



# WEST NORRITON TOWNSHIP 2050 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

MONTGOMERY COUNTY PENNSYLVANIA

*Draft March 2025*







1630 W. Marshall Street Norristown, PA 19403

[www.westnorritontwp.org](http://www.westnorritontwp.org)

#### ADOPTED DATE



Prepared by: Montgomery County Planning Commission

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# DEDICATION

## IN MEMORY OF BRUCE SHOUBE

Bruce was an integral part of the West Norriton community, having called the area home for more than three decades. Bruce served as the Chair of the Planning Commission for many years, during which time he oversaw tremendous change. Bruce was a ceaseless advocate for the betterment of his community. The township is better for the contributions that Bruce so generously offered. Thank you, Bruce.





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also inform the goals, strategies, and prioritization. The goals and strategies are outlined in the implementation reports, included after this introduction. The population and land use reports provide additional background information about demographic and land use trends, and include a future land use map to illustrate the township's land use vision. For information on how this plan fits into the county's comprehensive plan and neighboring municipalities' comprehensive plans, refer to Appendix B: Relationship to Other Plans.

## HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

This plan serves as a guide for future township actions. It identifies the ways in which West Norriton residents, elected officials, and staff want the community to change, and the policies and programs needed in order to achieve that change.

The next steps lie in the hands of elected officials and township staff to initiate new policies and programs, provide funding and resources, apply for grants, and oversee progress. The Board of Commissioners will need to further prioritize action items in this plan within the township's larger budgetary context. Residents of the township can use this plan for advocacy for the changes they want to see, and to track progress. They can also become more involved in the plan's implementation by serving on one of the township's many boards or commissions. The Planning Commission in particular is responsible for ensuring that future development aligns with the vision of this plan and for proposing next steps towards the plan's implementation.

## OVERVIEW

West Norriton 2050 is the township's long-range plan, establishing goals for the community in the years to come. The plan addresses future growth and development and establishes policies and guidelines to implement the township's goals. The plan provides suggested changes to the subdivision and land development ordinance and the zoning ordinance, and it offers support for grant applications and the township's capital improvement programs organized around four main topic areas:

- Housing & Neighborhoods
- Green Space & Sustainability
- Economic Development
- Transportation

Each has its own report with background information that supports the plan's goals. Input from the public, the steering committee, township staff and elected officials, and Montgomery County Planning Commission

# SUMMARY OF COMPREHENSIVE PLAN PROCESS

The timeline below summarizes the comprehensive plan process. For more information, refer to **Appendix C: Comprehensive Plan Process & Public Input Summary**.

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TIMELINE Winter 2023–Kickoff

Planning Commission review of background documents begins

### May 2023

Township Day public outreach

### September 2023

First public open house.  
Community survey launched

### March 2024

Planning Commission review of implementation goals and strategies

### June 2024

Second public open house

### Fall 2024

Review of final draft plan

### Winter 2024-2025

Plan adoption process

# SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

The top priority for the township is **preserving and enhancing the parks and open space** currently available. Many residents cite the park and recreation opportunities in the township as one of their top reasons for choosing to live in West Norriton, and want to see more amenities and more recreation options going forward.

Another top priority in West Norriton is **enhancing the West Main Street corridor**. Adopting zoning changes in 2023 to allow for a mix of uses and better design standards was the first step for the township. Adding amenities like adequate sidewalks, street trees and other landscaping, and lighting, will help this principal commercial area be more pedestrian-friendly. This can help spur private development, and attract the wider variety of businesses that residents want to see. Commercial areas along Egypt Road were also identified for similar improvements.

Ensuring there is adequate housing for those of varying income levels and abilities is another important issue. The median age of residents is increasing, so providing housing options for older residents will be important going forward.

The township was primarily built for car-based transportation, and **improvements are needed to provide more options for walking and biking to get around**. More sidewalks, bike lanes, crosswalks, curb cuts, and transit amenities like bus shelters will enhance residents' ability to get around without a car. Coordination with PennDOT to help with congestion and traffic flow along Egypt Road and West Main Street is also important.

More detail on the key issues, goals, and strategies is found in the following chapter, **Implementation Plan**.



## INTRODUCTION

The goals and strategies discussed in this section are sourced from public outreach, comprehensive plan steering committee discussions, conversations with township staff, and prior planning work.

Implementation goals are generally broad policy concepts, while the strategies listed under each goal provide a more specific starting point for implementation. Goals and strategies are listed in priority order, beginning with the goal or strategy that was determined by the steering committee to be the highest priority under the relevant topic.

### SYMBOLS TO INDICATE TIME-FRAME FOR EACH STRATEGY

*The Implementation Plan assigns a time-frame to each strategy:*

**Short-Term or Ongoing Strategies** (◐) to be pursued now,

**Mid-Term Strategies** (◑) to be pursued within approximately 3 to 5 years, and

**Long-Term Strategies** (◒), to be pursued within 10 years or more.

## IMPLEMENTATION PLAN: HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOODS

**Goal 1:** Preserve existing housing stock and allow for appropriate infill development in order to meet the current and future needs of households of varying incomes and abilities.

As outlined in the Housing & Neighborhoods report, the township does have some affordable housing stock already, and can accommodate additional higher density units. Forty percent of all units qualify as fair share housing types (townhomes and multifamily units), while the remaining 60% of units are single-family detached, twins, and duplexes. Per the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC), municipalities are required to zone an adequate portion of

land to allow for multifamily development (3 or more dwelling units), and townhomes. The MPC does not specify affordability requirements, however, so although West Norriton has many higher density units available, the price of those units may not be attainable for many. Many residents dedicate a disproportionate amount of income to housing costs. According to the 2021 American Community Survey, 25% of West Norriton households with a mortgage and 37% of renters paid 30% or more of their income on housing. Median housing prices in the township, when adjusted for inflation, have increased by \$64,402 since 2010.



*The Greens at Westover is an over-55 community in West Norriton*

As township residents continue to age, housing options that are accessible and affordable will be important. As township residents continue to age the strategies the township can employ to help in this regard include changing zoning standards to encourage the development of a variety of unit types, providing financial support for residents to meet their housing needs, and partnering with the county to access technical assistance. Design updates to the subdivision and land development ordinance will help create neighborhoods that can accommodate a greater variety of users.

*Strategy A: Continue to work with Montgomery County and neighboring municipalities on expanding opportunities for affordable housing in the region.* 🕒

The County Planning Commission and the Office of Housing and Community Development have been working on housing affordability through the Montco Homes for All initiative (<https://www.homesforallmontco.org/>). West Norriton representatives have participated in county-organized conferences and task forces around this topic, and should continue to do so. In addition, West Norriton’s housing task force should continue to meet and work on this. The Montgomery County Planning Commission has started offering municipalities housing audits, which help identify items that communities can do to increase housing affordability and accommodate future housing needs. Continuing to partner with these county offices will provide the township with resources and assistance. Housing is a regional issue, so working with other communities in the region on this topic will help as well. Montgomery County has several regional planning commissions, so participating in regional planning efforts could be a useful first step.



*Strategy B: Update the subdivision and land development ordinance to ensure design of residential neighborhoods encourages walkability, street interconnections, and accessibility.* 🕒

Connected and accessible neighborhoods will help West Norriton accommodate residents of different ages and abilities. Design standards that can be added to the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance include provisions for green sidewalk buffer, pedestrian-scale lighting, curb cuts, street trees, and regulations addressing cul-de-sacs.

*Strategy C: Update the zoning ordinance to ensure that an appropriate mix of housing types are permitted throughout the township.* 🕒

- Consider allowing multiplexes by-right in the R-2 zoning district with additional design standards to minimize their impact on neighborhood character
- Revise standards for accessory dwelling units to allow them more broadly throughout the township
- Consider providing a voluntary density bonus to encourage the development of high-quality affordable dwelling units

While West Norriton already allows for townhomes and multiplexes in all residential districts by conditional use, the strategies listed above can help eliminate barriers to building more housing. Design standards will ensure that new townhomes fit in with surrounding neighborhoods. Currently, West Norriton allows for accessory dwelling units (ADUs) with the requirement that the tenant is related to the principal occupant of a single-family dwelling. ADUs are allowed in the R-A, R-1, and R-2 districts. Removing the occupancy limitations could allow for a low cost dwelling to join the housing supply (rather than effectively being part of the single-family home). Allowing the property owner to live in the ADU and rent out the larger housing unit to someone who needs that space is another option. Additional regulations such as setting a limit on the total number of residents in an ADU, maximum permitted footprint or floor area, and site development standards can be incorporated to minimize the impact of this use. Another way that the township can increase the stock of affordable units is to offer an incentive to developers to include these units as part of their project.



*Strategy D: Initiate a first time homebuyer program and housing assistance program for older residents. As funding allows, continue the owner-occupied housing rehab program. Promote to residents Montgomery County Department of Housing and Community Development programs like the home repairs program.* ●

West Norriton already has some good programs to assist homeowners, like the owner-occupied housing rehab program. Continuing that program, adding other ones targeted at different groups, and helping to promote the county's housing support programs will provide additional support to residents.

*Strategy E: Create an institutional zoning district and permit the adaptive reuse of schools, churches, and other institutional buildings to multifamily or institutional living (e.g., continuing care community) to provide more affordable housing options.* ●

The township may wish to consider a zoning ordinance amendment that would allow for the conversion and adaptive reuse of institutional properties like schools and churches to multifamily housing. There currently is no institutional zoning district in West Norriton, and many of the township's churches and schools are in the R-A Rural Residence Zoning District. However, many of these properties are located on major transportation corridors (i.e. Trooper Road, Burnside Avenue) or adjacent to higher density uses in the LC&I Limited Commercial and Industrial District where it would make sense to allow for higher density housing.

## Goal 2: Ensure safe, sanitary conditions throughout the township through proactive monitoring, enforcement, and administration.

West Norriton Township provides many services to ensure the health, safety, and general welfare of residents. Continued monitoring, enforcement, administration, and information distribution, as well as periodic review of property maintenance and building codes can help keep the township safe for residents.

*Strategy A: Conduct periodic reviews of building and property maintenance codes and their enforcement and update/adjust as needed.* ●

*Strategy B: Improve efficiency and timeliness of information distribution to residents and businesses.* ●



### Goal 3: Increase access to healthy food options for residents.

There are five full-service grocery stores within West Norriton, and several others within driving distance. Evaluating the zoning ordinance and how it provides for other kinds of uses that provide access to fresh food like farmers markets and community gardens can help break down barriers for residents.

*Strategy A: Evaluate current zoning ordinance provisions to ensure that community gardens, farmers markets, and grocery stores are permitted and encouraged in appropriate locations.*

### Goal 4: Promote the preservation of historic resources within the township.

The township has a rich history and is home to dozens of resources that are potentially eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, but there are presently no resources actually listed. A first step towards promoting the preservation of historic resources would be to craft zoning and subdivision and land development regulations that address historic properties.



Riverside Cemetery

*Strategy A: Conduct a historic resource inventory, either township-wide or within target areas.*

*Strategy B: Amend land use regulations to encourage the preservation and reuse of identified historic resources.*

### Goal 5: Evaluate and work towards making West Norriton a community that is accessible to those of all ages, and implement strategies to assist older residents to age in place or age within the township.

West Norriton's population is aging, so providing support for this demographic will be increasingly important going forward. Joining AARP's Age-Friendly Communities Program provides technical assistance and resources for identifying and assessing community needs, fosters partnerships, and connects the township to a network of other enrolled communities. More information is found here: <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/>.

Other strategies from goals for different topic areas are relevant here, including performing an accessibility audit of parks and open space areas, prioritizing installing pedestrian infrastructure to increase connectivity, increasing the accessibility and safety of using public transportation and participating in active transportation like walking and biking in the township.



*Strategy A: Participate in AARP's 'age-friendly community' recognition program.*

*Strategy B: See Green Space & Sustainability Goal 1 (Enhance existing parks, open space areas, and recreation opportunities in the township):*

- Conduct accessibility assessments, including pedestrian and bicycle networks, for all township parks and implement recommendations from assessments. Develop a "Parks Guide" to distribute to all residents to increase awareness of park locations and amenities.
- Prioritize installation of sidewalks and bike lanes to enhance connectivity to existing parks and trails.

*Strategy C: See Transportation Goal 1 (Promote alternative modes of transportation such as biking and walking, and enhance related bicyclist and pedestrian infrastructure):*

- Review the township's ordinances to ensure adequate sidewalk, crosswalk, curb cut, and ADA ramp provisions are included. ●
- Conduct a walkability audit to identify priority areas for sidewalk improvements, new sidewalk installation, and crosswalks. Pay special attention to commercial corridors, schools, and parks. Public outreach also revealed concerns with W. Main Street, Egypt Road, Whitehall Road, Trooper Road, and Burnside Avenue. ●
  - ◇ Improve visibility of crosswalks by repainting, and by marking additional crosswalks as identified in the walkability audit.
  - ◇ Pursue grant funding opportunities to improve curbs and sidewalks.

