

CHAPTER NINE

Community Facilities

Background

Community facilities refer to a variety of public and non-public uses and services that are or may be provided to residents of a community, such as emergency services, schools, solid waste disposal, and sewer and water services. These are among the most important elements of a community, because they directly impact residents. As a result, how they are managed is a key to quality of life perceptions and community identity. This chapter examines the existing status and condition of each facility or service in Whitemarsh. For the most part, the system of facilities and services is well established and is expected to continue meeting residents' needs. For the purpose of this plan, parkland and recreation—typically thought of as community facilities—are discussed separately in Chapter Ten.

Administrative Facilities

The township's administrative and police offices are centrally located on Germantown Pike near the intersection of Crescent Avenue. Located in the former Barren Hill Consolidated Elementary School (re-named Lafayette in 1957), the brick structure was built in 1921, with additions made in 1951 and 1966. Remodeled for township use in the mid 1990s and dedicated in 1997, the township shares the structure with a bank. The township also has a public works department, which is located at their sewerage facility on Joshua Road. They have also retained ownership of the former township building on Joshua Road, adjacent to Miles Park. This colonial revival style building is currently occupied by a local ambulance service. The retention of this building and its proximity to the park allows for its potential future conversion to a community center.

Emergency Services

Whitemarsh Township's emergency services are overseen by the Emergency Service Board, which consists of: representatives of the township's three different fire companies/districts (Barren Hill, Spring Mill, and Lincoln); a resident from each of the three fire districts who is not a member of a fire company; the Whitemarsh Township Ambulance Volunteer Company; Police Chief; and Fire Marshall. The board meets every other month and coordinates the organization and delivery of services. With a 9-1-1 emergency communications service in effect throughout Montgomery County, all emergency requests are routed through a central radio dispatch station, administered by the Montgomery County Emergency Management Agency and located in Eagleville, Lower Providence Township.

Fire Protection

As indicated above, three volunteer fire companies serve the township. Their locations are shown in Figure 9-1. Besides their fire fighting duties, each company has a unique role in the township. These specific roles are explained below.

- **Barren Hill Fire Company.** The township's oldest fire company, it was organized in 1915 after a fire at the Whitemarsh Inn. It is a rescue company, specifically dealing with people trapped in vehicles or tight spaces. Its equipment includes two pumpers and a heavy rescue truck, which has a ladder with a bucket. In the county it is also known as Station 29.
- **Spring Mill Fire Company.** This company was founded in 1923, to serve this section of the township.

It is a water rescue company, responding to this type of emergency request throughout Whitemarsh. Its equipment includes an air and light cascade. It is also known as Station 45.

- **Lincoln Fire Company.** This company was founded in 1929 by a group from the Spring Mill company. Its specific role relates to the mitigation of hazardous material spills and accidents, not only for Whitemarsh, but also the eastern portion of Montgomery County, a duty it shares with a unit from Cheltenham Township. Also known as Station 56, its equipment includes an ambulance.

All three of these companies have fire police, which assist the township police on road closing and are active with the Colonial Fire Police Task Force, a group of seven fire companies which meet to share ideas and information. For the township fire companies, mutual aid is provided from neighboring companies in Springfield, Whitpain, Plymouth and Upper Dublin Townships and the Boroughs of Conshohocken and Ambler.

Police Protection

Located in the township building on Germantown Pike, the Whitemarsh Police Department was formed on June 1, 1930. The first force consisted of two members. Currently, the department employs 41 persons, which include the Chief, 1 lieutenant, 4 detectives, 22 patrol officers, 4 patrol sergeants, 4 civilian dispatchers, 1 administrative assistant, 1 part-time clerk, and 3 crossing guards.

