

# CHAPTER 2

# PARKS AND RECREATION PLAN TOWNSHIP PROFILE

## Facts and Figures

### Location

Whitemarsh Township is located in southeastern Montgomery County adjacent to the Andorra section of Philadelphia. It is surrounded in Montgomery County by Springfield, Upper Dublin, Whitpain, and Plymouth Townships and Conshohocken Borough. It is also bordered by the Schuylkill River, which separates it from Lower Merion Township. The community is part of the Colonial School District.

### Size

14.53 square miles

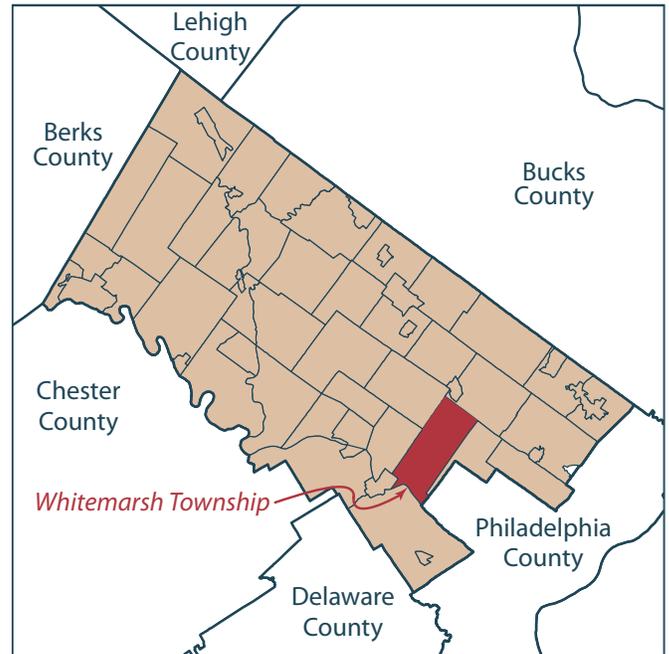
### History

Incorporated in 1704 as part of Philadelphia County, Whitemarsh Township was one of the 28 original communities that comprised Montgomery County upon its founding in 1784. Originally a nearly perfect rectangle, Whitemarsh underwent two boundary changes during the 19th century. In 1850, with the incorporation of Conshohocken Borough, it lost 320 acres. In 1876 it annexed 120 acres from Springfield Township in the Miquon area.

### Community Character

Regionally, Whitemarsh is one of Philadelphia's inner ring suburbs. Its principle image is of a post World War II bedroom community that grew up between older settlements, and it maintains its appearance with well kept residential neighborhoods with tree-lined streets. At the same time, Whitemarsh

Map #1 Regional Context



Township contains more farmland and estates than any of its surrounding municipalities. This combination of suburban and rural aspects creates a unique character for a township so close to the city. It gives the Township a special charm, one that differentiates it from any other inner ring suburb in the area.

Regionally, Whitemarsh is well known as the home of Fort Washington State Park, Hope Lodge/Mathers Mill, Germantown Academy, Plymouth Whitemarsh High School, and McNeil Consumer Healthcare, one of the largest private employers in Montgomery County. The Township is also the site of five golf clubs with six courses: Whitemarsh Valley, Sunnybrook and Green Valley Country Clubs; Ace Center; and Philadelphia Cricket Club.

# TOWNSHIP PROFILE

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## Districts

### *Broad Axe District*

The boundaries of this district extend from the Pennsylvania Turnpike, north to the Upper Dublin Township Line and from the Wissahickon Creek, west to the Whitpain Township border.

The character of this district is much the same as it has been for decades; rural and largely undeveloped, with homes located on large lots, and only few non-residential uses. The majority of this area is currently zoned AAA Residential. There are numerous large and mid-sized (under 50 acres) parcels in this district, which when combined constitute the majority of the land area within. Much of the undeveloped land in this district exhibits characteristics that make it very supportive of land development activities, i.e. gently rolling and well-drained soils.

This area has as strong a functional relationship with nearby Ambler Borough and Whitpain and Upper Dublin Townships, as it does with Lafayette Hill, the “psychological center” of Whitmarsh Township. Therefore, the abundant open space serves an important role for both the Township and these adjacent municipalities.

