



Location

Conshohocken Borough and the Township of Whitemarsh share nearly 2 miles of frontage along the Schuylkill River, in southeast Montgomery County, Pennsylvania. From the 1600's to the current day, each municipality's portion of that frontage was used intensely for business and industry and included quarries, iron furnaces, grist and textile mills as well as manufacturing and office. Canals, rail lines and major roads all transported goods to and from the river's edge. With the success of these businesses, and the close proximity of the City of Philadelphia, the population grew.

By the year 2020, nearly 100,000 residents will live in the five municipalities adjacent the study area.

Population	2010	2020 est.
Conshohocken Borough	7,833	8,917
Whitemarsh Township	17,349	17,852
West Conshohocken Borough	1,320	1,353
Plymouth Township	16,525	16,763
Lower Merion Township	57,825	58,600
Total 100,852	103,485	

Source: US Census, Montgomery County Planning

Located at the crossroads of major transportation routes, the riverfront of Conshohocken and Whitemarsh is also potentially shared with the entire population of Montgomery County. Each day, nearly 200,000 vehicles pass through the area on major highways. Almost another 12,000 people ride through on buses and trains and still another 1,600 are counted on bikes.

Passing by	Persons	Vehicles
Schuylkill Expressway		101,991
PA Route I-476		117,577
SEPTA Bus	1,356	
SEPTA Rail	10,478	
Trails (esp. bicycles)	1,633	

Source: Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission

Demographics and Employment

The combined population of the Borough and Township is growing and surprisingly trending toward younger and smaller households. U.S. Census and Montgomery County data project it to increase by a minimum of 825 persons between 2010 and the year 2020 and reveal the median age of a Borough resident was 32.7 years and in Whitemarsh 42.6 years, in 2010. Both municipalities show less than the county's average persons per household: Conshohocken with 2.05 persons and Whitemarsh with 2.52 persons compared to the County's 2.53 persons in the year 2010.

2010 Housing	Total Units	Ave. Household
Conshohocken Borough	4,686	2.05
Whitemarsh Township	<u>7,105</u>	2.52
Total	11,791	

Source: US Census, Montgomery County Planning

According to recent U.S. Census data, Conshohocken and Whitemarsh enjoy above average labor participation and below average unemployment. In Conshohocken, as much as 78% of the population, 16 years of age or older, participated in the labor force and in Whitemarsh that rate was 68.6%. The number one industry in Conshohocken and Whitemarsh continues to be the service industry.

Resident Labor Force by Industry	Conshohocken	Whitemarsh
Agriculture	0%	0.10%
Construction	4.3%	6.4%
Manufacturing	9.6%	7.3%
Wholesale	1.6%	3.3%

Retail 9.8%	8.6%	
Transportation	4.2%	2.3%
Information	2.7%	2.6%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate/Leasing	12.7%	12.2%
Services	52.1%	55.7%
Public Administration	<u>2.9%</u>	<u>1.4%</u>
Total Persons	4,971	8,942