Ambulance Service/Medical Facilities

Whitemarsh Ambulance, a volunteer organization, serves the township. It is located in the former township building on Joshua Road. In addition to the local clinics and medical offices that serve basic needs, a broader range of services are provided by hospitals in the greater Whitemarsh area, including Chestnut Hill Hospital (Philadelphia), Abington Memorial Hospital (Abington Township), and Montgomery Hospital (Norristown). Whitemarsh also has a private psychiatric hospital: the Progressions Institute.

Solid Waste Management

Under the terms of the Municipal Waste Planning, Recycling, and Waste Reduction Act (Act 101) adopted by the state in 1988, solid waste planning became the responsibility of counties rather than individual municipalities. The Montgomery County Municipal Waste Management Plan was subsequently developed in 1990 to address all management aspects (collection, transport, processing, disposing, and recycling) and created the Eastern, Northern, and Western Waste System Authorities to serve all municipalities, each with the responsibility of implementing selected disposal and recycling elements of the plan. Under the plan, all municipal waste collected in the township is disposed at the Resource Recovery Facility in Plymouth Township.

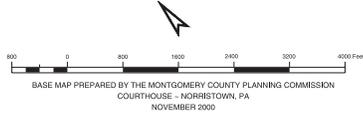
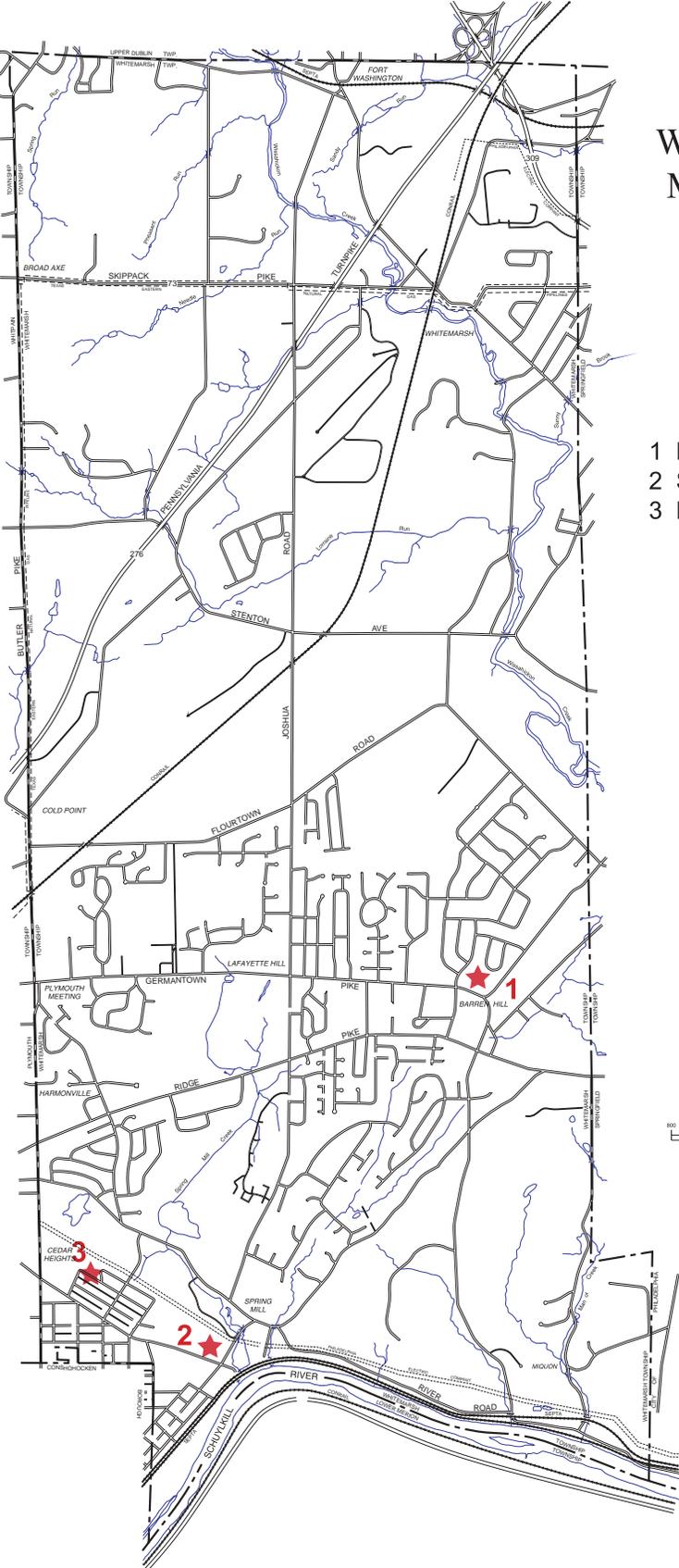
Within this framework, the municipal role is limited to choosing an arrangement of collection, which is typically either municipal collection, municipal contract collection, or individual homeowner service collection, and establishing a recycling program. Act 101 requires municipalities with a population of 5,000 or more and a population density greater than 300 people per square mile to establish a recycling program.

