 acres as school playing fields. A walking/bicycle trail currently leads from Colonial Drive, along the boundary of the park to Joshua Road at the William Jeanes Memorial Library.</p>

· CHAPTER 9 · RECOMMENDATIONS ·

<i>Recommendation 4:</i>	<i>Audit Findings</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate trail easements with properties that border Sandy Run. 	<p>SEPTA has provided a trail easement on its Ft. Washington Train Station property and has constructed a tunnel under the railroad tracks, enabling the extension of a trail that will proceed from the Office Park in Upper Dublin Township, along Sandy Run, with the potential to link up with the Cross County Trail. Not much has occurred with this recommendation, though it is part of the proposed Cross County Trail. A portion of the Fort Washington State Park behind the existing landscape business is a possible additional open space acquisition property.</p>

<i>Recommendation 5:</i>	<i>Audit Findings</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect stream corridors 	<p>The Township enacted a Riparian Corridor Ordinance in 2003 to protect natural features important to land and water resources such as headwater areas, groundwater recharge zones, floodway, flood plain, springs, streams, wetlands, woodlands, prime wildlife habitats, and other features that provide recreational value or contain natural amenities whether on developed or undeveloped land.</p>

<i>Recommendation 6:</i>	<i>Audit Findings</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preserve scenic resources 	<p>Specific roadways have been identified in the 2003 Comprehensive Plan as scenic and will be exempted from certain “improvements” such as curbs and widening. A proposed Growing Greener Ordinance will enable clustered developments to help protect scenic views. The Tax Increment Financing (TIF) developed for Erdenheim Farm area will provide funding from development in the district to preserve remaining portions of the farmstead.</p>

APPENDIX A · PLAN AUDIT

· CHAPTER 2 · GOALS AND OBJECTIVES ·

<i>Goal and Objectives</i>	<i>Audit Findings</i>
<p>Goal 1. Maintain and enhance the natural beauty of Whitemarsh Township:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Promote remaining agricultural lands. b. Preserve ecologically and environmentally sensitive lands. c. Conserve significant historic sites and structures. d. Protect scenic resources from development. e. Establish and amend appropriate growth regulation techniques to guide the location, type and timing of development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. In partnership with the County and the Colonial School District, Whitemarsh Township has agreed to participate in a Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) plan that will allocate, for a period of 20 years, 100% of its future tax revenues from the Hill at Whitemarsh toward the purchase of 97 acres of Erdenheim Farm—designated as part of the TIF district. This will help preserve an important tract of local farmland. In addition, a Foundation has been created to raise funds to help preserve this TIF tract as well as other parcels of the farm. b. The Township has adopted Riparian Corridor and Tree Protection Ordinances to help protect sensitive natural resources. The Subdivision and Land Development Ordinances are being revised to incorporate Growing Greener standards and a new Impervious Coverage Ordinance has also been adopted. c. The Township’s 2003 Comprehensive Plan includes an updated inventory of historic structures identified for protection. The Historical and Architectural Review Board Ordinance has been updated to include more rigorous standards and guidelines. Flourtown Road, at the intersection of Butler Pike, is scheduled to be rerouted away from the historic village of Cold Point. The rerouting will be partially paid for by a developer, as part of a negotiated arrangement with the Township. The new “Growing Greener” Land Development and Subdivision Ordinance will identify historic structures as a natural resource. d. The historic Simpson Paper factory along the Schuylkill River has been renovated as an office complex. e. The Township has identified certain scenic roads in its 2003 Comprehensive Plan. These roads will be exempted from road widening and curbing. Revenues from the TIF will help preserve a major scenic vista on Erdenheim Farm.