*Strategy D: See Transportation Goal 3 (Increase the safety and convenience of using available public transportation options):*

- In coordination with SEPTA, update township ordinances to require bus stop infrastructure on W. Main Street, Egypt and Trooper Roads as part of the subdivision and land development process. ●
- Work with private developers to install transit stop infrastructure on properties affected by development that are on a SEPTA route or service area. ●

## IMPLEMENTATION PLAN: GREEN SPACE & SUSTAINABILITY

### Goal 1: Enhance existing parks, open space areas, and recreation opportunities in the township

West Norriton Township offers diverse parks and recreation opportunities for residents. In addition to over 43 acres of public parkland, the township also owns and operates the 150-acre Jeffersonville Golf Club. Furthermore, nearby Valley Forge National Historical Park and the Norristown Farm Park provide vast recreation areas with a regional draw. Residents value these parks and open space: nearly 60% of community survey respondents indicated that the parks and recreation offerings were a key factor in moving to the township (n=196). An even greater share of survey respondents—70%—identified preserving and expanding open space, parks, and recreational opportunities as a priority for the township to focus on over the next 20 years (n=197). This community support provides the basis for the recommendations outlined in this section, and will be key to implementing the goals of the plan.



### OVERARCHING STRATEGIES FOR GOAL 1

*Strategy A: Start a township park volunteer group to help with management and stewardship of parks and open space.*



Public outreach revealed that many residents want to get more involved with township parks but they lack an outlet for this energy. It is therefore recommended that the township establish a park volunteer group. Initially, this may begin with a once or twice annual event where residents convene to clean up and/or maintain a specific park. Assuming this

type of event is successful, a permanent group may be formed. This can be done similarly to other local “Friends of” groups, such as the Friends of the Wissahickon [Park] in Philadelphia.

*Strategy B: Pursue opportunities to add new amenities to existing parks (i.e. splash pad, additional playgrounds, bocce courts, community garden spaces).*

Given the extensive park system available to residents, this strategy primarily focuses on improvements to existing parks and enhancing recreational programming. The steering committee, township officials, and residents voiced their desire for specific improvements throughout the plan development process:

- I. Install map/distance signage for the trail loops at Padden and Centennial parks
- II. Replace outdoor fitness equipment at Padden Park
- III. Create a master plan for Squire Croft Park
- IV. Explore opportunities to create a neighborhood pedestrian connection to the Schuylkill River Trail from General Armistead Avenue
- V. Convert one tennis court to pickleball at the Jefferson Firehouse Recreation Site
- VI. Explore opportunities to create a new park off of Riverview Boulevard by the Schuylkill River
- VII. Discuss public use of the two historic cemeteries with the owners; consider programming or walking trail access

*Strategy C: Conduct accessibility assessments, including pedestrian and bicycle networks, for all township parks and implement recommendations from assessments. Develop a “Parks Guide” to distribute to all residents to increase awareness of park locations and amenities.*

To gain a complete understanding of existing conditions at township parks, it is recommended that an accessibility assessment be undertaken for each park. This will include an inventory of amenities offered at each park, and will reveal any barriers to accessibility. The first step following an accessibility assessment will be addressing physical barriers to mobility into and throughout township parks, which will result in an improved sidewalk and pathway network. A print and/or online parks guide will provide a description of the amenities offered at each park, which were inventoried through the accessibility assessment process, allowing residents to choose the park that meets their recreation needs.

*Strategy D: Prioritize installation of sidewalks and bike lanes to enhance connectivity to existing parks and trails.*

Every resident of the township should be connected to a park via the sidewalk network or a pathway/trail. After analyzing the transportation network, the township should prioritize installation of infrastructure (i.e., sidewalk or bike lane) where gaps exist. Priority will be given to those locations where key connections exist (e.g., to Norristown High School), and to high-speed or high-traffic roadways where pedestrians and bicyclists are generally less safe.

## RECREATION PROGRAMMING AND COMMUNITY EVENT STRATEGIES FOR GOAL 1

*Strategy A: Continue to provide a diverse range of community activities, gatherings, and classes for residents.*

The township should continue to review their recreational and educational offerings. Moving forward, the township should analyze how programming meets the needs of residents, with specific emphasis on marginalized groups.

*Strategy B: Provide additional senior programming and increase outreach and promotion of the Silver Circle.*

The needs of elderly and aging residents was top-of-mind for community survey respondents, with about 1 in 8 community survey respondents noting that they are dissatisfied with the recreational offerings for seniors. Township staff can analyze existing programming, and review how to provide more diverse programming for seniors. The Silver Circle can be leveraged as a group already working with this population.

*Strategy C: Create an indoor recreation center with additional programming.* ◐

The community continuously voiced their desire for a permanent, indoor community center. This idea seemed to emerge from the desire for improving recreational offerings for both seniors and children. Studying the potential for a community center will be multi-year, multi-department effort that involves identifying siting alternatives and preparing plans for construction. The township will need to discern how the space will be used and by who, if/how groups or residents can reserve the space, as well as long-term plans for operations and maintenance. The community center can also be leveraged in times of emergency, when it can become a location for distributing aid or could even be temporarily used as a shelter. For example, residents in need may be able to visit the community center on days when a Code Red (extreme heat) or Code Blue (extreme cold) are declared by the County Office of Public Health.

**Goal 2: Promote solutions to risks associated with climate change like flooding and heat**

The effects of climate change are already being felt today, as an increasing number of increasingly extreme weather events continue to occur each year. Extreme heat and flooding are anticipated to be the greatest threats to residents of the county, and the township can work to mitigate and adapt to these impacts through a combination of naturalized and engineered solutions.



*Strategy A: Create a municipal climate action plan or sustainability plan to build on the township's Ready for 100 initiative.* ◐

Throughout 2020-2021, West Norriton Township collaborated with the Resilient Innovation through Sustainable Engineering (RISE) Forum, a consortium of Villanova University's graduate program in Sustainable Engineering to establish a baseline energy use audit and to provide a framework for transitioning to 100% renewable energy use by 2050. This effort provided a strong foundation for future work towards meeting this goal, and further studies could provide additional, specific action items to improve the sustainability of township operations.

*Strategy B: Create a street/park tree inventory to assess the state of the current tree canopy.* ◐

To gain an understanding of the state of the township's tree canopy, a park and street tree inventory can be undertaken. The report will reveal the existing count of trees and their locations, will prioritize removals and replacements, and can provide a starting point for planning reforestation of the township through the addition of street trees and trees on township-owned properties. The township can pursue grant funding to conduct the inventories.

*Strategy C: Start a street or yard tree giveaway program to promote increased canopy coverage and stormwater retention across the township.* ◐



Residents of the township should be engaged through outreach/education related to urban forestry, and can be provided with an annual street/yard tree giveaway program in the future.

*Strategy D: Install green stormwater infrastructure (e.g. rain gardens, bioswales) at township facilities as demonstration projects.* ◐

In the future, the township can design and construct a

green stormwater infrastructure demonstration project that makes use of industry Best Management Practices (BMPs) conspicuously at a township property. Such a demonstration project can include educational material, such as interpretive signage, that describes the project's impetus and outcomes.

*Strategy E: Regularly evaluate the township's stormwater basins to ensure they are operating effectively.* ●

Lastly, the township can continuously evaluate stormwater basins and ensure uninterrupted operation. These basins trap, reroute, and/or slow the flow of stormwater. As needed, stormwater basins will be enhanced with BMPs.

### Goal 3: Amend township land use regulations to provide stronger protection of natural features and to ensure the continued viability of environmental services.

One of the greatest powers available to the township is its wide latitude over land use controls, as enabled by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code. The township can promote sustainable development and mitigate the impacts of extreme weather events by amending land use regulations in many categories.

*Strategy A: Audit zoning ordinance provisions related to site development, such as maximum impervious surface allowances, to ensure that new development mitigates issues such as stormwater runoff and the heat island effect.* ●

A principal concern raised throughout the comprehensive planning process, both by the steering committee and the public, is the combined issue of stormwater management and flooding. A first step to address stormwater is reigning in impervious surfacing allowances by requiring a larger portion of a site to remain available for stormwater infiltration. Going along with this is improved landscaping standards, as vegetation soaks up stormwater. These regulations will work in concert to promote more sustainable development outcomes.

*Strategy B: Amend landscaping regulations to require a larger share of new plantings to be native species. Assess permitted plantings and ensure climate-appropriate species are offered.* ●

Native species of plants are most appropriate for the local climate, and should be promoted. A list of approved plants and a minimum required proportion for native species may be prepared and added to the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance.

*Strategy C: Amend parking lot landscaping provisions to ensure adequate plantings are required in parking areas.* ●

Parking lots in particular can benefit from improved landscaping standards, as they generate stormwater and trap solar heat within their dark surfaces, exacerbating the heat island effect (see **Chapter 6** for more information). More stringent landscaping and design standards should be employed in the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance to mitigate the issues caused by parking lots.

*Strategy D: Audit land use regulations related to the preservation of natural features. Consider requiring the preservation of a certain portion of sensitive natural features (e.g. woodlands, steep slopes, unique geologic features).* ●

The areas of the township that remain undeveloped largely remain as such due to site constraints, such as steep slopes, geologic formations, wetlands, waterbodies, waterways, or floodplain. These sensitive environmental features, as well as riparian corridors and woodlands, are best kept in their natural state where feasible. With that in mind, the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance can be amended to set a minimum preservation requirement for certain natural features. Any ordinance amendment will balance private property rights with environmental benefit.

*Strategy E: Analyze landscaping regulations to ensure adequate buffering between uses is required and review how existing features such as woodlands or topography can be applied to satisfy open space and buffering requirements.* ●

The township can take a holistic look at all landscaping requirements and discern how naturalized conditions can be integrated into site development. For example, existing topography or woodlands may be utilized to fulfill a buffering or screening requirement along property lines.

*Strategy F: Amend the property maintenance code to permit meadow or naturalized vegetation in lieu of turf grass lawn.*

The township can explore standards to permit meadow or naturalized yards in lieu of turf grass lawn. Meadow areas are both beautiful and functional, trapping more stormwater than turf grass and are a prime habitat for pollinators.

## IMPLEMENTATION PLAN: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Goal 1: Encourage the establishment of a strong mix of businesses on West Main Street.

The West Main Street corridor is a high priority for township residents. They want to see a more vibrant corridor, with a better mix of businesses. The below strategies will help the township foster redevelopment. An ongoing dialogue with property owners and other business partners will help to achieve this objective. The township has updated the zoning already to allow for a greater mix of active uses, so going forward, a streamlined review and approval process and municipal staff/officials engaged in working with businesses and regional partners can help to encourage redevelopment (see Strategy A).

*Strategy A: Provide increased coordination services and programs to support the business community with property maintenance, marketing, and business recruitment:*

- Work with property owners to identify economic opportunities for underutilized sites along West Main Street
- Connect property owners and prospective businesses with resources and programs offered by the Montgomery County Commerce Department, the PA Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED), and other organizations
- Coordinate with the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce and the County Redevelopment Authority when relevant to support and advertise vacant commercial properties
- Seek grant funding to assist property owners with façade improvements and greening

The organizations listed above are all working on economic development and redevelopment throughout the county and the state. Developing relationships with these organizations can help provide resources to West Norriton for revitalizing Main Street. The state Department of Community and Economic Development offers grants for façade improvements through the Keystone Communities Program.

*Strategy B: Encourage property owners to allow short-term leases for pop-up storefronts in vacant retail stores.*

Short-term leases can activate storefronts during interim periods, ensuring that vacancies are minimized. This is a strategy other communities have used to help small businesses get started.

*Strategy C: Explore the possibility of establishing a residential-office overlay for the area of Main Street zoned R-1 and R-2.*

For the areas of Main Street currently still in residential zoning, an overlay district that allows for office uses would allow for some conversions of residences along this busy corridor, while still providing for residential uses.



*Residents are looking for a greater variety of businesses on West Main Street, with fewer car-oriented uses.*



*Renderings of an improved West Main Street Streetscape (West Main Street Vision Plan, 2019)*

**Goal 2: Improve the streetscape in the township’s commercial areas.**

Physical infrastructure will be another key aspect to promote economic development and revitalization within West Norriton’s commercial districts. Commercial areas in the township are car-oriented, while residents desire a more pedestrian-friendly experience. Improved properties will attract new tenants and businesses, creating more tax revenue for the township. As West Norriton is largely built-out, redevelopment on a parcel-by-parcel basis provides growth opportunities. See also: Transportation Goal 1 (Promote alternative modes of transportation such as biking and walking, and enhance related bicyclist and pedestrian infrastructure).