Source: US Census

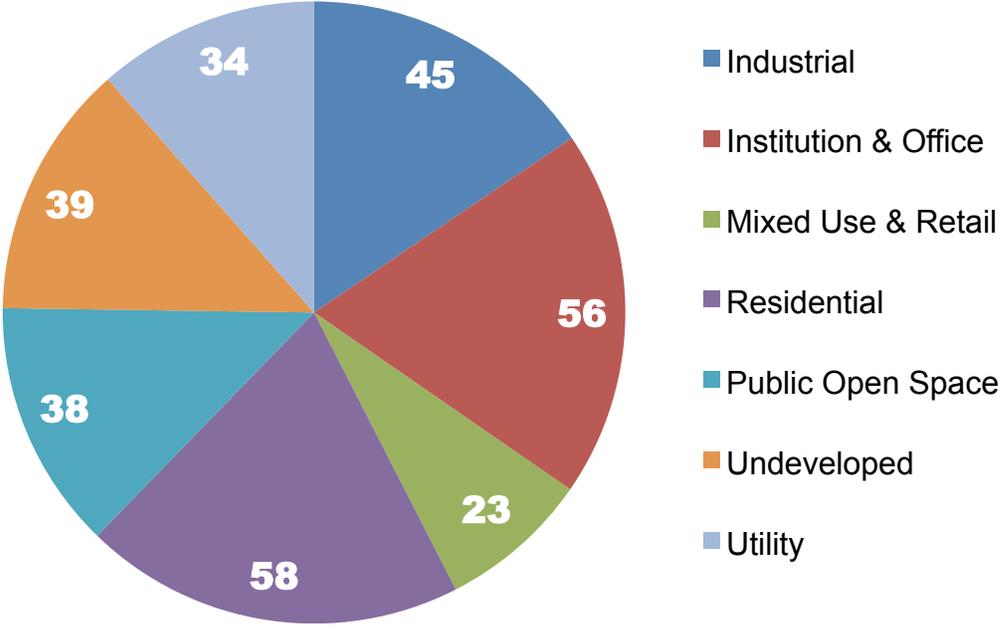
Existing Conditions

Defining the boundaries of the Study Area revealed two distinct areas of riverfront experience: the land, and land uses, along the river's edge and then also areas immediately in-land, from which a view of the river might be important. Land uses, and buildings, between the edge of the river and train tracks exhibit larger parcels of land and seemingly unfettered access to the water. Those above the train tracks exhibit smaller, vintage-sized parcels with physical obstacles to access the river but opportunities to view, or improve views of it.

Geography and Land Use

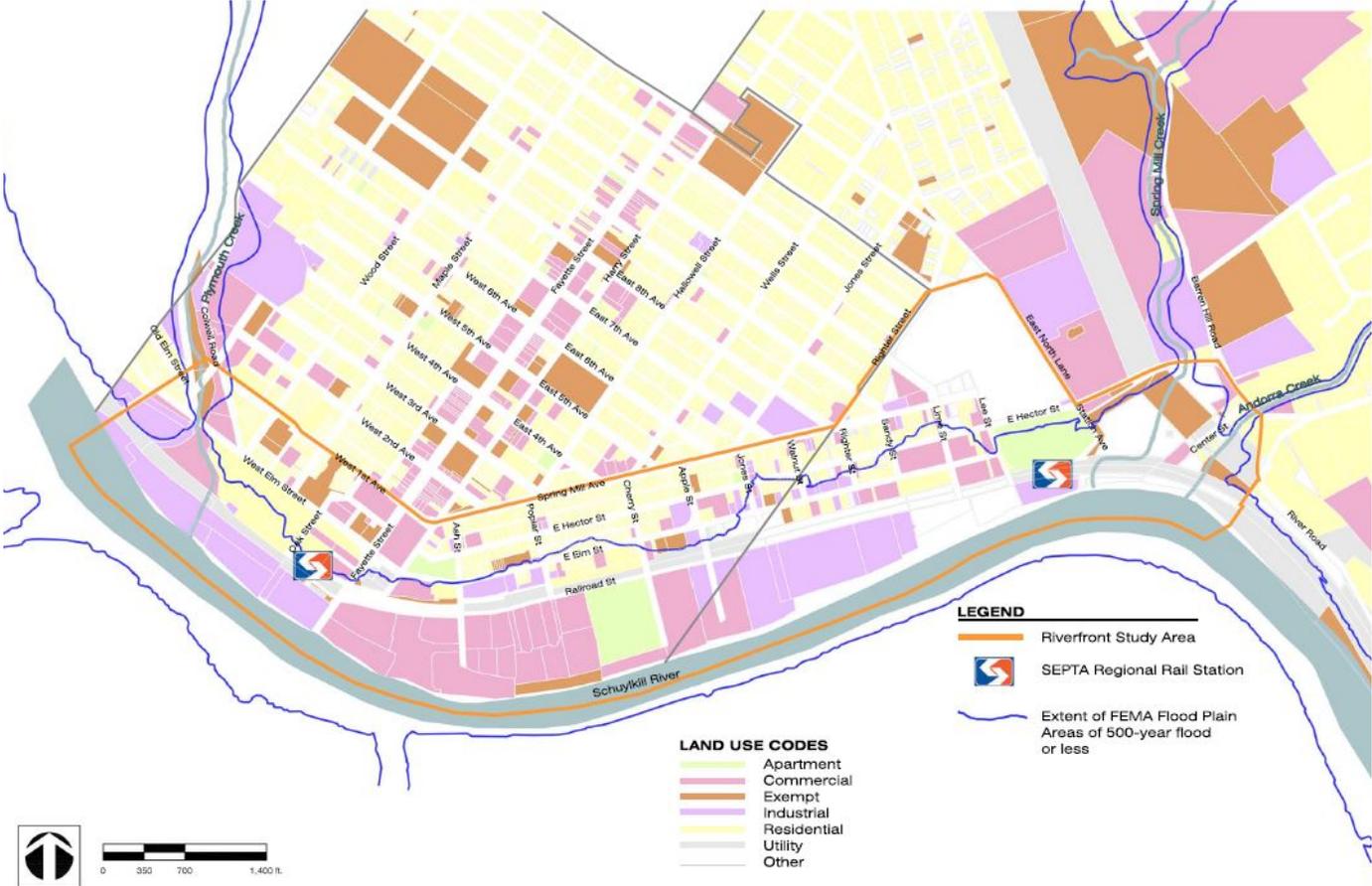
The Study Area captures geographic portions of southern and western Conshohocken Borough and Whitemarsh Township. Regardless of some areas of steep to moderate slopes, each municipality found firm geology of schist, gneiss, quartzite, dolomite, and some firm limestone, to build an industrial legacy.

