

Chapter One: Introduction

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In the fall of 2007, New Garden Township solicited proposals from consultants for the development of a township-wide Greenways Plan and a feasibility study and master plan for the Township's Phelps property. From the proposals received, the Township interviewed and selected the team of Simone Collins Landscape Architecture & GTS Technologies to complete the plan.

Regional Context

The exhibit below shows the relationship between New Garden Township, Chester County and the State of Pennsylvania.



Township Background

New Garden Township is located in southern Chester County, Pennsylvania, along the Delaware border. The Township consists of a total land area of 16.1 square miles and is bordered by the municipalities of Avondale, London Grove, Franklin, London Britain, Kennett, West Marlborough, and East Marlborough.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the total population of New Garden Township was 9,083 residents. The character of the Township is that of a rural horse farm and mushroom-growing community with few densely populated areas. The population density of the Township is 564 people per square mile. The median age of the population was 33.6 years with 30.7% of the population under the age

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of 18. Average household size was recorded at 3.16 persons per household with a median income of \$75,307.

The 2005 population estimate for New Garden Township is 11,020 with a projected increase to a population of 15,921 (or a 44.47% increase) by the year 2035, according the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC). This projection is generally consistent with the Chester County Planning Commission's (CCPC) projected estimates of a 50.9% increase between 2000-2020. These projections indicate that New Garden will be facing significant development pressures within the coming years.

Programming / Public Participation Summary

Public participation is a key ingredient in the success of any community project. Public meetings are designed to inform the public of the project status; to receive input as to the desired facilities; and address questions, comments, or concerns relative to the greenway development.

Two (2) public meetings and five (5) Study Committee meetings were held during the New Garden Township Greenways planning process. Public Meeting #1 was held on March 18, 2008 and focused on the consultant's scope of work, programming, benefits of greenways, and initial ideas and concerns. Public Meeting #2 was held on September 23, 2008 and included a presentation of the recommendations included in the DRAFT Plan. The DRAFT Plan recommendations were also presented at a Planning Commission Meeting on September 24, 2008 and at a Board of Supervisors Meeting on October 6, 2008. Study committee meetings took place in February, April, May, and September 2008. A fifth and final study committee meeting was held in November 2008 to present the final plan and consider the next possible steps. The final plan was presented to the Board of Supervisors Meeting on December 1, 2008. All Public and Committee Meetings were held at the New Garden Township Building.

Fourteen Key Person Interviews were also conducted over the phone during the analysis phase of the project. A copy of the interview questions and a summary of the responses are included in the report appendix.

Relevant Planning Documents Summary

New Garden Township Comprehensive Plan – Completed in 2005, this plan was prepared as an update to the 1993 comprehensive plan as a long range plan for New Garden Township for the next 10 years. Analysis was performed for regional perspective, demographics, historical and cultural resources, natural resources, housing, community services, existing land use,

and transportation & circulation inventory. The plan also outlines several goals and objectives for each of the analysis categories.

The following are recommendations as they specifically relate to the New Garden Township Greenway Plan:

Natural Resource Protection Plan:

- Adopt water resource protection standards for riparian buffers.

Open Space and Recreation Plan:

- Consider utility easements and corridors for open space protection and greenway connectors;
- Establish a greenway network throughout the Township;
- Identify potential trail corridors throughout the Township for passive recreation and connections between open spaces and parklands;
- Pursue the development of trails along the utility easements and Octorara Railroad;
- Pursue the development of trails along stream corridors, particularly the White Clay Creek; and,
- Coordinate with other trail development efforts in the Kennett Region.

Transportation and Circulation Plan:

- Consider roadway improvements, including both resurfacing and reconstruction, to provide adequate shoulder widths to facilitate bicycle and pedestrian mobility; and,
- Initiate the planning of and creation of trails throughout the Township.

The New Garden Township Greenway Plan will satisfy part of the last goal by providing a plan for a pedestrian trail network throughout the Township that will serve both recreational and transportation needs. This plan will build on the limited work completed in 2003 by the New Garden township Open Space Task Force, and will strive to connect residential developments with parks, the Township building, schools, and commercial areas. Also recommended, is the implementation of easements, requirements for trails in new residential subdivisions, and the use of trails in riparian buffers.

Linking Landscapes: A Plan for the Protected Open Space Network in Chester County, PA is the open space and recreation component to Chester County's Comprehensive Plan. *Landscapes* recommends that development be encouraged in designated "Suburban" and "Urban" Landscapes or "Suburban" and "Rural" Centers, instead of in "Rural" and "Natural" Landscapes. This document factored into many of the references, concepts, and data from this plan was incorporated into the Open Space and recreation Plan component of the New Garden Township Comprehensive Plan. For more information about Linking Landscapes, please refer to the following website: <http://dsf.chesco.org/planning/cwp/view.asp?a=3&q=604474>

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Trail and Path Planning: A Guide for Municipalities is a technical guidebook developed by Chester County Planning following the Landscapes plan that presents ways that municipalities can address trail and path planning in their comprehensive plan, official map, zoning ordinance and subdivision and land development ordinance. This document is available for download at: <http://dsf.chesco.org/planning/cwp/view.asp?a=3&q=631389>

Benefits of Trails & Greenways Planning

Having an established trails & greenways system provides many economic, social - and most importantly - health benefits for township residents. Economic benefits include increased real estate and property values for those located near trails & greenways. Social benefits of trails include providing additional locations for community interaction and improving the quality of life.

The most important benefit of a trails & greenway system is the opportunity these facilities can provide towards bettering the community's general health and well being through regular physical activity. Depression, obesity and diabetes are chronic diseases directly related to the physical inactivity and unhealthy eating habits associated with a sedentary lifestyle. The US Department of Health and Human Services, Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that in the past 30 years, the prevalence of obesity amongst adults aged 20-74 has increased from 15.0% to 32.9%, and the estimated cost of obesity in the United States in 2000 was about \$117 billion. For more information on the facts presented as well as many other programs promoting healthy lifestyles by the CDC, please refer to their website: <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyLiving/>

Therefore, the opportunity for physical activity that trails & greenway related facilities provide not only fights obesity and related diseases, but also results in reduced health care costs, increased work productivity, and improved longevity for the community as a whole.