*Strategy A: Install gateway signage entering the township from the 422/Trooper Road exit.* ●

This is the only entrance to West Norriton that does not have a sign to recognize it. Installing gateway signage here is a relatively simple and effective way to beautify the area.

*Strategy B: Pursue grant funding opportunities to improve curbs, sidewalks, landscaping, and lighting along West Main Street and Egypt Road.* ●

Both PennDOT and DCED have multimodal grant programs that provide funding for pedestrian infrastructure to increase connectivity and safety, streetscape improvements, and projects that coordinate land use with transportation assets like bus stops and bike lanes. These grants do require a match of some kind, but the township’s investment will help to spur future private commercial development. DCED’s Multimodal Transportation Fund accepts applications between March 1 and July 31: <https://>



*Several residences like this one on Main Street have already been converted to an office use.*

[dced.pa.gov/download/multimodal-transportation-fund-mtf-guidelines/?wpdmdl=82892](https://www.penn.gov/download/multimodal-transportation-fund-mtf-guidelines/?wpdmdl=82892). PennDOT's Multimodal Transportation Fund accepts applications between September and November: <https://www.penndot.pa.gov/ProjectAndPrograms/MultimodalProgram/Documents/PennDOT%20MTF%20Success%20Manual%207-3-2024.pdf>.

*Strategy C: Add additional streetscape, pedestrian connection, transit, and greening standards to the LC&I and C zoning districts and to the subdivision and land development ordinance to ensure new commercial development has adequate landscaping and pedestrian infrastructure.*



While the Main Street Commercial District includes these standards already, updating the remaining commercial districts in the township with these standards, as well as the subdivision and land development ordinance, will ensure that future redevelopment is more connected, more green, and more walkable. In addition, it will be important to revisit the West Main Street Commercial District standards in the event that significant development interest does not come to fruition.

*Strategy D: Coordinate with Lower Providence Township and Norristown Borough on land use and design standards for the West Main Street corridor.*

West Main Street passes through multiple municipalities, and coordinating with neighboring communities can help ensure consistency throughout the corridor.

## IMPLEMENTATION PLAN: TRANSPORTATION

**Goal 1: Promote alternative modes of transportation such as biking and walking, and enhance related bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure**

West Norriton Township was primarily developed in a period when automobile transportation took priority, and this mindset continues to leave its mark as pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure lag behind vehicle infrastructure. Moving forward, the needs of bicyclists and pedestrians will be considered in all transportation projects.



*Strategy A: Review the township's ordinances to ensure adequate sidewalk, crosswalk, curb cut, and ADA ramp provisions are included.*

As a first step, the township can review land use ordinances (i.e., Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance) and make targeted amendments to ensure adequate sidewalk, crosswalk, curb cut, and ADA ramp provisions are included. This was a medium to high priority for 90% of community survey respondents. This strategy relies upon private development activity to create or enhance infrastructure as development occurs. Although addressing deficiencies with the sidewalk network

will not be something that can be completed overnight, incremental improvements will add up and result in a more connected community.

*Strategy B: Conduct a walkability audit to identify priority areas for sidewalk improvements, new sidewalk installation, and crosswalks. Pay special attention to commercial corridors, schools, and parks. Public outreach revealed concerns with W. Main Street, Egypt Road, Whitehall Road, Trooper Road, and Burnside Avenue.*

- Improve visibility of crosswalks by repainting, and by marking additional crosswalks as identified in the walkability audit
- Pursue grant funding opportunities to improve curbs and sidewalks



A walkability audit can be undertaken to gain an understanding of existing conditions and plan for improvements. Priority focus areas include commercial corridors and the areas surrounding schools and parks, as well as W. Main Street, Egypt Road, Whitehall Road, Trooper Road, and Burnside Avenue. The findings of the walkability audit can be used to plan for improvements and pursue funding to address identified deficiencies in the sidewalk network.

*Strategy C: Establish a formal bicycle route system throughout the township and support the implementation of Bike Montco, the county's bicycle plan.*

- Continue to coordinate with PennDOT on the installation of sharrows and/or bike lanes as resurfacing and repainting projects occur on state roadways throughout the township

Bicycle infrastructure is all but absent in the township, so the creation of a bicycle route system will be a ground-up effort. A township-wide bicycle route system can be prepared after studying alternative routes. The routes should be formalized (e.g., through the addition of signage or sharrows) in coordination with PennDOT, Montgomery County, and neighboring municipalities. Although less universally supported than pedestrian infrastructure, the majority of residents (70%) identified adding or improving bicycle infrastructure as a medium to high priority moving forward.

*Strategy D: Create and promote events that encourage active modes of transportation through Safe Routes to School and other programs (e.g., Bike Bus event).*

The township can promote events that promote walking and biking. Examples of such events include the Week without Driving, Bike & Roll to School Day, and Walk to School Day. Events like these not only draw attention to the needs of walkers and bicyclists, but can also act as catalyzing community-building events.

## Goal 2: Consistently maintain township roads and bridges in good condition to enhance safety and ease of travel.

A principal responsibility of the township is ensuring that roadways remain safe and efficient. In order to effectively meet this obligation, the township must continuously monitor how the transportation system operates, address immediate maintenance needs as they arise, and plan for future improvements. Maintaining roads in good condition and managing traffic or congestion saw nearly universal support in the community survey.

*Strategy A: Consistently review the road maintenance schedule and pursue additional funding for maintenance of local roads.*

The Public Works Department should continuously monitor its ongoing maintenance plans and capital improvement projects. The township can pursue funding in coordination with regional partners, such as DVRPC and the county, to

offset the cost of regionally-significant transportation improvements.

*Strategy B: Coordinate with PennDOT on traffic light timing and paving schedules. Work with PennDOT on improvements to speeding issues and left turns on West Main Street between Norristown and Schuylkill Avenue. Work with PennDOT on improvements to traffic flow for the following intersections:* ◐

- Port Indian Road and Egypt Road;
- School Lane and Egypt Road;
- W. Main Street and Trooper Road;
- W. Main Street and Whitehall Road; and
- W. Main Street and Liberty Avenue.

In addition to regular maintenance of roadways, which the Public Works Department effectively conducts each year, there are special circumstances that suggest a need for improvements. Public outreach, both in-person and through the community survey, revealed several problematic intersections that warrant additional study: Port Indian Road and Egypt Road, School Lane and Egypt Road, W. Main Street and Trooper Road, W. Main Street and Whitehall Road, and W. Main Street and Liberty Avenue.

*Strategy C: Support the county's Trooper Road corridor improvement project between U.S. 422 and Egypt Road.* ◐

The proposed improvements to Trooper Road, between U.S. 422 and Egypt Road, is a priority project that is identified in Montgomery County's comprehensive plan, Montco 2040: A Shared Vision. This project will be designed to relieve safety issues and congestion throughout the township, particularly during peak commuting periods.

*Strategy D: Publish a public list or map of roads impacted by utility work or PennDOT projects with anticipated construction and road resurfacing timelines.* ◐

The public deserves timely notification of potential disruptions to their commute or other vehicles trips. The township can therefore improve this process by posting project information on the township website, along with a map of the impacted roadway and any necessary detours, whether it is a township-led, state-led, or private company-led effort.



### Goal 3: Increase the safety and convenience of using available public transportation options.

The use of public transit is often limited to those who do not have a personal vehicle available to them, but choosing public transit should be an attractive alternative to trips via personal vehicle. In order to promote transit ridership, the township can make a coordinated effort to ensure that bus stop infrastructure is enhanced over time. Improving transit access was a medium to high priority for most community survey respondents.

*Strategy A: In coordination with SEPTA, update township ordinances to require bus stop infrastructure on W. Main Street, Egypt and Trooper Roads as part of the subdivision and land development process.* ◐

The township should amend the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance to require the provision of transit-supportive amenities (e.g., bus shelter, benches) when a development abuts an existing bus stop. Design standards for bus stops should be integrated into the SALDO, which should be based upon the most recent edition of Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission's *SEPTA Bus Stop Design Guidelines*.

*Strategy B: Work with private developers to install transit stop infrastructure on properties affected by development that are on a SEPTA route or service area.* ◐

The township can work with private property owners to ensure that bus stops adequately meet the needs of riders and are designed in a coordinated manner. Outside of the land development process, the township may either influence or even incentivize the enhancement of bus stops. The township can also ensure that direct pedestrian connections to all bus stops are maintained and/or improved.



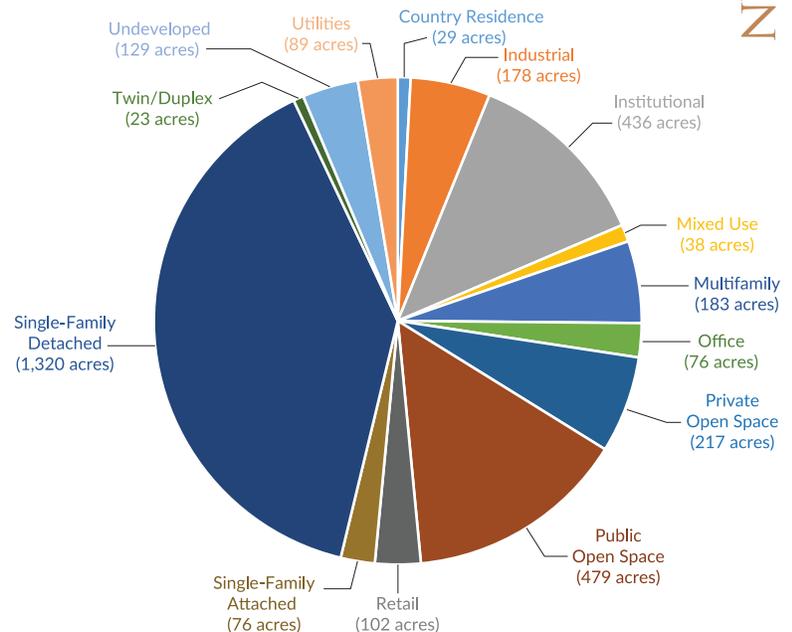


Appeals (BOA). Figure 1 shows the distribution of land use categories and Figure 2 maps land uses across the township. This map represents a snap-shot in time.

Much of the township consists of residential land (1,636 acres, or 48% of the total land area, the majority of which is single-family detached homes at 81% of the residential land area, followed by multifamily at 11%). Open space constitutes the second largest land use in the township. Public and private open space are 21% of the township's total land area, with 6% of that private open space and 15% public open space. Public open space includes the Norristown Farm Park, Jeffersonville Golf Club, the Schuylkill River Trail, Padden Park, Centennial Park, and Betzwood Park. Private open space includes the Westover Golf Club as well as open space associated with various developments..

Institutional uses make up 12.5% of the total land area in the township. These include the state hospital site, cemeteries, the high school and other schools,

