

CHAPTER 3 · COMMUNITY BACKGROUND

POTENTIAL OPEN SPACE LINKAGES



Vegetation along the Schuylkill River Bank

What are Open Space Linkages?

Open space linkages are linear, undeveloped corridors that contain natural features, trails, or open spaces that connect existing or proposed open space areas. They can form a link between multiple residential neighborhoods, and they can connect neighborhoods to other districts and the greater region. Typically, open space linkages follow creeks, streams or river banks, utility rights-of-way, abandoned or inactive rail lines, and in some cases, abandoned roadways. These linkages can be multi-modal, serving many different users including pedestrians, bicyclists and equestrians, or they can serve only one user group, typically depending on the type of trail and the terrain.

There are many different features within Whitemarsh Township that already serve as open space linkages or present excellent opportunities for the expansion of existing linkages. The Township is fortunate to be centrally located within the regional trail network. Four major regional trails traverse the Township and create a well-developed basis for the creation and development of a comprehensive Township-wide trail network. To take full advantage of its

regional location, the Township needs to ensure that its residents can access these regional resources easily through local trail networks that link to their neighborhoods.

The Township contains multiple creek and stream corridors, a significant utility right-of-way, and an extensive network of public open spaces. These corridors represent opportunities to create local feeder trails to Township parks and open spaces as well as the regional trail network.

The primary documents guiding the current trail development within Whitemarsh Township are Montgomery County's Bicycle Mobility Plan, Whitemarsh Township's 2003 Comprehensive Plan and the Open Space Plan Update of 1996. The proposed trails system, both on- and off-street, is shown on Map #14 Pathways and Trails.

The existing trails and potential linkages use the following natural and man-made features:

Creek Corridors

The following creek corridors represent potential open space linkages, either as natural areas or potential trail linkages, as determined by the Township.

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Lorraine Run · Lorraine Run is the Township’s largest creek, west of the Wissahickon. Lorraine Run flows east from the west side of Sheaff Lane, between a gap in Cold Point and Militia Hill, along the north side of Stenton Avenue, through the Philadelphia Cricket Club, before emptying into the Wissahickon Creek, near West Valley Green Road. Most of the Lorraine Run Corridor is located on Sunnybrook and Philadelphia Cricket Club lands, with a small portion between the two flowing through large residential lots. Along its course, Lorraine Run crosses the Cross County Trail and the Wissahickon Trail, just before emptying into the Wissahickon Creek.

Spring Mill Creek · The Spring Mill Creek begins within the Green Valley Country Club and flows south through Kline Park and Spring Mill Park before emptying in to the Schuylkill River. The proposed Silt Basin Trail follows its course south from Germantown Pike, through Kline Park and several undeveloped parcels, before terminating at the proposed sidewalk/pathway to be constructed along the length of Cedar Grove Road. Completion of this proposed trail would provide a connection from Miles Park to Spring Mill Park.

Andorra Creek · Andorra Creek flows southwest from Harts Lane and enters the Schuylkill River near Spring Mill Park. Andorra Creek flows through a large parcel of privately owned open space, a significant area of residential development, past the former ski slope parcel, across the PECO right-of-way, before crossing the Schuylkill River Trail and entering the Schuylkill River. Acquisition of the linear space along Andorra Creek would allow the creation of a riparian corridor and possibly a trail connecting the areas west of ACE

Country Club with the proposed sidewalk/pathway to be located along Germantown Pike.

Sandy Run Creek · Sandy Run Creek flows southwest from Upper Dublin Township for a short distance before converging with Wissahickon Creek in Fort Hill. The majority of this creek is located within the Sandy Run and Fort Hill Areas of Fort Washington State Park. Enhanced connections between the Cross County Trail and the Sandy Run Area would allow Sandy Run Area users to easily access the Cross County Trail and SEPTA’s Fort Washington Station.