Today, the Study Area exhibits as much a built environment as ever with only the types of land uses changing and not necessarily the bulk of the buildings. Neighborhood sized residential lots still exist above the train tracks. But where heavy industrial buildings once sat between the tracks and the river, large office towers and multifamily complexes now stand. As a result, a first glance suggests the riverfront is more business than neighborhood. However, looking closer at the Study Area, and some current real estate development projects, nearly 25% of the riverfront could be considered in residential land use.



Source: Montgomery County Planning, 2016

Land Use Type: Share of Study Area in Acres



Existing Land Uses of the Study Area

Conshohocken and Whitemarsh recently received proposals for the development and construction of at least **five** new office buildings in the Study Area of this Plan and nearly **1,317** housing units. When completed, the users of these developments will no doubt cherish the riverfront amenities and the supporting retail and commercial offerings of Conshohocken and Whitemarsh.

Proposed Development within the Study Area

Name	Location	Residential/Office	Status
Conshohocken Borough			
401-433 Washington	401 & 433 Washington St.	598 units in 4 buildings	Construction
51 Washington	51 Washington St.	310 units & parking	Permitting review
The Boathouse	Cherry Street		Built
Millennium – all phases	225- 227 Washington St.	Office plus plaza	
Tower Bridges – all	Elm Street	Office building	Permitting review
SEPTA parking lot changes			Pending
Train Station plan			Pending
Corson Street	West Elm	Office and 6 story parking	
400 West Elm	400 West Elm St.	5-story Office over parking	Approved 06/17/2015
One Conshohocken			Pending

Whitemarsh Township			
10th Ave Condominiums	10th Ave & Spring Mill Ave.	12 units over parking	Approved 1/23/2014
The Courts at Spring Mill	1101 E Hector St.	385 units w/ 2500 sf Office	Units Leased
AVA Landholdings/ Tison Homes	805 & 807 Spring Mill Ave.	10 units	Completed
Washington Street Assoc III LP	401 & 433 Washington St.	598 units in 4 buildings	Approved 5/28/2015
901 Washington Partners, LP	901 Washington Street	2-story Office over parking	Approved 11/12/2015
Hines Rowing Center	801 Washington Street	15,000 sf boathouse	Approved 2/20/2014
Spring Mill Corporate Center	North Lane	2-Lot Minor Subdivision	Approved 8/13/2015

Hydrology

There are three primary bodies of water affecting the Study Area, and the recommendations, of this plan: the Schuylkill River, the Plymouth Creek and the Spring Mill Creek.