· CHAPTER 2 · GOALS AND OBJECTIVES ·

<i>Goal and Objectives</i>	<i>Audit Findings</i>
<p>Goal 2. Establish an interconnected system of parks and open space within the community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Inventory and analyze existing public property or other wise protected land. b. Establish potential additions to the park system and potential linkages. c. Develop appropriate actions for implementing connection strategies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The Township’s public property and other protected lands were inventoried as part of the 1996 Open Space Plan. b. Fifty-four acres of the Silt Basin property were purchased as a passive park (Kline Park). Plans call for a trail to be built through this property, helping to connect Lafayette Hill with Cedar Grove Park. An easement through Andorra Glen Apartments has already been secured. The donation of Willow Lake Farm to the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association in Broad Axe creates an important destination point for a future greenway and trail system in this part of the Township. An easement for a future trail between Westaway Drive and Whitemarsh Elementary (“Kirby Trail”) has been acquired. A trail easement was also secured that connects the elementary and middle schools with the library on Joshua Road. The 2003 Comprehensive Plan identifies specific sidewalks as connectors between recreational sites. A major sidewalk improvement program is now underway along Pennsylvania Avenue in Ft. Washington and SEPTA has rebuilt the tunnel going under Rt. 309 to facilitate bike and pedestrian travel. Along Joshua Road between Ridge and Germantown Avenues, a sidewalk has been partially constructed. c. The Township is working closely with the Montgomery County Planning Commission and others to create connections with the Wissahickon Green Ribbon Trail that is being expanded by the County. The first section in Springfield Township on the Morris Arboretum property has been constructed.

APPENDIX A · PLAN AUDIT

· CHAPTER 2 · GOALS AND OBJECTIVES ·

<i>Goal and Objectives</i>	<i>Audit Findings</i>
<p>Goal 3. Ensure that all development is executed in a manner which is environmentally and aesthetically sensitive.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Continue the enforcement of current ordinances and review development proposals. b. Revise land use regulations as needed to meet the changing needs of the community while maintaining stewardship for the land. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The Township has created and Environmental Advisory Board to review all development and zoning proposals and provide input on their environmental impact and other issues. b. Other ordinances have been enacted to strengthen control over future development, including tougher Storm Water Management regulations based on DEP best practices, a Riparian Corridor Ordinance, and Shade Tree Protection Ordinance. An Impervious Coverage Ordinance has been adopted to help control the amount of impervious surface and associated runoff that comes from development. The Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance is being updated to incorporate Growing Greener standards and practices.

<i>Goal and Objectives</i>	<i>Audit Findings</i>
<p>Goal 4. Improve, maintain and expand the public parks and open space of the Township.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Develop a current comprehensive recreation plan. b. Create volunteer programs for maintaining existing facilities. c. Continue and expand promotional policies to increase facility use. d. Pursue public grant and loan programs and encourage individual and business donations for development and rehabilitation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The Township’s recreation plan is currently being updated through the Parks and Recreation Department. A recreation impact fee (RIF) assessed on new developments is being considered as a way to increase revenues for the park system. b. The Patrons of Whitemarsh Parks raised money for playground equipment and fences at Miles and Cedar Grove Parks. c. This element will be completed through updating of the Township’s Park and Recreation Plan. d. This element will be completed through updating of the Township’s Park and Recreation Plan.

· CHAPTER 2 · GOALS AND OBJECTIVES ·

<i>Goal and Objectives</i>	<i>Audit Findings</i>
<p>Goal 5. Improve the visual resources of the developed areas of the Township.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Continue to enforce the Shade Tree Protection Ordinance. b. Develop a revitalization plan for the Germantown Pike Corridor. c. Utilize County Tree Planting Program funds to provide shade trees in strategic locations. d. Continue the enforcement of sign, property maintenance, and related ordinances. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The Shade Tree Protection Ordinance has been strengthened. STP meetings were moved to evenings to enable more people to participate on the committee. b. A business association has been formed representing business owners on the Germantown Pike corridor and has expressed an interest in revitalization. No updates to the current Germantown Pike Revitalization Plan have been made at this point. c. More than 80 trees were planted in Miles and Valley Green Parks with County funds. d. The Township has hired an assistant building inspector and a new zoning officer to ensure compliance with existing codes.