Whitemarsh contracts with a private waste collection service to serve single-family and two-family dwelling units. This service also includes the recycling of glass, plastic, aluminum, and newspaper. Residents also can participate, at no charge, in Montgomery County's Annual Household Hazardous Waste Program. This program, which is held at various locations through the county, allows residents to drop off such household hazardous wastes as paint, herbicides, and automotive products. The township's Public Works Department also collects leaves from residential properties in autumn. These leaves are subsequently processed

Whitemarsh Township Montgomery County Pennsylvania

Figure 9-1
TOWNSHIP
FIRE COMPANIES

- 1 Barren Hill Fire Company
- 2 Spring Mill Fire Company
- 3 Lincoln Fire Company



into fine mulch at the township's compost facility and made available free of charge to residents. Residential buildings containing three or more units and all nonresidential uses are responsible for their own solid waste disposal.

Sewage Facilities

Under the terms of the Pennsylvania Sewage Facilities Act (Act 537), each municipality is responsible for maintaining a sewage facilities plan. In turn, the rules and regulations governing the contents of the plan are contained in Chapter 71, Administration of the Sewage Facilities Planning Program (25 PA CH 71) administered by the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). For example, certain planning elements that are expected to affect the specific needs of the community must be addressed, including:

- A description of the physical and demographic characteristics of the planning area (including area boundaries, surface water bodies, soils, geology, wetlands, and description of potable water supplies).
- An evaluation of the existing sewage facilities (including a map of the lines and treatment facilities and a description of the different treatment methods involved), existing problem areas, operation and maintenance needs.
- An evaluation of future sewage facilities needs, based on existing problem areas, proposed development, and the community's zoning and land use plan. An analysis of alternatives for meeting these needs, along with the preferred alternative and justification, a map of the future service area(s), and a schedule for implementation must be included.

Whitemarsh's Sewage Facilities

There are four public sewer systems serving Whitemarsh Township: the Whitemarsh Township Water Pollution Control Center (WPCC), the Conshohocken Borough Sewage Treatment Plant, the Ambler Municipal Sewage Treatment Plant, and the City of Philadelphia Southwest WPCC.

The Whitemarsh Township WPCC has a rated capacity of 2.0 million gallons per day (mgd). The average flow of the plant in 2002 was 1.3 mgd. The service area encompasses the area between Flourtown and Barren Hill Roads in the southern part of the township. A portion of the central part of the township is also served via pump station. Future development is anticipated to increase flows to the WPCC by 0.192 mgd. The township is working on rerouting the flows from Pump Station #6 through Springfield Township to Philadelphia for treatment. This will result in additional capacity at the township WPCC to treat flows from future development.

The Conshohocken Borough Sewage Treatment Plant serves only a very small area of the southwest corner of the township. The plant has planning approvals for an average annual capacity of 2.3 mgd and a maximum monthly flow of 3.0 mgd. It had an average flow of 1.023 mgd in 2002. A total of nine residential units are connected to the collection system, which conveys the flows to the Conshohocken facility for treatment and disposal.