At nearly 135 miles long, the Schuylkill River is one of Pennsylvania's most important rivers. Measured in its contribution to our state's heritage, economy and natural environment few other rivers impact Pennsylvania in so meaningful a way. From early Lenni-Lenape Native American life along the river to its use in the industrial age of 19th and 20th centuries to its status as a Pennsylvania Scenic River, the Schuylkill River is a defining element of Pennsylvania life.

Two creeks flow, and drain storm water, through major portions of Conshohocken and Whitemarsh. The Plymouth Creek flows to the Schuylkill from Whitemarsh, through Plymouth Township and finally through the Borough, near Colwell Lane and Elm Street. Spring Mill Creek is at the opposite end of the Study Area and flows from south-central Whitemarsh to the Schuylkill River at Spring Mill County Park.

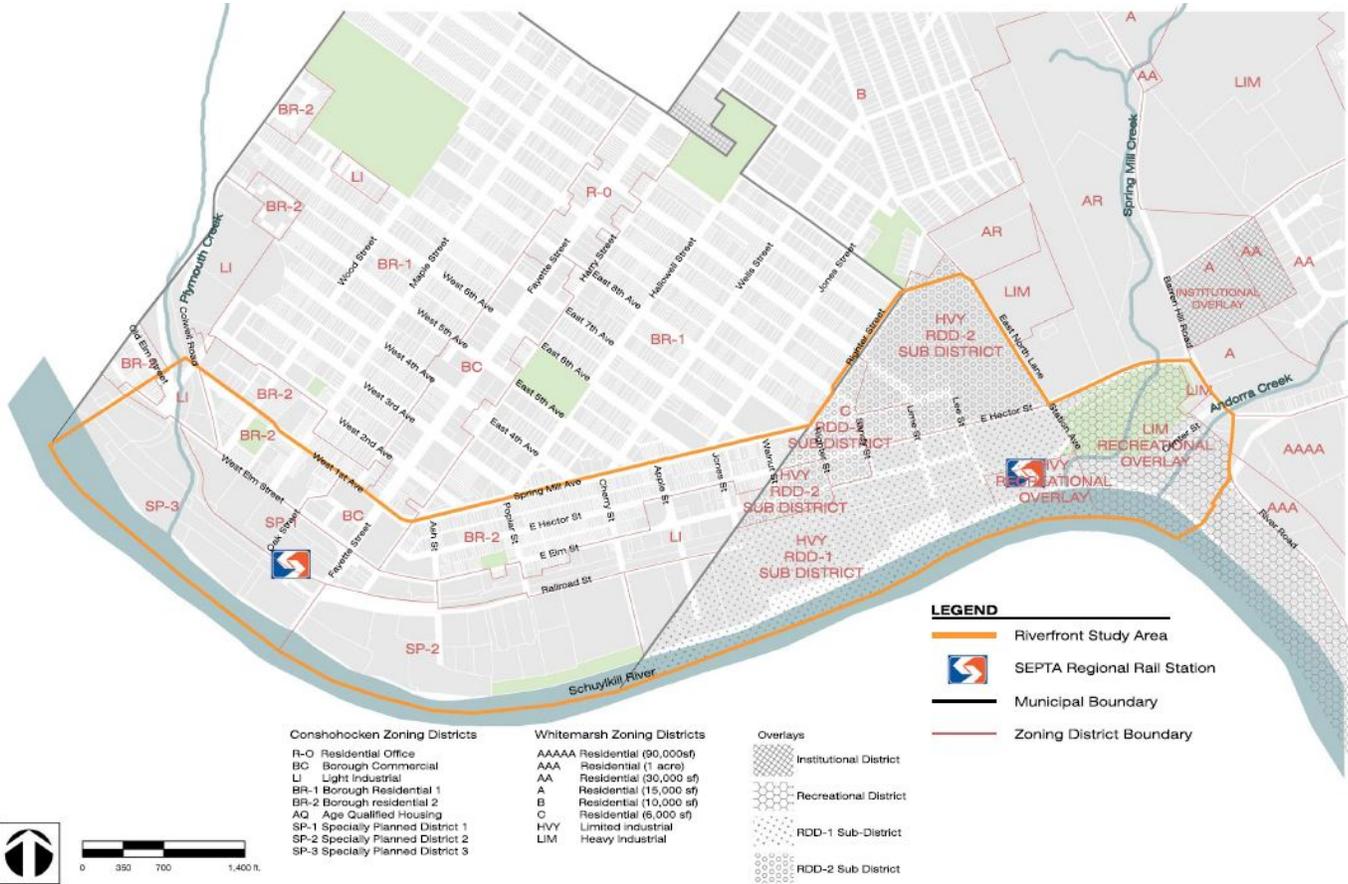
Enjoying the use and views of the Schuylkill River comes with an understanding that at times, its banks, and the banks of its tributary creeks and streams, may spill over with floodwaters. Nearly half of the Study Area is considered within the 100-year and 500 year floodplain of the Schuylkill River and Plymouth and Spring Mill creeks. The boundary of the river floodplain runs generally from the river's edge to 1,200 feet in-land, parallel with Elm Street.