### *Central District*

This district includes the area from Stenton Avenue, south of Erdenheim Farm, to approximately Barren Hill Road and Conshohocken Borough. It extends from Springfield Township line to the Plymouth Township line.

The Central District is the core area of the Township with more land development and greater density than any other district. This development is mainly south of Flourtown Road near Germantown Pike and Ridge

Pike. Several areas with higher residential densities, comprising multi-family and mixed-use units, are located along Germantown and Ridge Pikes. The development in this area has historically formed around key nodes at the intersections of primary road corridors, such as Ridge and Germantown Pikes. In the last 50 years, the district has expanded to exhibit many of the characteristics of traditional 20th Century inner-ring suburban communities. These characteristics include numerous residential subdivisions consisting of lots of one-half acre or less in size, and a free-form road network with cul-de-sacs and limited vehicular or pedestrian connectivity between subdivisions.

Although there are several substantial park and open space areas in this part of the Township, the district’s large population is still underserved by parks and open spaces. Furthermore, the amount of remaining undeveloped open space is very limited and privately owned. This remaining open space, although in some cases informally used by the public as passive recreation land, exists solely due to the fact that landowners have chosen not to exercise their right to develop. Should this condition change, the physical character and psychological perception of this district could change dramatically.

### *Miquon District*

This district is roughly bordered by Springfield Township, the Philadelphia City line, Barren Hill Road, and the area just north of, but not including, the PECO utility right-of-way.

The physical features of this area are primarily a function of the underlying geology consisting of Wissahickon Schist. This material forms a landscape of steep valleys and large areas of woodland. There is

# TOWNSHIP PROFILE

a limited amount of residential development located in this area, mostly on the higher elevations and plateaus. As a result of the topography, development is clustered or hidden in pockets, further creating a sense of low density development, especially when compared to the Central District, with its gently rolling lands and more visible expanses of residential development.

## *Riverfront District*

This district includes a narrow band of land located between the Schuylkill River to and including the PECO utility right-of-way, and from the Philadelphia City line to Conshohocken Borough line.

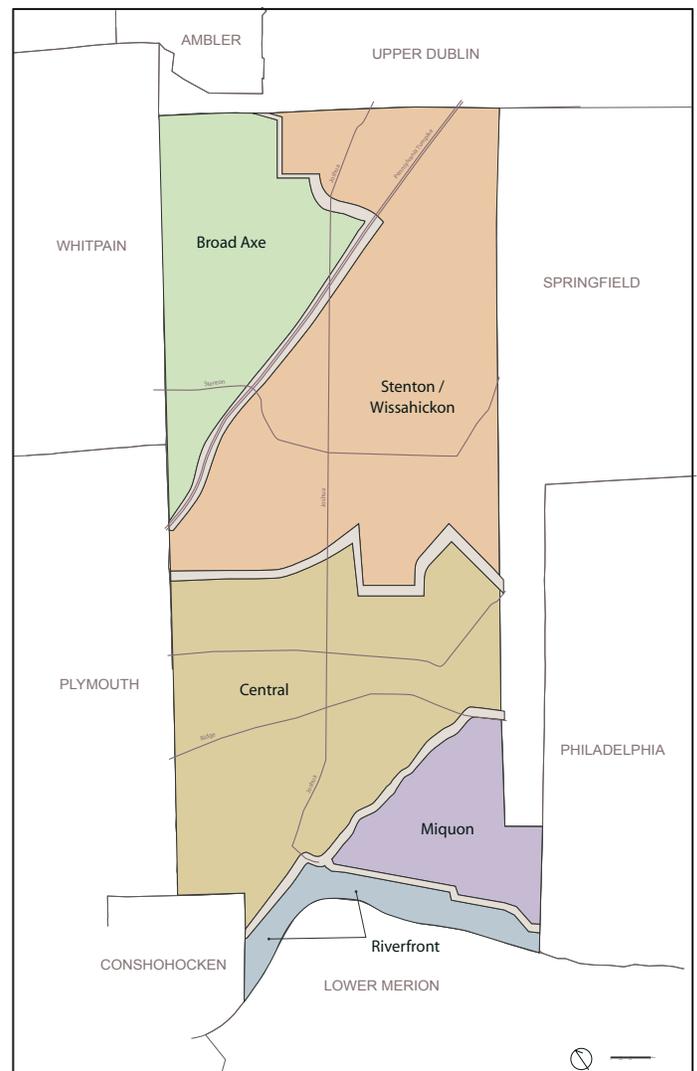
The Riverfront District is mostly composed of the low, flat flood plain area of the Schuylkill River, along with some areas of higher ground. The district is mostly defined by a series of linear infrastructure elements, including the Schuylkill River Trail, the SEPTA R6 Regional Rail line, and the PECO overhead power lines. There is a limited amount of residential development, and several non-residential uses located in the district. The area adjacent to Conshohocken Borough has an urban character and includes dense development very close to the river's edge.