**FIGURE 1 | LAND USE DISTRIBUTION**  
(MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOA)



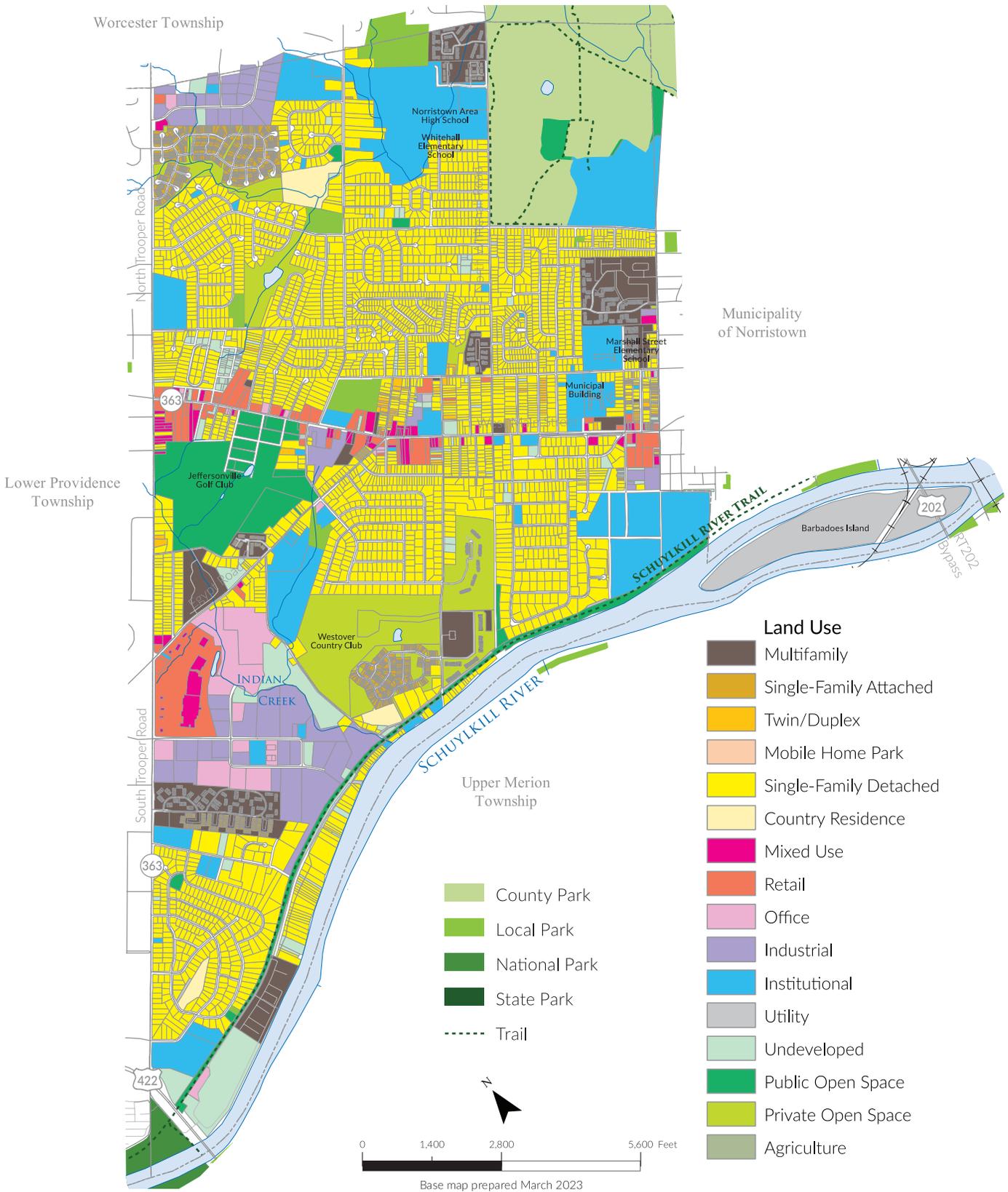
## INTRODUCTION

West Norriton Township's land uses vary from shopping centers and industrial parks to large institutions, and from residential neighborhoods with single-family homes to multifamily apartment buildings. An understanding of existing conditions and current trends can help inform goal-setting for desired future land use patterns. This report provides an overview of existing land use distributions within the township, a discussion of the changes over time, and a map of future land use to illustrate the community's vision for how the township will evolve over the coming years. The future land use map divides West Norriton into categories based on the character, function and intensity of an area. This vision will inform future amendments to West Norriton's ordinances and zoning map.

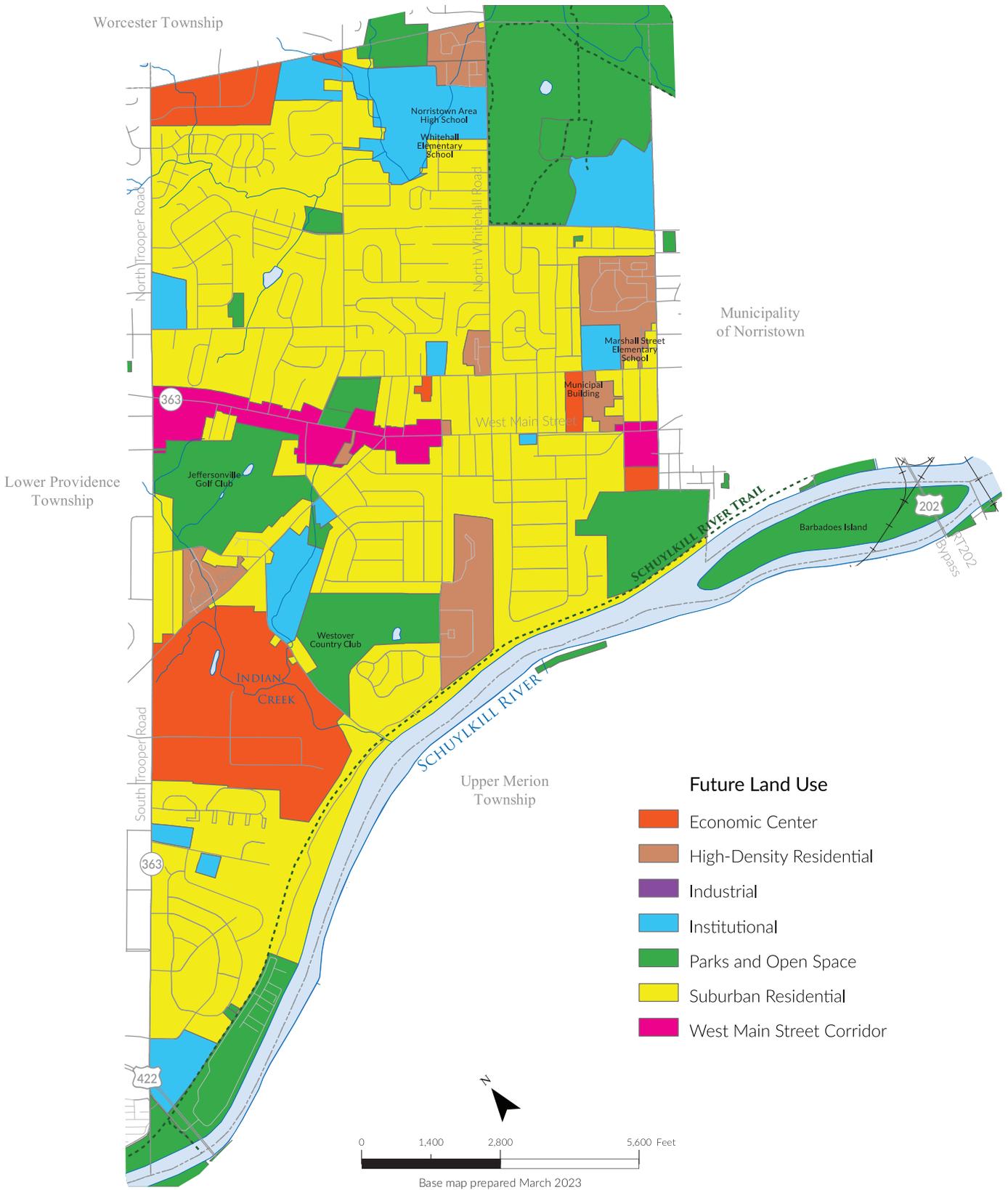
## EXISTING LAND USE ANALYSIS

The existing land use data comes from land classification data from the Montgomery County Board of Assessment

**FIGURE 2 | EXISTING LAND USE**  
 (MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOA)



**FIGURE 3 | FUTURE LAND USE**  
 (MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOA)



Montgomery County Youth Center, and various churches and other not-for-profits and similar uses. Retail and office uses combined make up 5% of the township's land uses, and are concentrated along West Main Street and Egypt Road. Industrial uses constitute 5% of the total land area and are found primarily along Trooper Road as well as sprinkled throughout other areas of the township. Undeveloped land only constitutes 3.8% of the total land area.

## LAND USE CHANGES & RECENT DEVELOPMENT

Since the 2010 comprehensive plan update, there have not been many new developments in West Norriton. A total of 178 residential units were proposed or constructed between January 1, 2010 and December 31, 2024. The most significant residential development was the Markley Farm property, which brought 79 single-family detached dwelling units. The Markley Farm property was the last large undeveloped area in the township. In addition, 46 apartment units were proposed for the Lubin Studios property. Construction of the Reserve at Stony Creek finished in 2024, bringing 51 townhomes.

There was 39,736 square feet of commercial development between 2010 and 2022. This includes both additions and expansions, as well as new builds. Notable developments include the Wawa/Citadel Bank development with 24,745 square feet of commercial space.

Industrial development included the T-Mobile building expansion. The building expansion project for Saint Sophia Greek Orthodox Church constituted the only institutional development during this time. Recreational

uses proposed include the Jeffersonville Golf Course improvements as well as some recreational land associated with Markley Farms.

## FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

West Norriton's future land use map (Figure 3) illustrates the vision for how land will be utilized in the township going forward, and builds on current trends.

### PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

Parks and open space includes land that is owned and operated either by a private entity, by West Norriton Township, by Montgomery County, or by the National Parks Service for open space or recreational purposes. This includes all township parks, the Norristown Farm Park, Valley Forge National Historic Park, and the Jeffersonville and Westover golf clubs. It is clear from public engagement that residents appreciate the existing parks and open spaces in the township and want them to remain. The only development to these areas would be to create new recreational amenities. Barbadoes Island and the area of the township by the Schuylkill River by the 422 off-ramp are included as Parks and Open Space, as in an ideal world these areas would eventually be preserved for public use. However, until that point, the nonresidential zoning for those properties should continue

### SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL

Suburban residential areas have a variety of housing types but single-family neighborhood-style developments predominate. These areas include most of the township's residential zoning districts, which have a mix of single-family detached and single-family attached homes, as



West Norriton Citadel Bank



Typical Single-Family Detached Neighborhood in West Norriton

well as duplexes. Anticipated density is between one and four dwelling units per acre. Residents of the township expressed appreciation for the existing character of West Norriton’s neighborhoods. Going forward, new residential development should match the character and type of housing found in the surrounding neighborhood, and street trees, landscaping, and sidewalks should be provided. New parks and small institutions would also be appropriate in these areas.

### **INSTITUTIONAL**

The properties designated institutional are currently developed by an existing institutional organization. This includes places of worship, schools, municipal buildings, the 30-acre Montgomery Cemetery, and the 50-acre Riverside Cemetery.



*Riverside Cemetery*

### **HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL**

High-density residential areas are those currently developed with apartments and retirement residences. Several are located along transit routes, and new higher-density developments should be located along existing bus routes going forward. New developments should be designed to fit in with surrounding areas, and include buffering, common open space areas, sidewalks, and more landscaping.



*Westover Village Apartments*

### **ECONOMIC CENTER**

Economic centers are concentrations of employment-oriented land uses, including offices, industrial parks, and shopping centers. Going forward, these areas should include more supporting land uses like retail, services, and day cares. Development should be designed to be accessible via public transportation, include ample landscaping, and control the impact of noise, light, and pollution on nearby residences.



*Valley Forge Business Center*

### **WEST MAIN STREET CORRIDOR**

The West Main Street Corridor is expected to see the most change in the township in the coming years and is best suited to accommodate change due to the concentration of more intense land uses and the existing infrastructure. Land uses should include a mix of retail, higher-density residential, and offices. Parking should be located to the rear of buildings, and development should be pedestrian-oriented with ample landscaping. The 2023 West Main Street District zoning changes represent the first step towards change to this corridor, which could come in the form of infill or rede-velopment.

The blocks where the Main Street Commercial District abuts properties in the R-1 Residential District or R-2 Residential District may be eyed for increased



*Lighting, sidewalks, and landscaping on West Main Street*

residential density as the West Main Street corridor sees revitalization and redevelopment. At present, the Township Zoning Ordinance allows for townhome developments with up to eight dwelling units within the R-1 and R-2 Residential Districts. This is one example of a “middle” housing type that could soften the transition between single-family neighborhoods and West Main Street, and similar residential density in different layouts (e.g., duplex, triplex, etc.) may be appropriate in certain locations (i.e., near transit stops). Any dense residential development must provide adequate buffering and landscaping to limit adverse impact on the established neighborhood. As these unique circumstances arise, the Planning Commission and Board of Commissioners will need to analyze how the development fits into the long-term plans for the township.

## KEY FINDINGS

West Norriton has not had significant changes in land use since 2010. The township is largely built-out, and therefore future changes will likely come in the form of infill and redevelopment. West Main Street is the area most poised to receive that growth. Adding provisions to the zoning ordinance can help to ensure that future development fits in with the surrounding community, and includes adequate landscaping and pedestrian infrastructure.



## POPULATION GROWTH

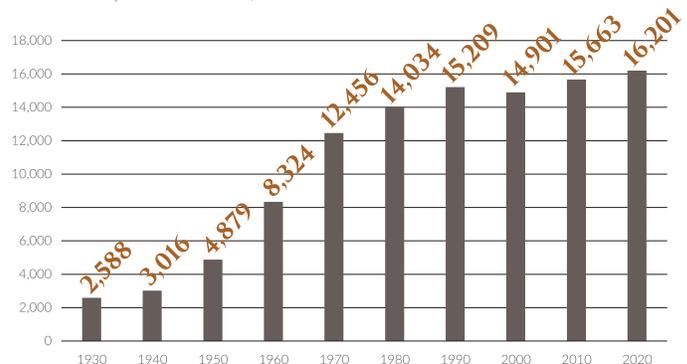
West Norriton’s population continues to grow, though the rate of growth is slowing. The biggest increase in population occurred between 1960 and 1970 (4,114 residents, a 49% increase). This coincides with the construction of US 422 from US 202 in King of Prussia to 363 in Betzwood.<sup>1</sup> The 2% decrease in population between 1990 and 2000 reflects a decrease in household size, although the township added 322 housing units during that time.