Zoning Districts of the Study Area

The Study Area boundary also collects the riverfront zoning districts of Conshohocken and Whitemarsh according to “River’s Edge” and “River View” categories. These categories are named as such to help maintain the sentiment of the Riverfront Plan.

River’s Edge districts are located nearest the river and will be reviewed for their ability to enhance the riverfront experience. River View districts are located above the train tracks and below Spring Mill Avenue. These districts will be reviewed for the opportunity to enhance views of the riverfront (see Appendix III. Zoning).

Study Area Zoning Districts	River's Edge	River View
Conshohocken Borough		
Specially Planned District 3 (SP-3)	●	
Specially Planned District 2 (SP-2)	●	
Specially Planned District 1 (SP-1)		●
Borough Residential 2 (BR-2)		●
Limited Industrial (LI)		●
Borough Commercial (BC)		●
Whitemarsh Township		
Residential District (6,000 sq. ft.) (C)		●
Heavy Industrial District (HVY)	●	
Limited Industrial (LIM)	●	
(RDD-1 Sub-District)	●	
(RDD-2 Sub-District)		●



Existing Zoning of the Study Area

Circulation: Trains, Cars, and Trails

The riverfront of Conshohocken and Whitemarsh is especially known for its movement of commuters to and from the City of Philadelphia. Two train stations, multiple bus stations and scores of parking garages reveal a busy place with near constant movement of people. Add a record number of bicyclists on the trails, for recreation and commuting, and it becomes nearly a 24-hour destination.

Trains

Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) transports nearly 10,478 people, through the Study Area, on the Manayunk/Norristown rail line; and maintains two commuter stations with parking for daily and weekend riders.

Conshohocken Train Station

Located just west of the intersection of Harry Street and Washington Street, this station is under study for redesign near the Fayette Street Bridge, in the Borough. A morning ticket booth and waiting area and 118 free parking spaces are available to riders. Bus services are available via SEPTA's Route 95 and Route 97 buses.

2013 Daily Ridership

646 boardings

682 alightings

Ridership to and from this Station has, in the past, revealed an interesting statistic of “reverse commuting” from Philadelphia to Conshohocken businesses.

Spring Mill Station

Located at the intersection of Station Avenue and North Lane, in Whitemarsh, this station is at the edge of the Schuylkill River. Daily and weekend riders have a small shelter, a bike rack, and dedicated parking available to them; with over 100 parking spaces at \$1.00 per space per day. Bus service to Spring Mill is provided by SEPTA's Route 97 bus.