## *Stenton/Wissahickon District*

This district spans from the northeast boundary with Upper Dublin Township, west to Germantown Academy and the Wissahickon Creek. The district extends along the southern border of the Pennsylvania Turnpike, to approximately Flourtown Road. The district's eastern boundary follows the Springfield Township line and includes all of Erdenheim Farm.

The character of the district is defined by substantial numbers of privately owned, large undeveloped parcels, several large quarries, and four golf clubs with five golf courses. In addition, the district includes a substantial amount of public lands, including Fort Washington State Park, the Wissahickon Valley, and land owned by Montgomery County. There is limited residential development, occurring mostly west of Joshua Road and along Church Road.

Map #2 *Whitemarsh Districts*



# TOWNSHIP PROFILE

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## **Access**

Access to Whitemarsh Township is provided by numerous arterial roads, including Ridge, Germantown, Butler, Skippack, and Bethlehem Pikes, Stenton and Pennsylvania Avenues, and Joshua and Morris Roads. These roads provide convenient access to and from Whitemarsh and have been instrumental in its growth. The Pennsylvania Turnpike (Interstate Route 276) and the Route 309 Expressway (State Route 309) also run through the Township. Although neither have an interchange in Whitemarsh, the Turnpike has an interchange in nearby Plymouth Township, and the Route 309 expressway also has an interchange in Fort Washington which also connects with the turnpike. An interchange to the Blue Route (Interstate 476) is also located through nearby Plymouth Township providing convenient access to Center City Philadelphia, the Philadelphia International Airport, King of Prussia and other regional interstate highways.

Whitemarsh also has regional public transportation including the R5 and R6 Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) rail lines, both of which have stations in the Township. The R5 line, which connects Bucks, Chester, Montgomery, and Philadelphia Counties has a station in the Fort Washington section of the Township. In addition, nearby stations in Ambler Borough and the Fellwick area of Springfield Township also provides convenient access to the line for township residents. The R6 line, which runs along the Schuylkill River, has two stations located in Miquon and Spring Mill. The R6 provides a direct connection for the Township with Philadelphia's Center City and the Norristown Transportation Center. Through both of the rail lines, connections to Amtrak and the Philadelphia International Airport are possible. Bus service in Whitemarsh is provided by SEPTA, running primarily along the Township's major

arterial roadways, such as Germantown, Ridge, and Bethlehem Pikes, providing links to the regional rail lines and connections to other bus lines throughout the region.

## **Regional Recreation**

The Township has six municipal parks with 116.8 acres. There are several significant regional recreational amenities in addition to local municipal parks. The Fort Washington State Park is a 483 acre site located in the middle of the Township. The Schuylkill River Trail is a biking and pedestrian trail that extends from Center City to Valley Forge National Park. A segment of Green Ribbon Preserve Trail, a regional biking/pedestrian trail is being developed. The Schuylkill River Trail was developed by Montgomery County as the first trail in an envisioned trail system that would connect much of the Philadelphia region. In Whitemarsh, the trail extends along the river and has numerous connections to Township roads.

## **Government**

### *Types*

Home Rule Charter

### *Elected Officials*

In the Township, the Board of Supervisors has five members who are elected to four-year terms and together represent the entire Township. They serve both legislative and executive functions.

# TOWNSHIP PROFILE

## Appointed Officials

Boards related to parks and recreation include the Park and Recreation Board, an Open Space Committee and an Environmental Advisory Board.

## Municipal Administration

Whitemarsh Township has a Township Manager, an Assistant Township Manager and a finance officer.