Utility Rights-of-Way

PECO Transmission Line · This transmission line located in the southern portion of the Township enters Whitemarsh from Plymouth Township, south of Sherry Lake. The transmission line and the associated right-of-way travels south to Spring Mill Park before turning to the east and paralleling the Schuylkill River before entering into Philadelphia. The right-of-way passes by a variety of land uses including single- and multi-family residential developments, several office parks, undeveloped parcels, and Whitemarsh Township’s Cedar Grove Park and Montgomery County’s Spring Mill Park. The western portion of the right-



PECO right-of-way

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of-way presents the potential for a connection of surrounding residential neighborhood with Cedar Grove Park, Spring Mill Park and the Schuylkill River Trail.

Transportation Rights-of-Way

SEPTA R5 Line · SEPTA's R5 rail line enters Whitemarsh Township from Springfield Township, north of Camp Hill Road in the Stenton/Wissahickon District. It travels through the Township for a short distance before exiting into Upper Dublin Township, near Germantown Academy. The R5's Fort Washington Station is located along the line near Bethlehem Pike. The R5 line traverses the edge of the Sandy Run Area of Fort Washington State Park. It crosses the Norfolk Southern railroad lines which travel in a north-south direction through the Township. The Cross County Trail utilizes a small portion of the R5 line corridor from Commerce Drive to Bethlehem Pike. The Whitemarsh Township Comprehensive Plan indicates a proposed trail which closely parallels the R5 Line from Bethlehem Pike to the point at which the line joins the Wissahickon Creek Corridor. Extension of the existing trail portion along the remaining portion of the R5 line corridor would quickly expand the service area of both the Cross County and Wissahickon Creek Trails.

SEPTA R6 Line · The R6 rail line enters Whitemarsh Township from the City of Philadelphia along the banks of the Schuylkill River, the Riverfront District. The line runs through the Township in close proximity to the River and moves away from the riverbank as it enters the Borough of Conshohocken. The Schuylkill River Trail parallels the rail line in this area and is a popular resource for bicyclists, runners, walkers and rollerbladers.

Norfolk Southern Freight Line · The abandoned Norfolk Southern Freight railroad line enters Whitemarsh Township from Plymouth Township in close proximity to Flourtown Road. From this point it travels east towards the intersection of Joshua Road and Stenton Avenue, where it turns to the northeast. It exits the Township near the Fort Washington exit of the Pennsylvania Turnpike. Along its course, the Norfolk Southern Freight Line passes Sunnybrook Golf Club, crosses the Philadelphia Cricket Club, and travels through, or near, large portions of Fort Washington State Park and Wissahickon Valley Park. Several significant portions of trail already exist along this corridor. The Cross County Trail utilizes the Norfolk Southern Freight Line, from its entrance into the Township until it turns to the north at Joshua Road. At this point the Cross County Trail diverges from the Norfolk Southern line for a short distance, before rejoining it at the south end of Fort Washington State Park. The trail again follows the Norfolk Southern Line until it crosses the Wissahickon Creek, at which point the trail turns north and joins the Wissahickon Trail. A small spur of the Wissahickon Trail, which follows Stenton Avenue, crosses the Norfolk Southern Line shortly after the Cross County Trail diverges. An on-street sidewalk/pathway is proposed along the length of Joshua Road and would also cross the rail right-of-way at this point.