The total population was 16,201 in 2020, an increase of 3% or 538 residents from 2010 (Figure 5). There are similar patterns in most of the neighboring communities.

Change to Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, the planning entity for the greater Philadelphia area forecasts 12% growth between 2020 and 2050 (1,947 residents), which is a greater rate of change than the county’s 10% forecasted growth in that time frame.<sup>2</sup>

West Norriton has a higher population density than all of the neighboring townships, and the county as a whole: 2,751 residents per square mile vs. 1,777 residents per square mile in the county (Figure 6). This can largely be attributed to the amount of multifamily in the township.

FIGURE 5 | POPULATION GROWTH (DECENNIAL CENSUS, 1930-2020)



## INTRODUCTION

West Norriton Township is an established community that has seen steady population growth in recent years and is projected to have continued growth over the next 30 years. West Norriton’s population is well-educated, with rates that match those of the county as a whole. The township’s population is aging and becoming more diverse. Going forward, as residents continue to age, the township can expect that housing will change hands, likely resulting in increased diversity and more young families. Housing needs are also likely to change, as older residents seek out smaller homes on smaller lots in more walkable neighborhoods. The senior population influences economic trends in the township, as senior residents earn less and experience poverty and unemployment at higher rates than neighboring townships. The higher senior population, plus the amount of multifamily housing, results in a higher percentage of single-person households. The demographic trends discussed inform the vision and goals for future development in West Norriton.

FIGURE 6 | POPULATION DENSITY COMPARISON (DECENNIAL CENSUS, 2010 & 2020)

Municipality	Land Area (sq. miles)	Population	Density (people/sq. mile)
West Norriton Township	5.89	16,201	2,751
Worcester Township	16.22	10,317	636
Lower Providence Township	15.25	25,625	1,680
Upper Merion Township	16.97	33,613	1,981
East Norriton Township	6.06	14,021	2,314
Municipality of Norristown	3.52	35,748	10,156
Montgomery County	487	865,553	1,777

## SINGLE-PERSON HOUSEHOLDS

Average household size decreased 6.3% over the last twenty years, from 2.23 in 2000 to 2.09 persons per household in 2020.<sup>3</sup> This is lower than the county's average household size of 2.54.

West Norriton leads the area in single-person households (40%), and only 16% of households have a resident under age 18 (Figure 7)

FIGURE 7 | HOUSEHOLD TYPES (ACS 5-YEAR, 2010 & 2020)

Municipality	Households with One or More Persons Under Age 18		Households with One or More Persons 65 and Over		Householders Living Alone	
	2010	2020	2010	2020	2010	2020
West Norriton Township	20%	16%	28%	33%	42%	40%
Worcester Township	36%	33%	26%	42%	22%	21%
Lower Providence Township	41%	33%	29%	34%	21%	27%
Upper Merion Township	26%	26%	24%	28%	33%	31%
East Norriton Township	26%	18%	30%	41%	29%	30%
Municipality of Norristown	36%	36%	18%	21%	30%	30%
Montgomery County	33%	31%	26%	33%	27%	26%

## AGING POPULATION

The township's population is aging. 13% of the total population is school-aged. This is the smallest school-aged population in the region. The median age of 45.4 is among the highest in the area, and 20% of the population is aged 65 or older (Figure 8).

FIGURE 8 | AGE CHARACTERISTICS (ACS 5-YEAR, 2020)

Municipality	Median Age (years)	Percent Under 18	Percent 65 and Over
West Norriton Township	45.4	13%	20%
Worcester Township	47	23%	22%
Lower Providence Township	42.2	21%	16%
Upper Merion Township	38.4	18%	17%
East Norriton Township	50	14%	25%
Municipality of Norristown	32.9	25%	11%
Montgomery County	41.2	21%	18%

# INCREASING DIVERSITY

Diversity is increasing, which matches countywide trends. The percentage of white residents decreased from 83% in 2010 to 72% in 2020. The percentage of Black and African American residents increased by 3%, Asian residents increased by 1%, and the population that identifies as two or more races increased by 5% (Figures 9 & 10).

Outside of Norristown, West Norriton has the highest concentration of residents identifying as Hispanic and Latino in the area (7%). Most common countries of origin include: Mexico, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Puerto Rico. 16% of residents speak a language other than English at home. Of those, 6.4% speak Spanish, 5.1% speak another Indo-European language, and 3.3% speak an Asian and Pacific Island language.<sup>4</sup>

FIGURE 9 | 2010 RACE (DECENNIAL CENSUS, 2010)

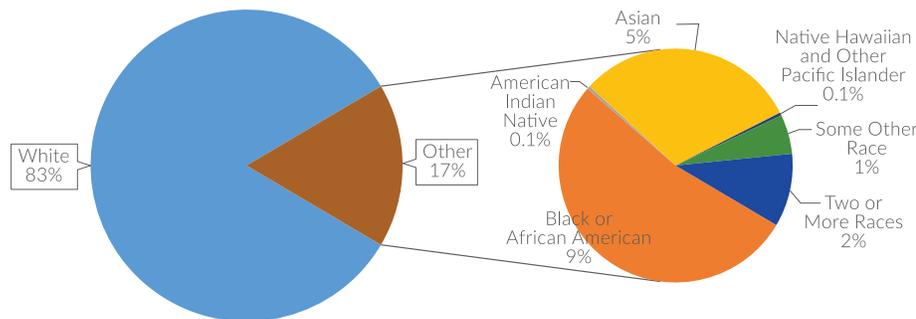
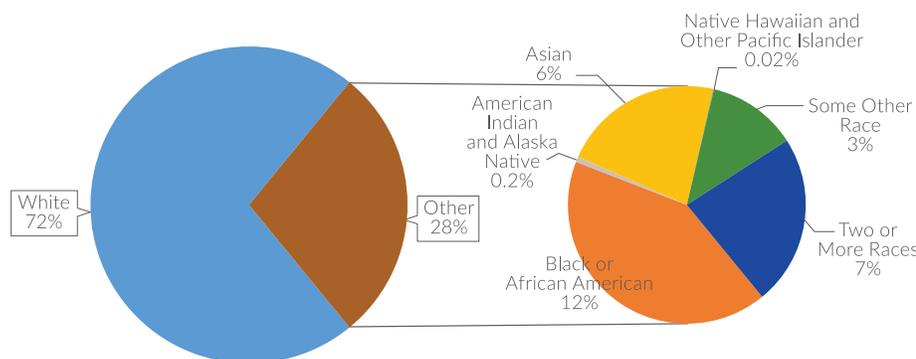


FIGURE 10 | 2020 RACE (DECENNIAL CENSUS, 2020)



# EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

93% of residents have a high school degree or higher, and 45% of residents have a bachelor's degree or higher.<sup>5</sup> This matches countywide trends.

# INCOME AND POVERTY

West Norriton's median household income of \$77,188 (in 2020 inflation-adjusted dollars) is among the lowest of the surrounding townships, and the percentage of families and individuals living in poverty is among the highest of neighboring municipalities, with the exception of the municipality of Norristown. When adjusted for inflation, incomes in the township have increased 21% or \$13,438 since 2010.<sup>6</sup> The current poverty rate has increased 58% over the past nine years, from 4.8% in 2012 to 7.6% in 2020. However, 40% of households earned higher than the median income at \$100,000 or more in 2020, while 48% earned lower than the median income at less than \$75,000 in 2020. West Norriton residents experience poverty at higher rates than the county, but at lower rates than the state (Figure 11).

The housing and transportation index (H&T Index) measures affordability of a place by combining a household's housing and transportation costs, setting the benchmark at no more than 45% of household income. In West Norriton, this index varies. Neighborhoods in the northern part of the township have a higher H&T index, around 46% (27% of income spent on housing and 19% on transportation), while those in the southern part of the township have an index between 36% and 45%, as they have greater access to transit. Transportation costs are considered affordable if they are 15% or less of household income or \$10,851 per year for the regional

FIGURE 11 | INCOME AND ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS (ACS 5-YEAR, 2020)

Municipality	Median Household Income	Mean Per Capita Income	Percent of Families Below Poverty Level	Percent of Individuals Below Poverty Level	Unemployment Rate
West Norriton Township	\$77,188	\$47,784	4.40%	7.60%	7.30%
Worcester Township	\$133,339	\$66,415	1.90%	3.50%	4.90%
Lower Providence Township	\$94,840	\$44,343	3.20%	4.10%	5.80%
Upper Merion Township	\$100,901	\$54,779	2.80%	4.80%	5.40%
East Norriton Township	\$86,423	\$46,308	4.60%	4.40%	4.60%
Norristown Borough	\$54,409	\$26,324	11.20%	16.90%	6.50%
Montgomery County	\$102,896	\$49,405	3.80%	7.20%	4.50%
Pennsylvania	\$63,627	\$35,518	8.10%	12.10%	5.40%

typical household. Total annual driving costs for most of the township are estimated at \$15,098 per year.<sup>7</sup> This index indicates that many West Norriton households spend a disproportionate amount of their income on transportation.

Another metric to consider is ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, and Employed), which encompasses those who struggle to meet their basic needs. These households earn more than the Federal Poverty Limit (\$26,500 for a family of four in Pennsylvania in 2021) but less than the basic cost of living for the county. United Way calculates the basic cost of living for Montgomery County to be \$65,796 for a family of four in 2021, meaning that 37% of households in West Norriton were below the ALICE threshold in 2021.<sup>8</sup>

## KEY FINDINGS

West Norriton continues to grow in population, but the rate of growth has slowed in recent years. Residents are aging, and the township has the smallest school-aged cohort in the area. The township has more single-person households than any of its neighbors. Diversity is increasing, as are poverty rates as many residents are struggling more to meet their basic needs.

Understanding who lives in West Norriton and how that has changed over the past decade helps the township plan for its population. Policies and programs that accommodate different groups' needs for housing, recreation, transportation, services, and facilities helps all residents thrive, thereby ensuring community vitality.



Main Street zoning district allowing for mixed-use development, West Main Street is poised to welcome additional residential units. However, there has been limited development in recent years, contributing to higher housing costs as supply is limited—between 2010 and 2022, only 127 units were proposed or constructed. Residential vacancy rates in the township are low, providing evidence of strong demand: the overall housing vacancy rate is 4% per the 2020 census. Multifamily housing in the township had only 67 vacant units in 2023, and the occupancy rate of these units has fluctuated between 96% and 91% between 2013 and 2023.<sup>9</sup>

As the township's population grows, there will be a need for about another 678 units by 2050, the majority of which will likely come in the form of infill and redevelopment. Going forward, as the township's population continues to age, it will become increasingly important to provide for a wider range of housing types, and housing units that accommodate the needs of seniors.

## IMPLEMENTATION GOALS

The following overarching goals will guide the township in addressing concerns identified by the community throughout the comprehensive planning process:

1. Preserve existing housing stock and allow for appropriate infill development in order to meet the current and future needs of households of varying incomes and abilities.
2. Ensure safe, sanitary conditions throughout the township through proactive monitoring, enforcement, and administration.

## INTRODUCTION

West Norriton's diverse neighborhoods make the township a great place to live, and contribute to its character. The township's land use decisions, policy decisions and design requirements influence residents' health, as walkable neighborhoods with tree cover and connections to nearby goods and services enables healthier lifestyles. Better sidewalk connections will help increase access between residential and commercial areas.

The township's typical dwelling unit size and age indicates the relative affordability of its housing stock, and the median sale price of homes is lower than most neighboring municipalities. However, the community remains unaffordable for many residents. A quarter of homeowners and almost 40% of renters dedicate more than 30% of their incomes to housing costs. Additional housing units will likely come in the form of infill development, as the township is largely built-out. Much of the township (47% of developable land) is zoned to allow for higher-density housing (multifamily units), yet additional measures are needed to ensure affordability. With the new

3. Increase access to healthy food options for residents.
4. Promote the preservation of historic resources within the township.
5. Evaluate and work towards making West Norriton a community that is accessible to those of all ages, and implement strategies to assist older residents to age in place or age within the township.

*Please refer to Chapter 2, Implementation Plan, for detailed information on implementation goals and strategies.*

## TRENDS

The following trends in residential development are impacting communities across Montgomery County and are therefore relevant for West Norriton’s future.

### MISSING MIDDLE HOUSING

Recent residential development in Montgomery County has come in the extremes: single-family detached homes and mid or high-rise apartments. Everything in between has been referred to as “missing middle” housing and includes townhomes, duplexes, triplexes, live-work spaces, and other multifamily developments of varying sizes and layouts.



*Existing Missing Middle Housing in West Norriton*

These missing middle housing types are inherently more affordable than single-family detached homes, and they are better suited to address the needs of people of varying ages, incomes, and backgrounds. Missing middle housing could be permitted within a transitional zone between low- and high-density areas, or these housing types can be integrated into existing neighborhoods as infill development. One of the benefits of these housing types is that they are relatively small and can therefore be

designed to fit into the existing community. In built-out West Norriton, most of the new residential development will come in the form of infill, and therefore encouraging missing middle housing in the zoning ordinance will help to fill a needed housing gap.

### ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS

Accessory dwelling units are an option to allow or encourage limited increases in residential density in built-out communities such as West Norriton. Accessory dwelling units (ADUs), sometimes known as “in-law suites,” are separate from and secondary to a primary residence on a lot and may either be attached or detached from the home. Adding a dwelling unit to a previously developed lot or utilizing a portion of an existing building allows for increased residential density while impacts on the neighborhood are minimal or nonexistent. West Norriton’s ordinance allows for ADUs in a limited capacity, but the language could be revised to be more inclusive. Removing the occupancy limitations could allow for a low cost dwelling to join the housing supply. West Norriton can cater regulations to meet community objectives, setting a limit on the total number of residents in an ADU, adding a maximum permitted footprint, and requiring a buffer or visual screen.



*Accessory Dwelling Unit in North Wales Borough*

### AGING-IN-PLACE & AGING-IN-COMMUNITY

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines “aging-in-place” as, “the ability to live in one’s own home and community safely, independently, and comfortably, regardless of age, income, or ability level.” This definition focuses on keeping aging residents within their homes, which would generally require retrofitting the home. Aging-in-community

focuses on making the community as a whole more accessible and safe for seniors. This includes providing a wide array of housing layouts, types, and sizes, as well as complete streets policies, and enhancing recreation opportunities.

West Norriton has a relatively high senior population, and the township is well positioned to address aging-in-place and aging-in-community, with zoning regulations allowing for a mix of housing types within all residential zoning districts. The township’s RR Retirement Residential Districts is built-out: 306 age-restricted dwellings, known as Greens at Westover, occupies this area. The only other age-restricted development in West Norriton is Jefferson Apartments, which has 162 dwelling units that are income restricted. The Greens at Westover does not have income restrictions.



*The Greens at Westover*

# HOUSING

## HOUSING UNIT CHARACTERISTICS

A typical home in West Norriton Township is an owner-occupied single-family detached house that was built between 1969 and 1992, and has about 1,400 square feet of living area. The predominant housing type in the township is the single-family detached home on individual lots (54% of all units), followed by multifamily units (26%). Multifamily includes larger apartment complexes, as well as smaller multifamily buildings and condominiums. Attached single-family homes, including townhouses, twins, and duplexes make up 21% of all housing types. There are no mobile homes in the township anymore. Country residences (lots of 5 acres or greater that are occupied exclusively for one family) are the final 0.1%. There has been a 13% increase in units since 2000, an addition of 879 units over the 20-year

period (Figure 12). Since 2000, the housing unit type that has increased the most is multifamily. Most of the township’s housing stock is occupied (96%).

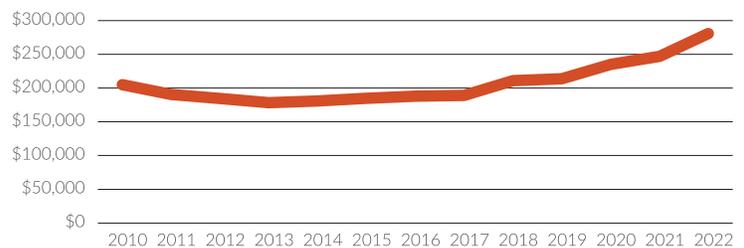
**FIGURE 12 | TOTAL HOUSING UNITS, 2000-2020 (DECENNIAL CENSUS, 2020; MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF ASSESSMENT APPEALS, 2000-2020)**

Housing Unit Type	2000	2010	2020	Percent Change 2000-2020	Absolute Change 2000-2020
Single-Family Detached	3,071	3,163	3,252	6%	181
Single-Family Attached	1,960	2,088	2,153	10%	193
Multifamily	1,843	2,354	2,354	28%	511
Mobile Home	6	0	0	-100%	-6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6,880</b>	<b>7,605</b>	<b>7,759</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>879</b>

## HOUSING COSTS & SALES

Median sale prices for homes in the township have been increasing since 2014, after a dip between 2010 and 2013, likely due to the effects of the Great Recession (Figure 13).

**FIGURE 13 | MEDIAN HOME SALES PRICE, 2010-2022**



The greatest increase in median sales price was \$33,890 between 2021 and 2022, a 13.7% increase. Figure 15 compares median sales price trends in West Norriton to that of the surrounding municipalities. West Norriton’s sales price is the lowest of the townships in the region, and higher only than the municipality of Norristown. Of the 318 homes sold in the township in 2022, 44% were single-family attached homes, 43% were single-family detached homes, and 13% were multifamily.

**FIGURE 14 | HOUSING UNITS BY TYPE (MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOA)**

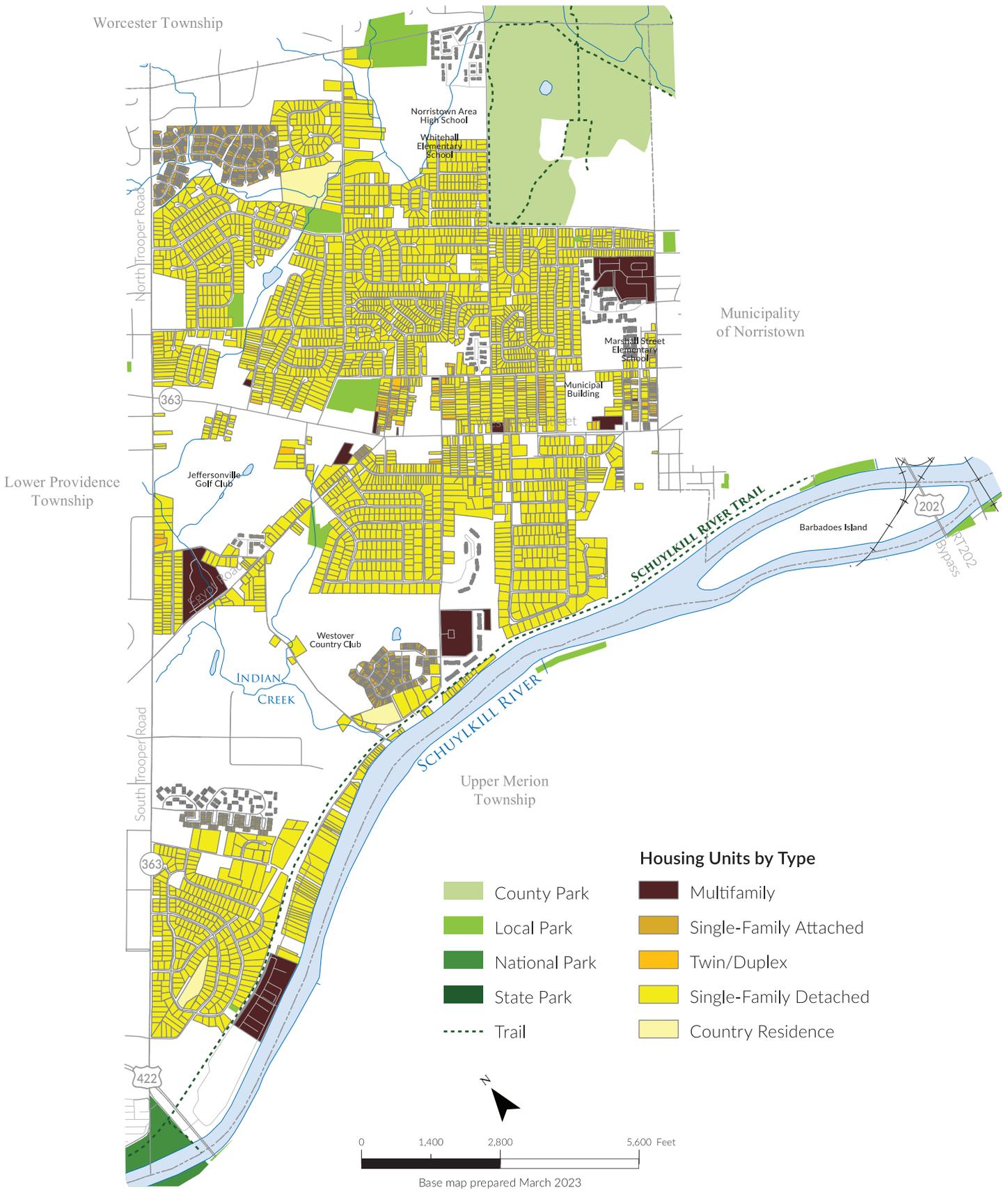


FIGURE 15 | 2022 MEDIAN SALES PRICE FOR HOUSING IN THE REGION (MCPC)

	All Units Median Sales Price	Total Number of Sales	SFD Median Price	Total Sales SFD	SFA Median Price	Total Sales SFA	MF Median Price	Total Sales MF	Median Sales Change 2020-2021	% Change 2020-2021
West Norriton Township	\$280,890	318	\$351,000	137	\$250,000	141	\$216,000	40	\$33,890	13.7%
Worcester Township	\$688,335	202	\$947,000	115	\$584,903	87	*	*	\$100,835	17.2%
Lower Providence Township	\$446,500	228	\$470,000	193	\$407,000	35	*	*	\$215,500	5.1%
Upper Merion Township	\$452,500	407	\$460,000	228	\$487,500	142	\$275,100	37	\$42,250	10.3%
East Norriton Township	\$316,500	238	\$375,000	151	\$317,500	80	\$221,000	7	\$0	0.0%
Norristown Borough	\$180,000	491	\$275,000	40	\$175,000	451	*	*	\$22,500	14.3%
Montgomery County	\$400,000	11,975	\$470,000	6,839	\$320,000	4,576	\$222,500	558	\$30,000	8.1%

FIGURE 16 | MEDIAN RENT (ACS 5-YEAR, 2021)

Municipality	Median Rent 2021
West Norriton Twp.	\$1,519
Worcester Twp.	\$2,211
Lower Providence Twp.	\$1,143
Upper Merion Twp.	\$1,695
East Norriton Twp.	\$1,488
Municipality of Norristown	\$1,131
Montgomery County	\$1,428

West Norriton rents are roughly comparable to those in Upper Merion, East Norriton, and the county as a whole. They are 33% higher than in Lower Providence (Figure 16).

### HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

A common method of estimating affordability calculates how much of a household’s income is devoted to housing expenses. If a household spends more than 30% of their gross income on housing, they are considered cost-burdened. Data from the Census Bureau demonstrates that renters are becoming more cost-burdened over time. In 2021, 25% of households with a mortgage and 37% of renters paid 30% or more of their income on

FIGURE 17 | COST BURDENED HOUSEHOLDS – NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS PAYING MORE THAN 30% OF INCOME TOWARDS HOUSING (ACS 5-YEAR, 2010)

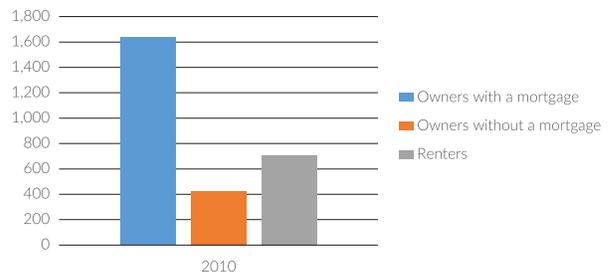
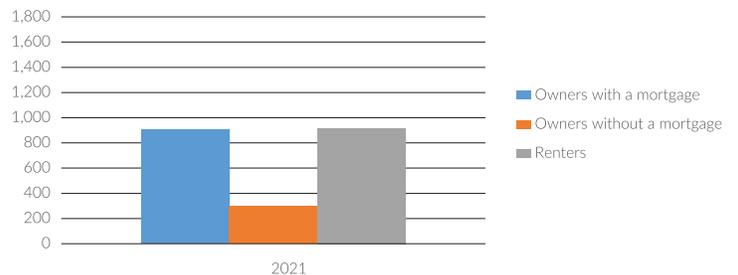


FIGURE 18 | COST BURDENED HOUSEHOLDS – NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS PAYING MORE THAN 30% OF INCOME TOWARDS HOUSING (ACS 5-YEAR, 2021)



housing, and the number of cost-burdened households is increasing. There is a need to address this disparity in the township (Figures 17 & 18). While West Norriton has a better supply of affordable housing than many other municipalities in the county, there is still a need.

In contrast, there was a drop in the number of cost-burdened households with a mortgage between 2010 and 2021, which could be due to market conditions and lower interest rates during that time.

## FAIR SHARE ANALYSIS & ACCOMMODATION OF FUTURE HOUSING DEMAND

A discussion of the township’s current stock of higher-density housing and the amount needed by 2050 to accommodate future demand is found on page 37, and a more detailed analysis can be found in **Appendix D. Fair Share Analysis and Accommodation of Future Housing Demand.**

## PUBLIC HEALTH

There are many connections between land use and health, from tree cover and heat, to how the built environment enables seniors to age well, to the materials we use to build our homes, to environmental contaminants from industry. Land use policy can influence better public health outcomes by creating walkable neighborhoods and accessible public parks to encourage healthy lifestyles, and by providing access to healthcare facilities.