2013 Daily Ridership

378 boardings

358 alightings

This station is located at the confluence of Spring Mill Creek and the Schuylkill River and combined floodwaters often lead to temporary closing of the station.

Cars

The *Crossroads of Montgomery County* is the name given to the county's busiest transportation interchange and it includes portions of Conshohocken and Whitemarsh and the volume of cars passing by the riverfront is staggering. In past years, two major thoroughfares, the Schuylkill Expressway and the PA Blue Route, recorded nearly 219,568 vehicles per day near the Study Area. This volume can have a negative impact on the environmental health of a community and a positive impact on the economic vitality of it; depending on how it is managed.

For the residents and businesses of the Study Area, traffic can be overwhelming at times, especially during peak morning and afternoon rush hours. Many studies have recorded the volume of cars, in and out of the Study Area. The primary repository of traffic data, for the streets and intersections now included in the Study Area, is the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC). For more than a decade DVRPC has worked toward an interactive database of Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) for the region at large.

In 2015, DVRPC recorded large volumes of vehicles travelled along Fayette Street especially in mornings and evenings toward the Schuylkill Expressway and PA Blue Route highway interchanges and locally to the Conshohocken train station.

	AADT
Fayette Street Bridge (Eastbound)	18,379 vehicles
Fayette Street Bridge (Westbound)	26,466 vehicles

DVRPC also captured peak morning and evening traffic counts for Whitemarsh near the Spring Mill Train Station. The limited access, via North Lane and Hector Streets, makes the traffic count especially important. In 2011, DVRPC recorded:

	AADT
Hector Street	11,738 vehicles

Parking along the riverfront of Conshohocken and Whitemarsh can, on most weekdays, be a challenge. Residents, commuters and local businesses all compete for parking: in train station lots, parking garages and street-front metered spaces; with more than one strategy employed to ease the burden. Free and charge-as-you-go spaces exist. Shared parking exists in the Borough, parking permits, too. But in all cases the demand overwhelms the available land use in the Study Area.

Of special concern for the Study Area are the existing parking garages. Dominant features in the landscape these garages either offer relief to parking issues or, if their location is outdated, present challenges. Five separate parking garages are located in the Study Area, at the following intersections:

Conshohocken Borough

1. West 1st Avenue & Robinson Alley
2. Oak Street & Stoddard Avenue
3. Fayette Street & East 1st Avenue
4. Harry Street & Washington Street

Whitemarsh Township

5. Station Avenue & North Lane

Parking lots, of considerable size, also exist throughout the Study Area and additionally offer relief or present challenges to riverfront land use planning.

	Acres in Parking Lots (approx.)
Conshohocken Borough	11 acres
Whitemarsh Township	7 acres

Trails

Conshohocken and Whitemarsh residents and visitors currently have access to four separate riverfront trail systems, with improvements to each hoped for.

Cross County Trail

Montgomery County is steadily increasing the number of available walking and multi-use trails. To date, nearly 25 trails have been completed, proposed or planned for construction. One such trail, The Cross County Trail, will when completed, extend 17.5 miles from Conshohocken Borough eastward through several municipalities and parks to the border of Bucks County.

From near the intersection of West Elm Street and Old Elm Street in Conshohocken, the Cross County is launched north along the Plymouth Creek. It runs, 12 feet wide, for ½ mile, until it slips under PA Route 476 to head east.

Schuylkill River Trail

The Schuylkill River Trail (SRT) is one of the largest trail planning and installation projects of the entire region. When completed, this paved trail will travel nearly 100 miles from Schuylkill County to the Delaware River in Philadelphia.

In Conshohocken Borough and Whitemarsh Township, the SRT runs through the entire riverfront area. It begins in the western portion of Conshohocken at Old Elm Street and West Elm Street, high on a ridge overlooking the river valley, then slides downhill to run parallel the train tracks. It stays above the train tracks, crossing 7 streets, and through a tree-lined corridor past the Spring Mill County Park, in Whitemarsh Township, onward to Philadelphia.