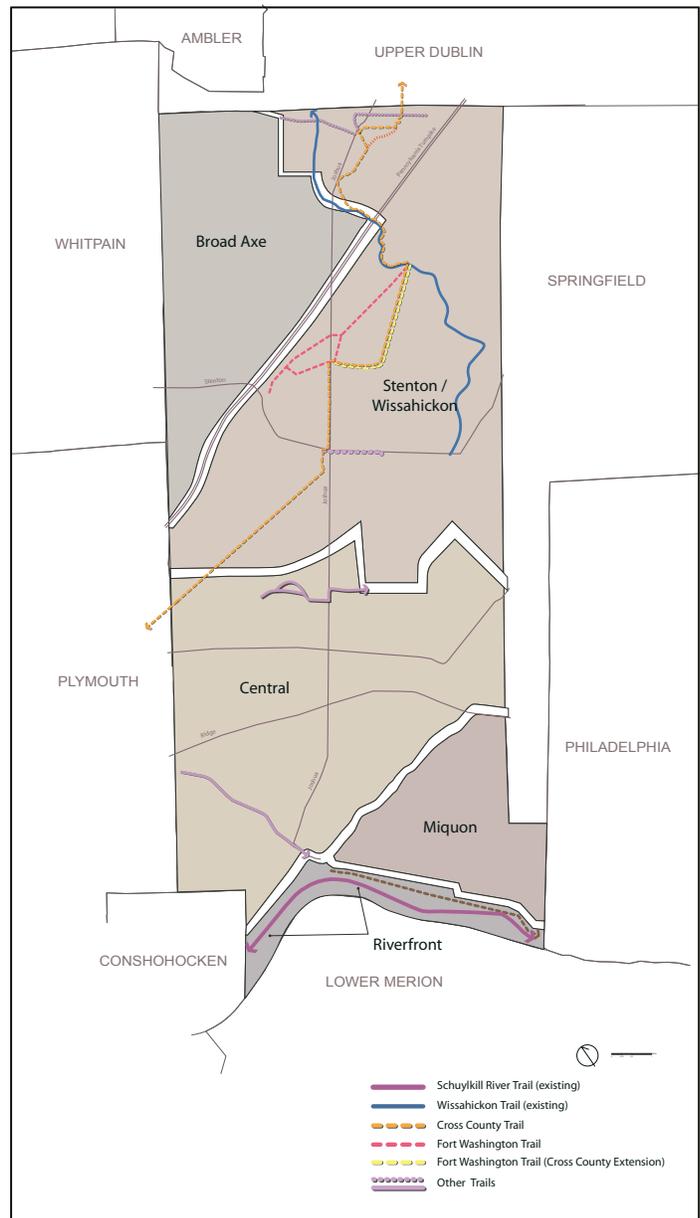
Trail Linkages

Open space linkages in the form of trails have been detailed in the Whitemarsh Township Comprehensive Plan of 2003. Most of the trails shown in the Comprehensive Plan are proposed trails; however, there are extensive segments of existing trails. The addition of the trails proposed in the plan will create

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a comprehensive trail network that serves the majority of Whitmarsh Township residents. In particular, the proposed Joshua Road Trail will enable residents in the Central District to connect with the resources in the Township and beyond.

Map #13 Existing Trails by District



The Central District, the area with the greatest concentration of residential development in the Township, is nearly devoid of trails

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Schuylkill River Trail at Spring Mill Park

Existing Trails

Schuylkill River Trail · The Schuylkill River forms the southern edge of the Riverfront District of Whitemarsh Township as it flows towards its convergence with the Delaware River. The linear nature of rivers and creeks usually make them prime opportunities for the location of trail corridors. Even though the areas directly adjacent to the River have seen relatively large amounts of industrial and institutional development, the abandonment of the Pennsylvania Railroad's Schuylkill River Branch allowed for the extension of the Schuylkill River Trail through the southern section of Whitemarsh Township. The Schuylkill River Trail is an extensive hard-surface trail that traverses Montgomery County, connecting to the Perkiomen Trail near Valley Forge and extending through Philadelphia's Fairmount Park to Center City.

Wissahickon Trail · The Wissahickon Trail is a partially completed trail envisioned to follow the length of the Wissahickon Creek through the Stenton/Wissahickon District of Whitemarsh Township which, when complete, will connect the municipalities upstream with the Schuylkill River Trail and Philadelphia's Fairmount Park system. The trail par-

allels the Wissahickon Creek as it traverses the Township. Along its length it passes through Germantown Academy, the Fort Hill Area and main sections of Fort Washington State Park, Wissahickon Valley Park, West Valley Road Park and Erdenheim Farm. Construction of the remaining portions of this trail is being facilitated by the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association and the Morris Arboretum.

Proposed Trails

(Per the Township Comprehensive Plan)

Fort Washington Trail · The Fort Washington Trail is part of the trail network located within Fort Washington State Park in the Stenton/Wissahickon District of the Township. It provides trail access to most areas within the Park. It also serves as an alternative route for portions of the Cross County Trail.