The Ambler Municipal Sewage Treatment Plant serves the northern area of the township. This facility is rated at 6.5 mgd, and experienced an average flow in 2002 of 4.354 mgd. Whitemarsh Township has an allocation in the plant of 0.23 mgd. In 2002, flows to the plant from the township average 0.064 mgd.

The area of the township bordered by Skippack Pike and Bethlehem Pike, known as the Arlingham Section, is served by the City of Philadelphia Southwest WPCC. The Southwest WPCC is a large facility, serving parts of Philadelphia and neighboring municipalities. It has a rated capacity of 200.0 mgd, and in 1997

(the year for which the most recent numbers are available) treated an average of 169.96 mgd. Whitemarsh Township does not have a capacity agreement directly with the City of Philadelphia. Rather, it conveys sewage to Springfield Township, which then conveys the flows to Philadelphia. The township sent an average of 0.065 mgd to Philadelphia for treatment in 2002 from the Arlingham Section. It is in the process of completing negotiations with Springfield Township and the City of Philadelphia to send flows from Pump Station #6, which serves the south central portion of the township.

An analysis of the township's existing sewage facilities performed for the November 1998 Act 537 Sewage Facilities Plan Update determined that there was no need for any upgrade or expansion to serve the areas planned for public sewer service, provided the proposed rerouting of Pump Station #6 is accomplished.

Water Service

Whitemarsh Township residents are provided with public water service by two different purveyors, Philadelphia Suburban Water Company (PSW) and Ambler Borough Water Department. The two systems are interconnected in the vicinity of Camp Hill Road and Skippack Pike, which improves the reliability of service. In addition to public water service, a few residents and businesses in the northern and extreme southern portions of the township have individual wells.

The service area for Ambler Borough Water Department is the northwestern corner of the township, bounded by Morris Road, Lafayette Avenue, Skippack Pike, and Butler Pike. The service area extends down Butler Pike on the southern side of Skippack pike for about one-half mile.

There were 222 domestic connections, 10 commercial connections, and 4 institutional connections serving approximately 2,400 residents in the township by the Ambler Borough Water Department as of 2000 (the year for which the most recent numbers are available). The source of the water provided is groundwater via several wells in the Ambler Borough Water Department service area. None of the wells currently in service are within Whitemarsh Township.

PSW serves the majority of the township, with lines extending from Valley Green Road and Pennsylvania Avenue in the north to North Lane, Barren Hill Road, Harts Lane, and Manor Road in the south. The PSW system is one of the largest in the region, serving 850,000 people on 294,048 connections in southeastern Pennsylvania. There is no breakdown of service by municipality. However, with the extensive coverage of service lines that PSW maintains, most residents are within a few thousand feet of a water line.

Locally, PSW draws water from numerous wells, the Schuylkill River, and the Perkiomen Creek. In addition, the Upper Merion Reservoir and the Pickering Reservoir supply water to PSW's system. Recently, the township approved a plan for PSW to build a new treatment facility at Bubbling Springs.

Public water companies that operate in Whitemarsh are regulated by the Public Utility Commission (PUC). Private wells are required to obtain permits from the County Health Department and those that withdraw more than 10,000 gallons per day (gpd) are further regulated by the Delaware River Basin Commission, because the township is located within the region's groundwater protection area. The township also recognizes that the water usage of any commercial agriculture or extraction industry located in Whitemarsh is regulated under specific guidelines devised by the Commonwealth.

Libraries

The township's first library was established in 1868 in a building constructed specifically for it on Ridge Pike. It contained 1,500 volumes, but vanished within 20 years. In 1926 the widow of William Jeanes

established a trust fund for a public library to serve Plymouth Meeting. It opened in a private home in 1933 and moved into its own building in 1935. On June 14, 1971 the present library building on Joshua Road was opened. It contained 11,000 square feet and a book capacity for 37,000 volumes.