APPENDIX A · PLAN AUDIT

· CHAPTER 2 · GOALS AND OBJECTIVES ·

<i>Goal and Objectives</i>	<i>Audit Findings</i>
<p>Goal 6. Promote Public Access to the water-related resources of the Township.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Develop and enforce stream corridor protection ordinances.b. Establish a Sandy Run Greenway and trail.c. Develop a passive recreation facility on the Schuylkill River.d. Encourage waterfront landowners to donate land or grant easements where appropriate.e. Complete a continuous trail through the Township along the Wissahickon Creek.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. A new Riparian Corridor Ordinance has been adopted to protect waterways in Township. Last fall, Boy Scouts planted hundreds of trees along the Wissahickon Creek in the Natural Lands Trust-deeded portion of Erdenheim Farm.b. The Open Space Committee sent a letter to the Springfield Board of Commissioners and Open Space Committee about collaborating on areas of interest to both municipalities, one of which is the Sandy Run area. McNeil Labs has provided an easement along that portion of the creek that runs through its property.c. The Township intends to work closely with the County in the revitalization of Spring Mill Park and the effort to create greater public access to the river.d. Neighboring landowners (O’Neal and others) have deeded easements to the Township that will permit public access to the water.e. The Township is participating in the County-led multi-township effort to complete the Wissahickon Green Ribbon Trail, part of which runs through Whitmarsh. A grant from the University of Pennsylvania to the Morris Arboretum helped enable the organization to provide a portion of the trail on Arboretum property. The completed trail will connect Forbidden Drive to the beginning of the Wissahickon Trail at Stenton and Northwestern Avenues.

· CHAPTER 2 · GOALS AND OBJECTIVES ·

<i>Goal and Objectives</i>	<i>Audit Findings</i>
<p>Goal 6. (Cont.) Promote Public Access to the water-related resources of the Township.</p> <p>f. Generate public interest in passive recreation and the environment through educational programs and promotional literature.</p>	<p>f. The Township has made an effort to keep the public aware of progress it is making in protecting the environment and improving its parks and trails. The new storm water management regulations were mailed to the entire township. Whitemarsh has created a quarterly newsletter to update residents on items of interest, many of them related to recreation and the environment. In addition, it has updated its website to include more timely information of interest to residents.</p>

· CHAPTER 4 · POTENTIALLY VULNERABLE RESOURCES ·

<p>a. Scenic Resources</p> <p>b. Steep Slopes</p> <p>c. Surface Waters</p> <p>d. Vegetation and Wildlife</p>	<p>a. The Township has identified a number of roads as scenic in its 2003 Comprehensive Plan, which will exempt them from widening and curbing. The TIF will help ensure preservation of a major viewshed on Erdenheim Farm.</p> <p>b. The Township's Steep Slope Ordinance, one of the strongest in the County, was recently revised.</p> <p>c. The Township's waterways are now protected by a Riparian Ordinance. This protection is further enhanced with the adoption of an Impervious Coverage Ordinance and the new Growing Greener Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance, currently under development.</p> <p>d. The Township's revised Shade Tree Protection Ordinance will help protect and preserve important trees and woodlands. As part of a negotiated agreement with community groups in the Township, the developer of the Hill at Whitemarsh has secured a permanent easement on a 12-acre stand of trees located on the future Hill at Whitemarsh property.</p>
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APPENDIX A · PLAN AUDIT

· CHAPTER 5 · OPEN SPACE LINKAGES ·

<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Trailsb. Bike and Pedestrian Mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. The Township will work in cooperation with the County and private conservation organizations such as the Natural Lands Trust and Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association to create a continuous trail system along the Wissahickon Creek through the Township. This trail system will link up to small local trails wherever feasible. Similarly, the Township will look for opportunities to link up with the Cross County Trail as it traverses Whitemarsh Township.b. The Township's 2003 Comprehensive Plan expands on the roadways identified for bike paths in the County's Bike Mobility Program to ensure connections to all parts of the Township. The Township also recognizes the fragmented nature of its sidewalk system and the need to better coordinate this system with trail networks, parks and commercial corridors, such as Lafayette Hill and Ft. Washington. Several projects are now underway.
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