## Whitemarsh Demographics

According to the U.S. Census of 2000, the population of Whitemarsh Township is 16,702 as shown in Table 2-1. Despite previous projections estimating population decline, Whitemarsh Township experienced 12.4 percent growth from 1990 to 2000.

## Population Forecast

The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) has forecasted a population increase in Whitemarsh Township of 1,623 residents between 2000 and 2030. However, the actual number of housing units proposed for development in Whitemarsh Township now already exceeds that number at an estimated 1,813 new residents. The Land Use Assumptions Report developed by the Township in 2005 was an in-depth analysis of future population growth based on the recent and anticipated development in Whitemarsh Township. The Land Use Assumptions Report forecasts a population increase of about 17 percent through 2016 totaling about

1,500 additional people. However if all potentially developable land in the Township is actually developed, this could potentially add another 10,509 residents in 4,011 new housing units. It is important to note that these are projections which could easily be altered by changes in the economy or other conditions such as open space conservation measures.

	1990	2000	% Change 1990-2000
Pennsylvania	11,881,643	12,281,054	3.5%
Montgomery County	678,305	750,097	10.6%
Whitemarsh Township	14,863	16,702	12.4%

Source: Penn State Data Center and U.S. Bureau of the Census  
2000 Census

Research into population projections by age group found that projections are made according to number of additional people without regard to any other demographic characteristic such as age, gender or any other characteristic. Therefore information about future age group trends is not available.

Age Group	Whitemarsh 1990 Population %	Whitemarsh 2000 Population %	Montgomery County 2000 %	PA 2000 %
Under 5	6.5	6.7	6.3	5.9
5-19	16.6	19.2	13.6	20.6
20-44	37.4	33.2	35.4	18.8
45-64	22.9	25.0	23.3	29.7
65+	16.2	15.7	14.9	15.6
Median Age	38.3	39.8	38.2	38.0

Source: Penn State Data Center and U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000 Census

# TOWNSHIP PROFILE

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## Age

As interests change throughout one's lifetime, it is important to look at the age groupings in order to target services. Table 2-2 represents population by major age group changes between 1990 and 2000 as well as comparisons with Montgomery County and Pennsylvania. Whitemarsh Township has one of the highest concentrations of people ages 65-74 in Montgomery County. Because the Township had significant housing development in the 1950's and 1960's, many of these original home buyers have likely chosen to remain in their homes. The U.S. Census Bureau considers a change of 2.5 percent or more to be a significant change. In Whitemarsh Township, the age cohort of 20 to 44 nearly reached that level of significance with a decrease of 2.3 percent, while the group aged 65 years and older increased by 2.6 percent. In addition the Township has approved age restricted housing developments.

## Powerful Demographic Changes Ahead

Whitemarsh Township's median age of 39.8 is higher than the median age of both Pennsylvania 38 and Montgomery County at 38.2. The median age in the community increased by a year and a half in the 1990's. Two milestones will occur in 2006: the first baby boomers will turn 60 and more than half of all boomers will be age 50 or older by May. People ages 45 to 54 have the highest average household income and the highest household spending of any age group. Old age is still a long way off as 50 year olds can expect to live another 30 years (women, 82.5 and men, 78.5)<sup>1</sup>. About 43 percent of Whitemarsh Township's population is 45 years of age and older.

- U.S. Bureau predicts a 72 percent increase in adults 50+ between 2000 and 2020 and a slight decrease in adults under 50.
- Adults 50+ control 77 percent of this country's assets.
- Women are responsible for 80 percent of household spending.
- Per capita spending is 2.5 times the national average in 50+ households.
- The broad market of women ages 50-70 represent a major opportunity for marketing as they have the time, money and motivation to take control of their future and that of their household .

## Different Generations - Different Views of the World: Implications for Township Planning

Effective program planning and public outreach necessitates an understanding of potential client groups. Figure 1 provides information about various generations along with implications for program and service planning and in devising outreach strategies to implement this plan.

Longer lives have produced several generations with different views of the world: Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Gen X and Gen Y. Their formative experiences have molded specific preferences and beliefs. Each age group has its own attitudes, sensibilities, hot buttons and cultural expectations. Clarifying the needs and desires of all generations is essential in public service. Finding out how to reach and involve different generations of people in everything from programs and services to funding in parks and recreation in a positive manner is complex.