The Walking Path/ River Walk

Conshohocken Borough and Whitemarsh Township are actively promoting the development of a riverfront walking path along the Schuylkill River. Early in the days of the Borough's riverfront redevelopment, developers complied with each municipality's zoning and established portions of the improved path.

Today, a walking path exists from a point just west of the end of Ash Street meandering eastward approximately ½ mile to the very end of Cherry Street; with a handful of sitting areas and landscaped zones along the way. This path is intended to run the entire 2 miles of riverfront for Conshohocken and Whitemarsh residents and visitors.

Spring Mill County Park

Spring Mill County Park is an exceptionally large woodland for a near-urban setting with nearly 38-acres of land and easements now owned by Montgomery County. Located adjacent the Spring Mill train station and with three very small points of park access: Center Street, in the village of Spring Mill, Station Avenue and the Schuylkill River Trail, this mostly undeveloped park offers explorable streamside habitat, shaded footpaths and the potential for environmental education.

Spring Mill County Park is situated alongside the Schuylkill River Trail, above the train tracks and the river’s edge.



Existing Trails of the Study Area

Public Participation

The Riverfront Plan incorporates the public participation input and stakeholder interviews of various previous plans. Two plans offering key insight to the sentiment of Conshohocken and Whitemarsh are the *2011 Riverfront Open Space Plan of Whitemarsh Township* and the *Conshohocken Revitalization Plan Update: "The Community Revisited."*

Borough and Township feedback asked for:

- A passive recreation trail for leisurely use, with signage suggesting as much, along the river (unique to more intensive trail activity of Schuylkill River Trail)
- A civic gathering space, artwork, and new concessions along the waterfront
- New signage for visiting back and forth to the river, including historic and cultural resources
- Boat launches staged at various locations, including revised usage of the Borough's "Riverwalk" at Millennium ramp
- Improvements to existing parking and clarification of shared parking
- Installation and improvement of safety and emergency response elements are critically important
- Improvements to Spring Mill County Park
- Potential license agreements and trail improvements in the PECO utility easement to provide non-road access to the riverfront trail system

The Riverfront Plan also incorporates the input of more recently selected Borough and Township Stakeholders. Each Stakeholder received the following questions:

- What history do you, or your organization or group, have with the redevelopment of the previously industrialized areas of the riverfront?
- What history do you, or your organization or group, have with development of the Schuylkill Riverfront Trail or Cross County Trail?
- What benefit do you feel public transportation brings to your business or organization; ie. do you or your employees take advantage of the existing train or bus stations?
- What plans, reports or studies have you contributed to in the past for the analysis of the riverfront's revitalization opportunities?
- What are your primary concerns for shared use of the riverfront, by way of a riverwalk, boating access, etc.?
- What land uses or amenities, if any, would you introduce to make the interaction between the public and the business space more interesting:
 - *Land use*: active recreation areas, sports arena, retail, commercial entertainment, museum/art gallery or other (s)
 - *Amenities*: outdoor cafe-like seating and lunch areas, food festival/event/small concert venues or other (s)?

- If it could be demonstrated that improvements to the riverfront will enhance the value of your property would you support municipal or joint financing of these improvements; for example would you support a government issued bond, the use of government awarded grants, or possibly recruitment of private foundation monies?

Most of the Stakeholders recently selected by the Borough and Township contributed their input via phone, email and meeting attendance. For those attending Stakeholder meetings held **September 16, 2015** and **September 17, 2015**, presentations and discussions used the goals of the Steering Committee and the Stakeholder Questionnaire as a basis for gathering feedback.

Top Stakeholder Concerns

Traffic

Parking

Flooding

Access

Enjoyment

Boating

Safety

Collaboration

The concerns of the Stakeholders, Steering Committee and the public are incorporated the recommendations of this plan, including opportunities for further input to the implementation of its Action Plan. See *Appendices of Meeting Minutes and Comments from Stakeholders*.