The trend in healthcare is towards decentralization – systems are expanding their use of outpatient satellite offices, urgent care facilities are on the rise, and telemedicine is becoming the norm for certain types of appointments. West Norriton’s closest full-service hospital is Einstein Medical Center. The county’s 2050 comprehensive plan background reports include an interactive map of healthcare facilities in the township and across Montgomery County: <https://health-montco-2050-montcopa.hub.arcgis.com/>.

## PHYSICAL HEALTH

According to the 2018 Southeastern Pennsylvania Household Health Survey, nearly 11% of children and 38% of adults in Montgomery County did not get the recommended amount of physical activity each week. Over 13% of children and over 16% of adults in Montgomery County have asthma.<sup>10</sup> Asthma can be attributed in part to and can be exacerbated by air pollution within the local environment. Local sources of air pollution may include vehicle exhaust, industrial emissions, household mold and dust, or even wildfires. Proximity to common pollution-emitting sources, such

as heavy manufacturing and nearby roadways with heavy truck traffic, increase the risk of developing asthma. Negative indoor air quality, from sources such as cigarette smoke and particulate matter from inadequately maintained older homes, can also influence the prevalence of asthma. The leading causes of death in Montgomery County in 2022 were heart disease, cancer, COVID-19, cerebrovascular diseases, and chronic lower respiratory diseases.

## MENTAL HEALTH

The adverse mental health impacts of the pandemic had a particularly chilling effect on vulnerable populations. The 2021 Pennsylvania Youth Survey report indicated that more than 1/3 of school-aged respondents in Montgomery County felt sad or depressed most days and 17.7% stated that they had seriously considered suicide (18.6% across Pennsylvania) throughout 2020.<sup>13</sup> Elderly adults also saw an outsized impact on their mental and physical health due to social isolation.

## HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE

The township has an uninsured rate of 6.9%, which is 5% lower than Norristown Borough but significantly higher than its other neighbors (Figure 20). Insurance is often tied to employment, so this higher than average rate may be a reflection of where residents are employed.

**FIGURE 20 | PERCENT UNINSURED (ACS 5-YEAR, 2021)**

Municipality	Uninsured
West Norriton Twp.	6.9%
Worcester Twp.	0.3%
Lower Providence Twp.	2.6%
Upper Merion Twp.	3.2%
East Norriton Twp.	3.0%
Municipality of Norristown	11.9%

## FOOD ACCESS

All grocery stores in the township are located along West Main Street, Trooper Road, and Egypt Road, the most highly trafficked roadways of the township, which can make it challenging for pedestrians, bicyclists, and public transit users to access them. These grocery stores, ½-mile buffers surrounding them, and the sidewalk network are mapped below in Figure 21. This map acts as a proxy for “food deserts,” which the 2008 Farm Bill

# FAIR SHARE ANALYSIS

All municipalities in Pennsylvania are obligated to ensure their zoning ordinances provide for, "... residential housing of various dwelling types encompassing all basic forms of housing, including single family and two family dwellings, and a reasonable range of multiple family dwellings in various arrangements," (MPC § 604-4). The basis for discerning compliance with this fair share obligation emerged from a 1977 Pennsylvania Supreme Court Case, *Surrick v. Zoning Board of Upper Providence Township* 776 Pa. 182, 382 A.2d 105, which made use of a three-part analytical test that continues to be relevant today:

## IS THE MUNICIPALITY A LOGICAL AREA FOR POPULATION GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT?

West Norriton Township is a logical area for population growth and development based on the sustained growth of the population and its location in the Greater Philadelphia Region. The township population has grown by over 8% over the last 20 years, and is forecasted to grow by another 8% by 2050 per DVRPC's population forecast.<sup>11</sup>

## IS THE MUNICIPALITY DEVELOPED OR DEVELOPING?

Courts have found that a community is not considered "developed" until 95% or more of its land is consumed. MCPC estimates that just over 250 acres or about 6.5% of the gross acreage in the township remains undeveloped.<sup>12</sup> Although this is quite close to the "developed" threshold, it is necessary to operate under the assumption that the fair share mandate continues to apply until the 95% developed threshold is exceeded.

## IS THE AMOUNT OF LAND AVAILABLE FOR MULTIFAMILY DEVELOPMENT DISPROPORTIONATELY SMALL, IN RELATION TO POPULATION GROWTH PRESSURE AND PRESENT LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT?

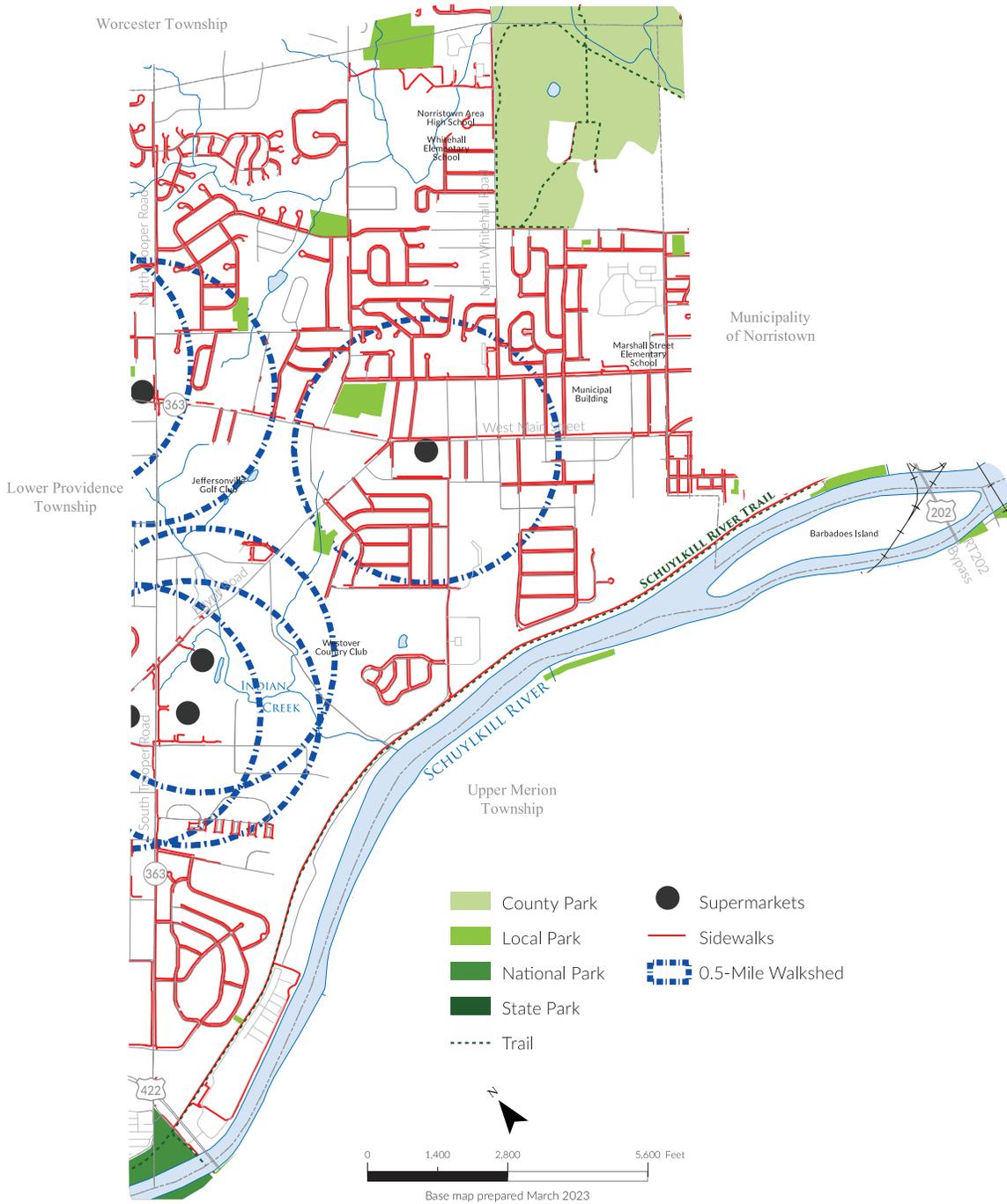
A summary of this calculation is provided below, while the full calculation is contained in **Appendix D: Fair Share Analysis and Accommodation of Future Housing Demand**. West Norriton easily passes this test with roughly 47% of developable land available for fair share housing development. Overall, the township is estimated to need 576 additional dwelling units by 2050. Of that, 256 units would need to be higher density to continue the existing ratio of lower density to fair share units. The township is well-situated to accommodate this.

FIGURE 19 | SUMMARY OF FAIR SHARE ANALYSIS

<b>Developable Land Remaining in Community:</b>		
Total acres of developable land	254 acres	
Developable land as percentage of gross acreage	6.5%	
<b>Multifamily Units:</b>		
Multifamily units as a percentage of existing housing stock	40.8% (2,354 units)	
New dwelling units needed to house the 2050 population	576 units	
Estimated number of potential new multifamily units (40.8%)	256 units	
Total housing units of all types possible at build-out	6,491	
Total multi-family units possible at build-out	3,076	
<b>Percentage of Land Available for Multifamily Development:</b>		
Developable land zoned for multifamily units	Acres	Percent
	120	47%
Total land zoned for multifamily units	3,341	85%

All steps of this analysis can be found in Appendix D, Accommodation of Future Housing Demand & Fair Share Analysis

FIGURE 21 | GROCERY STORES WITH 0.5-MILE WALKSHEDS (DVRPC: MCPC)

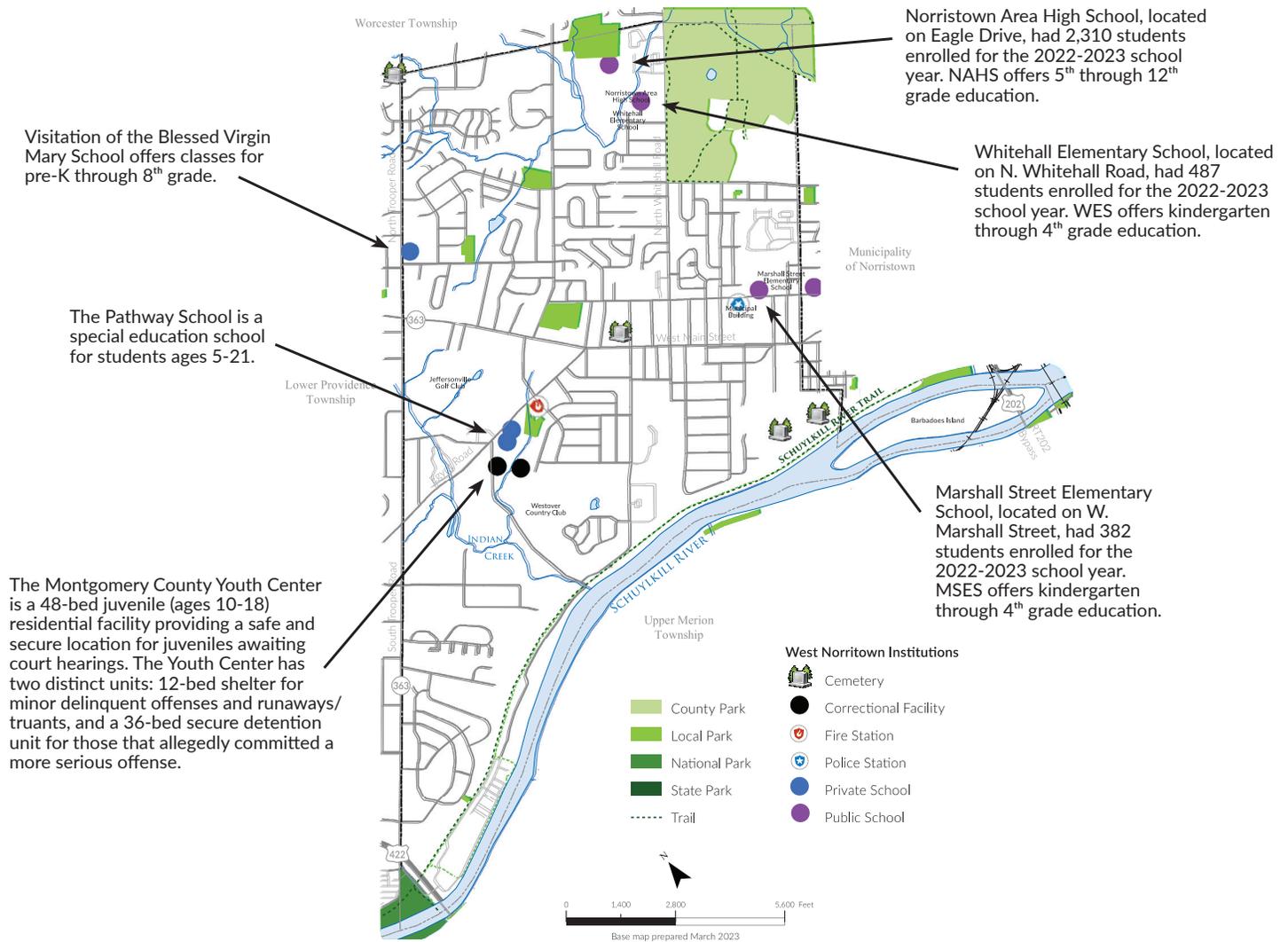


defined as an, “area in the United States with limited access to affordable and nutritious food, particularly such an area composed of predominantly lower-income neighborhoods and communities.”<sup>14</sup> People in the eastern part of the township have to travel further to get to a grocery store.