<sup>1</sup> Ad Age.Com. Implications of Latest Baby Boomer Milestone. <http://www.adage.com>. 7/5/05.

<sup>2</sup> Ad Age.Com. Targeting a Powerhouse Female Demographic: Older Women. <http://www.adage.com>. 10/10/05

# TOWNSHIP PROFILE

## Figure 1 Generations and Implications<sup>3,4</sup>

**Traditionalists** – Born before 1946. Affected by the Great Depression. Hard work. Self-sacrifice. Respect for authority and institutions. Earned their material comforts the good old-fashioned way. *Reaching this group:* Stress frugality & their right to enjoy the fruits of their labor. Use endorsements of well-known people with wisdom of experience.

**Baby Boomers** – Born 1946 – 1960. Born into prosperity and affluence. “Permissive” upbringing. Feel special and privileged. Challenge authority. Champion the unconventional. Focused on self-fulfillment. Strong sense of entitlement and self-worth. *Reaching this group:* Stress family and family activity. Supply products and services that make boomers feel like young active winners.

**Gen X** – Born 1960-1980. Lived with social and economic obstacles that are harder than those faced by Traditionalists and did not exist for Boomers. Technology and media opened them to wider choices in lifestyle than previous generations. Sophisticated and savvy about the world. Skeptical. *Reaching this group:* Use candor, humor, and pragmatic approaches.

**Gen Y (Echo Boomers)** – Born 1980-2000. Group so large and complex that it is viewed as three distinct groups: adults, teens and children. Multi-cultural diversity. Broader definition of family. Affected by violence and scandal: 9/11, Columbine, Iraq, terrorism, and political scandals. More watchful and careful about their personal safety. Mistrustful of the media. Information Age influence: shorter attention spans, boredom and over-stimulation. *Reaching this group:* Use technology: videos, computers, WEB. Capitalize on hope and optimism. Inclusive multi-cultural programs and services. Participative planning enabling people to be heard through pulling together

<sup>3</sup> Paul, Pamela. September 2001. Getting Inside Gen Y, American Demographics, Volume 23(9) pp 42-49.

<sup>4</sup> Smith, J. Walker and Clurman, Ann. 1997. Rocking the Ages: the Yankelovich Report on Generational Marketing. (New York, NY: Harper Business).

For example, one generation alone, Gen Y, has three segments: adults, teens and children.

## Population Target Groups

The Whitemarsh Township Parks & Recreation Department can use population figures to target age group planning. Table 2-3 presents the raw number of citizens by age group. For example, one of the Department’s prime target groups is the age group 5 to 14. This group has 2,290 people. The family life stage age group of 35 to 54 has about 5,401 people verifying that family oriented programming is important. Over 2,600 people are 65 and older.

Age Group	Number	Percent
Under 5 Years	1,116	6.7
5-14 Years	2,290	13.7
15-19 Years	918	5.5
20-34 Years	2,753	16.5
35-54 Years	5,401	32.3
55-64 Years	1,594	9.5
65- 84 Years	2,271	13.6
85 Years+	359	2.1

Source: Penn State Data Center and U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000 Census

## Family Structure

One of the most marked changes in Pennsylvania’s population in recent years has been the alteration of the family structure. Households have experienced a decline in married couples and households with children. Households with single people, single heads of households and single parents have increased.

# TOWNSHIP PROFILE

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Between 1990 and 2000, Whitemarsh Township remained fairly stable in family structure as follows:

- The percentage of family households in Whitemarsh decreased from 75.9 percent to 74.4.
- Householders living alone increased from 20.3 percent to 20.8 percent.
- Single head of households decreased from 7.4% to 7.1%, a reverse of the trend elsewhere.
- Percentage of non-family households increased from 24.1 percent to 25.6 percent.
- U.S. Census Bureau began to track the number of grandparents as caregivers. In Whitemarsh, 62 households indicated that the grandparents were responsible for grandchildren.
- Proportion of households with all working parents is significant. About 60.6 percent of households with children under the age of six have all parents working.
- Most women work: while 67.8 percent of the employable population is in the labor force, 58.8 percent of females over 16 years are in the work force.

## Income

Whitemarsh Township's trends in income between 1989 and 1999 show that the median household income has outpaced that of Montgomery County or Pennsylvania. For example, the median 1989

household income of \$53,075 indexed for inflation would be worth \$71,200 in 1999 dollars. However, the actual median household income in Whitemarsh in 1999 was \$78,630.