Currently the library contains 49,600 volumes and over 77,000 items in circulation, including books, periodicals, and videos. It is also connected to the state’s library system, access PA. The library provides many programs for township residents, especially children. Specific children’s programs include a Summer Reading Program, a year-round Story Time Program and Bedtime Story Program. It also has a very active support group called Friends of the Library. Presently the library has outgrown its current building and is discussing how to best expand the facility.

Schools

The township is part of the Colonial School District. Besides Whitemarsh, the district includes Plymouth Township and Conshohocken Borough. The district has five elementary schools:

Name	Current Enrollment*
Conshohocken	148
Plymouth	432
Ridge Park	330
Whitemarsh	370
Colonial	702

**As of 1/3/2003 (Figures provided by the Colonial School District.)*

The first four schools are for students from Kindergarten through Grade Three, while Colonial has Grades 4-5. Of these schools, two—Whitemarsh and Colonial—are located in the township.

The district has one Middle School: Colonial, its current enrollment is 1,108 students*. The school is located in Plymouth Township. The district has one High School: Plymouth Whitemarsh; 1,604 students are currently enrolled*. The total current enrollment is 4,694 students*.

Other relevant school district information includes:

- *Kindergarten Cut-Off Date:* Student must be five years old by September 15.
- *Kindergarten Sessions:* Half-day, morning and afternoon. Students also may be enrolled in an enrichment program for the half of the day they are not in class.
- *Per Pupil Cost:* \$9,915 (as of 2000).
- *Teacher/Pupil Ratio:* Class sizes vary but usually average 20 to 22 across the district.
- *Graduation Credit Requirements:* A minimum of 22.5 credits.
- *Facilities:* The elementary schools are equipped with libraries, auditoriums, gyms, audiovisual facilities, cafeterias, and modern playgrounds. Renovation projects recently were completed in the elementary schools. The program includes specialists in reading, art, music, and health and physical education. Each elementary classroom is equipped with at least four personal computers which are used as part of the curriculum.

The middle school is an attractive, modern building with such facilities as a planetarium, library, home economics and industrial arts suites, music rooms, gym, and cafeteria.

The high school recently underwent an extensive \$13.2 million dollar renovation program. Facilities include a television studio, swimming pool, instructional materials center, two gyms, two cafeterias, and an auditorium. An addition presently is in the planning stage.

- *Program:* The curriculum offers programs to meet the needs of every student, from those who are academically gifted to those who need special educational support. There are also athletic and band programs and many other varied extracurricular activities. Computer education begins in the elementary schools and is part of virtually every subject area.
- *Special Programs:* Summer school, adult evening school, summer arts consortium.
- *Vocational-Technical Education:* Colonial students may attend the Center for Technical Studies, formerly the Central Montgomery County Vocational-Technical School, in Plymouth Township.

Other Educational Facilities

There are three private schools in the township: Germantown Academy, which has been located in the Fort Washington area since 1960; St. Philip Neri Elementary School, located in Lafayette Hill and first opened in 1951; and the Miquon School, located on Harts Lane and established in 1932.

There are no colleges in the township, but those nearby include: Chestnut Hill College (Philadelphia), Gwynedd Mercy College (Lower Gwynedd Township), and Temple University—Ambler Campus (Upper Dublin Township).

* As of 1/3/2003 (Figures provided by the Colonial School District.)

NOTE: The information contained in this report comes from the following sources:

- Administrative Facility: Whitemarsh Township Staff, "*The Second Hundred Years*", (a historic study of Montgomery County)
- Police, Fire and Emergency Services: Whitemarsh Township Staff, "*The Second Hundred Years*"
- Solid Waste Management: County and Whitemarsh Township Staffs
- Sewer and Water: County Staff
- Library: Jeanes Library Staff and "*The Second Hundred Years*"
- Schools: Colonial School District and "*The Second Hundred Years*"