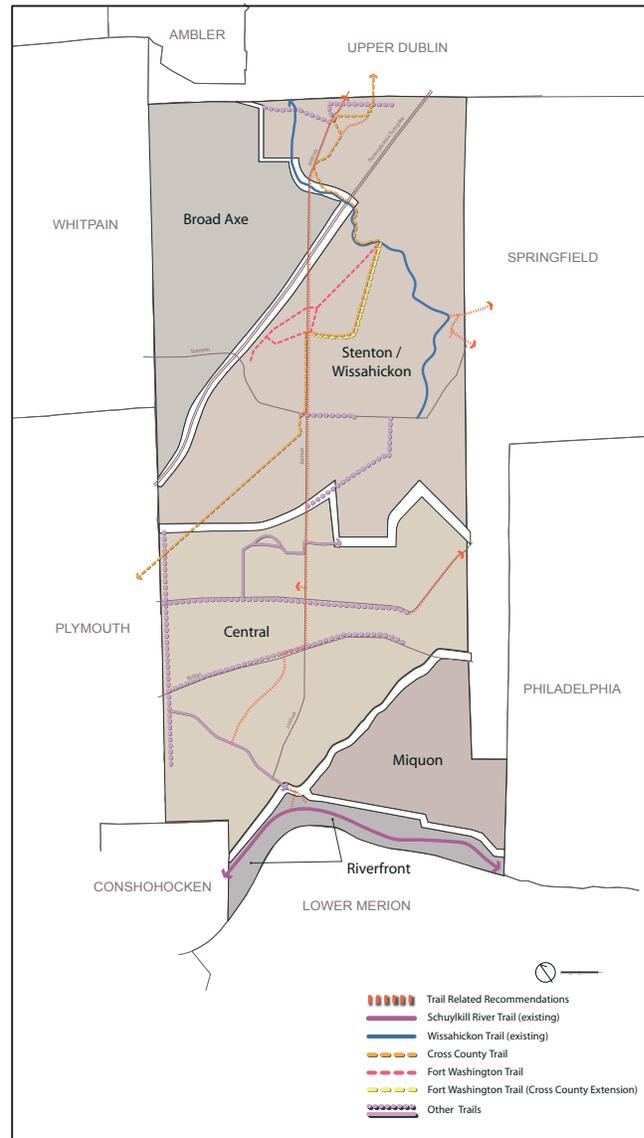
Cross County Trail · The Cross County Trail is currently under construction and will stretch from Upper Moreland Township southwest to the Schuylkill River Trail in Conshohocken. The trail will enter the Township west of Bethlehem Pike and travel south before turning west to follow the Sandy Run Creek to its confluence with the Wissahickon Creek. The trail then joins the Wissahickon Creek Trail and follows it south until it intersects the Norfolk Southern freight line within Fort Washington State Park. From this point, the trail follows the Norfolk Southern right-of-way to the edge of the park. The trail turns, and travels along the edge of the State park until joining Joshua Road and following it south. The Cross County Trail rejoins the Norfolk Southern right-of-way on the Sunnybrook Golf Club property and follows the rail line west, into Plymouth Township.

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Silt Basin Trail · The Silt Basin Trail is proposed for the Central District. It will follow the Spring Mill Creek Corridor from the south side of Ridge Pike, south, through Kline Park and connecting to a proposed on-street sidewalk/pathway along Cedar Grove Road. When completed, this trail will provide connections between two on-street sidewalks/pathways and Kline and Cedar Grove Parks. It will also serve as an alternative route to a portion of the on-street sidewalk/pathways proposed along the length of Joshua Road.

On-Street Sidewalk/Pathways · The 2003 Comprehensive Plan Trail System Map shows a number of trails running along roadways. The use of on-street bicycle routes is an integral part of the proposed trail system in the Open Space Plan. Roadways, when designed properly, can provide ample space for bicyclists. Several key on-road, or parallel-to-roadway, routes have been identified in this plan. These include Germantown and Ridge Pikes in the Central District, and Joshua Road, which traverses all five districts within the Township. The Joshua Road route also connects to several existing or pending routes including the Wissahickon Trail, the Cross County Trail, a proposed trail through Kline Park and the existing pathway along Cedar Grove Road. With the completion of a missing segment in the Riverfront District, a continuous trail could be created which would extend through most of the Township, including the core of the Central District to the Schuylkill River.

Map #15 Proposed Trails by District



The proposed Joshua Road route would connect the Central District with existing trails and open space resources throughout the Township and the region