In 1989, Whitemarsh Township's median household income was 21.4 percent higher than that of the county. In 1999, it was 29.2 percent higher. The percentage of families in poverty in Whitemarsh Township increased from 0.6 percent to 1.6 percent from 1989 to 1999. Table 2-4 presents information on the median income, the value of 1989 dollars indexed for inflation, and poverty level.

## Education

Educational attainment is the strongest indicator of an individual's income potential, attitudes and spending habits. The national trend is toward higher levels of education. Montgomery County ranks second highest among counties in Pennsylvania in the proportion of residents over 25 with bachelor's degrees at 23 percent. The County also ranked third with the proportion of residents with a high school diploma. Whitemarsh Township outpaces Montgomery County in terms of residents with bachelor's degrees and advanced degrees. Table 2-5 represents the educational attainment levels for the township, county and the state.

Area	1989 Median Household Income	1999 Median Household Income	1999 Dollar Value of 1989 Income	1999 Per Capita Income	% Families in Poverty
Pennsylvania	\$29,069	\$40,106	\$39,060	\$20,880	7.8
Montgomery County	\$43,720	\$60,829	\$58,713	\$30,898	2.8
Whitemarsh	\$53,075	\$78,630	\$71,200	\$39,785	1.6

Source: Penn State Data Center and U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000 Census

# TOWNSHIP PROFILE

TABLE 2-5  
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF PEOPLE 25 YEARS  
AND OLDER 2000

Area	High School Graduate %	Bachelor's Degree %	Advanced or Professional Degree %
Pennsylvania	38.1	14.0	8.4
Montgomery County	49.8	23.1	15.7
Whitemarsh	40.3	28.2	23.3

Source: Penn State Data Center and U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000 Census

## Demographic Trend Implications

The two most significant demographic changes forecast for Whitemarsh Township are the potential increase in the municipal population and the aging population.

If the developable land were to be developed with as many as 4,011 new housing, Whitemarsh Township would be the home to another 10,500 new residents. This would be a population increase of about 63 percent.

As the Baby Boomers begin to turn 60 this year, planning to serve this burgeoning group will be crucial in terms of public recreation services. People aged 30 to 50 made up the largest population segment in Whitemarsh Township in 2000. As the children of the baby boomers are aging from youth into young adults, it is expected that the Township will always be the home to a significant number of children and youth. Concern was raised in the planning process that the number of children might decrease to the point where there may be a reduced need for sports fields, game courts and playgrounds in the future. Historical use of parks shows otherwise. While changes in recreation preferences change

over time, facilities such as ball fields, game courts, playgrounds, picnic areas and trails remain utilized over time. For example, in communities where tennis demand has decreased, tennis courts were recycled in street hockey courts or skateboard areas. Overall community trends including people leading active recreational lifestyles well into advanced years, four season sports, new types of sports leagues, both males and females engaged in active recreation combined with the Township's limited parkland and recreation facilities ensure continued use of facilities over time.

An effective guideline for determining if a capital investment is merited can be based upon state and federal funding guidelines. They require a 25 year lease for control and tenure over a site for grant funding purposes. The theoretical life expectancy of a park in terms of development and investment is 40 years. It is important to note that many parks in America are well over 100 years old. And they all regularly undergo capital improvements and investments using a generational approach to maintain and meet changing needs.

## Public Opinion

The planning project included a five-part public participation process: a Study Committee, a community wide direct mail survey, key person interviews, focus groups and public meetings.

## Study Committee

Citizens representing a broad base of community interests participated on the Study Committee. They included elected and appointed officials, Parks and Recreation Board members, representatives of special interest groups such as natural resource

# TOWNSHIP PROFILE

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conservation, senior adults, families, organized sports, Colonial School District Board, and general community interests. The Study Committee met monthly throughout the planning process.

## Key Person Interviews

The Whitemarsh Township Parks and Recreation Department and the Plan Study Committee identified interviewees:

- Township Supervisors
- Township Planning Commission
- Township Manager, Assistant Manager, and Finance Director
- Colonial School District Superintendent, Business Manager and Athletic Director
- Plymouth Meeting Historical Society
- Parks and Recreation Board
- Public Works Director
- Program Coordinator
- Senior Program Coordinator
- Program Development Manager
- Summer Playground Leaders and Director
- Administrative Assistant
- Environmental Action Committee
- Montgomery County Parks and Heritage Services
- Montgomery County Planning Commission
- Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission
- Whitemarsh Community Arts Center - Director
- William Jeanes Library
- Philadelphia Whitemarsh Rugby
- Plymouth Soccer Club
- Whitemarsh Girls Softball League
- Whitemarsh Little League
- Philadelphia Sports and Social Club
- CYO (Catholic Youth Organization)
- Plymouth Whitemarsh Aquatics Club
- Fort Washington State Park
- Bike & Hike Path Committee
- Whitemarsh Boys and Girls Basketball

## Focus Groups and Work Sessions

The planning team held focus groups with members of organized sports groups, teens, senior adults, and volunteers who signed up via the community survey. The purpose of the forums was to hear the particular needs and interests of the target group and identify opportunities and potential issues.

## Community Direct Mail Survey

To achieve statistical significance with a high level of confidence, the study needed to generate 361 surveys in the Township based upon the number of households. The returned surveys exceeded these numbers with 505 from the Township. A direct mail survey was sent to 1,200 households. Seventy-nine (79) of these were returned as undeliverable. This yielded a 45 percent return rate. Direct mail surveys typically garner a two to four percent (2% - 4%) response rate. The summary of the survey findings is reported below.

## Public Meetings

Public meetings were held at key points in the planning process to engage the public in creating the plan. This included an open house after data collection, a public meeting when the recommendations were formulated and when the plan was in draft.

## Findings of the Public Participation Process

Overall the public participation process revealed a great deal of pride, love and enthusiasm for Whitemarsh. The following points summarize the findings:

# TOWNSHIP PROFILE

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- 1. Genuine pride and appreciation for the high quality of life in the Whitemarsh Community.** People expressed appreciation for the caliber of this community in terms of its scenic beauty, preservation efforts to date, Miles Park, the school system and municipal services. About 79 percent of survey respondents reported having a positive impression of recreation services. About 61 percent of the survey respondents expressed satisfaction with community parks.
- 2. Citizens perceive Miles Park as being larger than it is and able to serve all needs.** The Township's practice of trying to squeeze as many uses as possible into Miles Park has created fundamental challenges as result of overuse, lack of space for support infrastructure such as parking, and the availability of downtime to perform necessary facility maintenance.
- 3. Citizens invest their own time and expertise to improve the community.** The number of volunteers, volunteer hours, and contributions that support community parks and recreation is remarkable. At the same time, there is a very high level of expectation among the citizenry regarding facilities, services, and programs that extends beyond the human and financial resources available.
- 4. Natural resource protection ranks high with the citizens.** About 77 percent of the survey respondents stated that protecting natural resources and open space should be a municipal priority.
- 5. Concern about the loss of open space in Whitemarsh Township is prevalent.** Citizens expressed concern that the undeveloped areas of the Township will become developed forever changing the landscape so treasured here.
- 6. Trails and riverfront access are important.** Interviews, focus groups and the public opinion survey all found that creating trails and recreation opportunities on the river are important.
- 7. Additional sports fields and gyms are needed.** Community sports organizations serve about 3,000 players, some of whom play in more than one sport. League officials report growing participation, four season play, more girls playing, players at older and younger ages, and newer sports emerging as organized leagues such as lacrosse. As an emerging sport, lacrosse is growing intensely at the same time that no fields are available. Soccer, baseball, rugby and lacrosse all use fields in other communities. The School District and representatives from surrounding municipalities all report a shortage of fields. Ballfields captured a high response rate of 55 percent of the respondents saying that sports fields improvements should be a priority. This is a high response rate in community recreation surveys in which the response for additional sports fields generally falls below

# TOWNSHIP PROFILE

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20 percent. Gym time is very limited to the degree that organizations rent gyms elsewhere. The School District reported the need for gyms is so intense that they could even use a gym for band practice and other events not normally associated with gymnasiums.

**8. Year-round recreation is a priority.** In addition to outdoor recreation, there is a need for indoor facilities for a variety of activities ranging from gyms for youth sports to fitness and wellness facilities for the aging population and facilities and services in the arts, culture, and family recreation. School facilities have very limited availability. About 57 percent of the survey respondents indicated that developing an indoor recreation center is a priority or a high priority.

**9. The community has many recreation opportunities. Municipal parks and recreation serves as a catalyst for developing lifelong interests.** An important finding emerged from the public participation process: municipal parks and recreation has an important niche role in creating lifelong active lifestyles through basic community recreation programming and opportunities. They offer important feeder services from which participants move onto higher level leisure pursuits with appropriate providers.

**10. Special events are the top program area for reaching the broadest base of citizens.** Analysis of the survey findings show that Township Day reaches a broad segment of the population.

**11. Promoting parks and recreation is important to the community.** The public participation process shows that there is a high level of recognition about community parks and recreation. In a market where people are deluged with information, seeking new ways to advertise is increasingly challenging. Community members value receiving the Recreation Newsletter with three out of four survey respondents indicating that it is their primary source of information about parks and recreation. In the future about 62 percent said they would like to be able to download the newsletter from the Township's WEB site.

**12. Financial Concerns.** Given the challenging economic times and the many significant capital funding needs in Whitemarsh, citizens are concerned about the costs to support projects, programs and ongoing facility maintenance. It is important to note that most of the local tax dollars are directed to the Colonial School District, not to the Township or the County.

**13. Partnerships are important.** Citizens recognize that the Township cannot solely provide existing and expanded recreation services. Partnerships with a host of community organizations are crucial. Building upon relationships with community providers and the School District should be a major initiative of this plan.

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# TOWNSHIP PROFILE

## Analysis

Whitemarsh is a vibrant community with a high quality of life, outstanding municipal services, a top-notch educational system, and an affluent, well-educated and interested citizenry.

The amount of developable land in the Township could potentially bring in as many as 10,500 citizens. The potential number of people that could move into the Township appears to be the major concern in terms of planning parks and recreation services. A potential 62 percent increase in population would require another 100 acres of parkland minimum along with commensurate facilities to be developed on the parkland.

The population is aging. Baby boomers are emerging as an active, healthy, well-educated and engaged group of people who are interested in activities that challenge the mind and foster social interaction and activity. The community continues to be family oriented as well as a retirement destination with the recent approval of age restricted housing. Population changes warrant planning ahead for adult park and recreation consumers who comprise 76 percent of the population. The large number of senior citizens that will emerge as the baby boomers retire is a major significant demographic change that the Parks and Recreation Department must address in terms of planning.

The public participation process found areas for improvement which include the need for additional ball fields and improved athletic field maintenance, and interest in fitness/wellness and environmentally oriented programming. Concern about the preservation of open space and the pressures of new development was raised throughout the public participation process.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

1. **Plan for an increasing population.** Another 1,600 to 10,000 citizens, (depending upon level of development and open space conservation achievements) will be moving into the community through 2015.
2. **Plan for an active aging population.** The changing community demographic requires planning efforts to include an active aging population and families.
3. **Balance facility development for lifetime and self-directed recreation.** The Parks and Recreation Department in Whitemarsh needs to achieve balance in its facilities and services. This includes providing facilities and services for organized sports, natural resources protection, programmed recreation and self-directed recreation.
4. **Explore options for increasing the number of sports fields, especially for soccer.** Involve sports groups and the School District in the study process and explore the acquisition of additional park land on which to locate ball fields.
5. **Provide year round indoor recreation opportunities.** Whitemarsh citizens are influenced by the Greater Plymouth Community Center and expect the same caliber of indoor facility here. A “pod” concept in which the recreation Building, the Arts Center, the Barn and additional

# TOWNSHIP PROFILE

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new facilities host various indoor recreation components through renovation or addition to existing facilities, could provide one option for service delivery.

**6. Establish more regular methods for public outreach.** The public participation process found that involving the public regularly beyond organized appointed committees provides fresh eyes and information to guide decision-making.

**7. Explore and procure public and private funding sources.** Work with all levels of government and the private sector to secure additional funding for planned projects. Recognize that there is a limited pool of private sector resources in the Whitemarsh community for which numerous sources compete to obtain financial support. Work with the Township on overall financial planning that incorporates the broad view of public needs and the urgency of special issues such as land conservation which has a narrow window of opportunity given development pressure and escalating land values.