We know that 7% of county residents are food insecure,

but this percentage is higher for minorities: 15% of the black population and 16% of the Hispanic population.<sup>15</sup> more residents in the township receive food stamps or SNAP benefits than most of the surrounding municipalities, and in the county as a whole (6.5% of township households vs. 5.4% of households county-wide) (Figure 22).

**FIGURE 23 | INSTITUTIONS**



**FIGURE 22 | HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVING FOOD STAMPS/ SNAP (ACS 5-YEAR, 2021)**

Municipality	Percent of Households Receiving Food Stamps/SNAP
West Norriton Twp.	6.5%
Worcester Twp.	1.2%
Lower Providence Twp.	3.1%
Upper Merion Twp.	2.0%
East Norriton Twp.	2.6%
Municipality of Norristown	26.5%
Montgomery County	5.4%
Pennsylvania	13.1%

Many residential neighborhoods have connected sidewalk networks, but the commercial areas of the township are lacking adequate sidewalks. Improving walkability in these corridors can increase access to fresh, healthy and affordable food and avoid food insecurity.

## INSTITUTIONS

Figure 23 shows the location of all schools, both public and private, within the township, as well as cemeteries, fire stations, police stations, and other governmental facilities.

### SCHOOLS

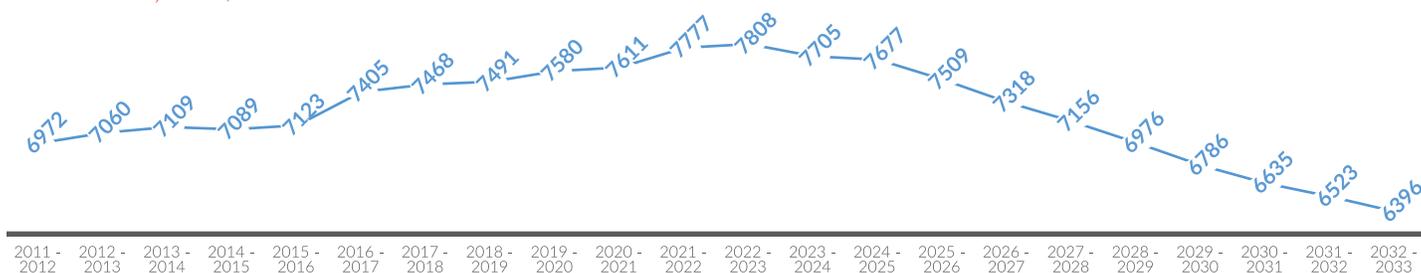
West Norriton Township is part of the Norristown Area School District (NASD), which also serves residents

of East Norriton Township and Norristown Borough. Between the 2012-2013 and 2022-2023 school years, NASD enrollment grew by over 10% (748 students). However, in the decade between the 2022-2023 and 2032-2033 school years, the Department of Education projects that enrollment in NASD will decline by nearly 20% (1,412 students). Subsequent years of enrollment data could shift this calculation, however. If enrollment were to drop dramatically, NASD would likely consider closing certain facilities and reorganizing more broadly. Enrollment figures from the 2011-2012 through 2032-2033 school years may be found in Figure 24.

# HISTORIC PRESERVATION

West Norriton has a rich history and has retained many historic resources. However, there are currently no formally recognized historic resources or historic districts within the township. There are a handful of township regulations, housed within the zoning ordinance and subdivision and land development ordinance that are aimed at protecting historic resources. These protections could be strengthened if specific historic resources were

**FIGURE 24 | NORRISTOWN AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT ENROLLMENT AND PROJECTION (PA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, 2023)**



## PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Montgomery County-Norristown Public Library (MC-NPL) operates as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. The main branch is located within Norristown and is the “home library” for residents of West Norriton. As of 2022, MC-NPL offered access to 168,454 adult books, 226,839 children’s books, 128,245 eBooks, and 62,954 other items. The library system offers many public events that are catered to patrons of all ages: throughout 2022, over 1,800 programs were offered and over 32,000 people attended these events.

## U.S. POST OFFICES

There are no retail post offices located within West Norriton Township; however, there is a “carrier annex” located on Potshop Lane. The carrier annex is an operations facility where mail is sorted for distribution. The Eagleville Post Office serves all residents of the township, zip code 19403, but it is located in Lower Providence Township. The post office offers retail mail/parcel service and PO boxes for rent.



*Major General Hancock's Tomb in Montgomery Cemetery*

inventoried and recognized. State enabling legislation, the Historic Districts Act (HDA) and the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC), provide for local administration and allow for strong control over historic resources. Currently adopted land use regulations rely upon the language of the MPC, while creation of a local historic district would rely upon the HDA.

The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), housed within the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC), maintains a list of resources that have been determined to be potentially eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register requires significant documentation in order to be listed, however, there are many benefits, such as unlocking Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credits for qualifying projects. Potentially eligible resources identified by the SHPO include Barbadoes Island, the railroad bridge over Barbadoes Island, Montgomery Cemetery, a multi-county Schuylkill Navigation Company Historic District (following the Schuylkill River from Port Carbon to Philadelphia), numerous individual resources within the Norristown State Hospital and Farm Park grounds, and a potential Norristown State Hospital Historic District that would include the individual resources previously noted. See **Appendix E: A Brief History of West Norriton Township** for more information.

## KEY FINDINGS

West Norriton's neighborhoods make the township a great place to live. There are a variety of housing options available in the township, yet the community is unaffordable for many residents. Putting in place land use regulations that ensure future development accommodates residents of varying income levels, ages, and abilities, as well as requiring better pedestrian connectivity will help the township be more accessible for all going forward.





## IMPLEMENTATION GOALS

The following overarching goals will guide the township in addressing concerns identified by the community throughout the comprehensive planning process:

1. Enhance existing parks, open space areas and recreation opportunities in the township
2. Promote solutions to risks associated with climate change like flooding and heat
3. Amend township land use regulations to provide stronger protection of natural features and to ensure the continued viability of environmental services

*Please refer to Chapter 2, Implementation, for detailed information on implementation goals and strategies.*

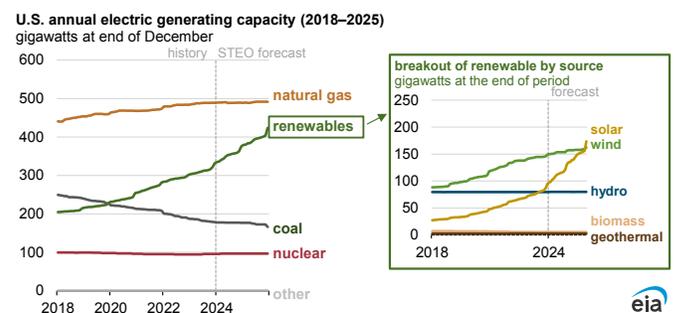
## TRENDS

The following trends in sustainable development are being utilized in communities across Montgomery County and are therefore relevant for West Norriton’s future.

### RENEWABLE ENERGY

Renewable energy opportunities continue to expand due to reduced equipment costs, making its use more

**FIGURE 25 | U.S. ANNUAL ELECTRIC GENERATING CAPACITY (2018-2025) (EIA)**



## INTRODUCTION

West Norriton Township was developed in an area rich with diverse and unique natural features. After centuries of human development, some natural services have become strained. The township has committed to ensuring a sustainable future, as demonstrated by the Township’s active Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) and their work, and by the establishment of a Ready for 100 Initiative. The Ready for 100 Initiative involved extensive analysis by Villanova University students, and laid out the path to 100% renewable energy use by 2050<sup>16</sup>.

The ultimate goal is to ensure the continued sustainability of the township, first and foremost through sustainable municipal operations that can act as a model for others. Sustainable municipal operations relate to the services offered, parks and open space as key resources, and the continued viability of infrastructure. All of these factors must necessarily consider adaptation and mitigation of future risks from climate change, which will be explored in this chapter.

attainable for the average household. Building-integrated solar energy generation systems and geothermal energy systems have also become increasingly common for residential and commercial purposes. Renewable energy generation - comprised of wind, solar, hydro, biomass, and geothermal - are continuing to grow and make up a larger share of the U.S. energy generation portfolio, accounting for 22% of electricity generation in 2023.<sup>17</sup>

Residents of Pennsylvania can choose where they source their electricity by using the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission’s PA Power Switch program. This system allows customers to search and select alternative energy suppliers, choose to source their power from renewable sources, review rates and contract terms, and easily switch providers.

The Township is also empowered to choose an electricity provider on behalf of residents and business of the township through the Power of Community Choice Aggregation (CCA). Residents and local businesses can opt-out of the CCA at any time and select their own provider, as noted above.

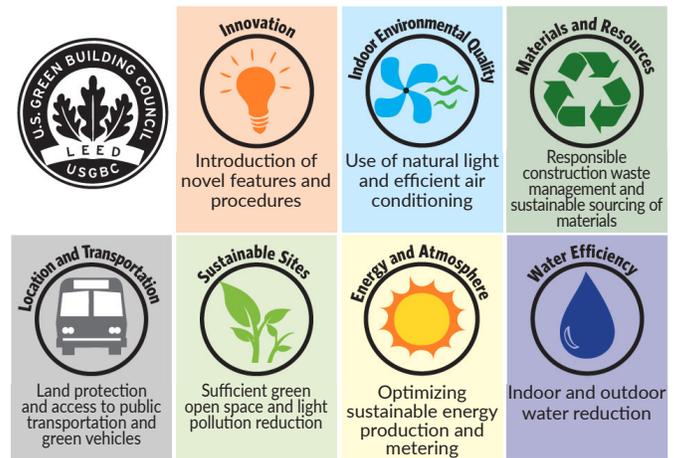
## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines green building as “the practice of creating structures and using processes that are environmentally responsible and resource-efficient throughout a building’s lifecycle from siting to design, construction, operation, maintenance, renovation, and deconstruction.” Green buildings reduce the impact of construction on the environment and human health by using resources more efficiently and reducing waste. This includes everything from using reused or recycled materials, to using materials with fewer pollutants to improve indoor air quality, to renewable energy generation/use and electrification, to design choices to minimize energy use, to green roofs and rainwater harvest, and much more.

There are many programs and organizations that certify the sustainability of buildings. The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification is a green building rating system based on environmental and energy efficiency goals. Another ubiquitous program is

## LEED CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

In order to achieve LEED certification, projects must earn points in these categories:



Source: US Green Building Council

Energy Star, administered by the EPA, whereby certain appliances, electronics, and other products are assigned a relative energy efficiency rating.

## GREEN PARKING

Surface parking lots have proven to be a problematic land use, as they increase stormwater runoff and exacerbate the heat island effect. The heat island effect is the observed phenomenon where impervious surfaces, primarily buildings and paving, absorb and retain heat throughout the day. This heat is then trapped and slowly released, warming ambient air temperatures for many hours after the fact- often well into the night. A comparison of surface temperature and impervious surfacing can be seen in Figures 26 and 27.

Stormwater runoff from surface parking lots is another issue, as runoff often contains sediment, heavy metals, and other contaminants that adversely impact surface water quality. Design features like incorporating naturalized drainage, maximizing shading and greening, using permeable paving, and using energy-efficient lighting can help reduce the impact of parking lots. Montgomery County Planning Commission recently published a guidebook, *Green Sustainable Parking Lots*, which provides model regulations that could be integrated into the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance. The township could also pursue a municipal demonstration project, similar to East Greenville Borough

in northwest Montgomery County:



*Permeable parking lot at East Greenville Borough Hall*

## NATURAL FEATURES

West Norriton Township was established within a beautiful landscape, upon the north bank of the scenic Schuylkill River. The varied topography is a result of the underlying geology, primarily the sedimentary Stockton Formation, which formed during the Triassic Period about 150-180 million years ago.<sup>18</sup> These geologic formations shaped the topography, soils, hydrology, and vegetative communities seen at the surface.

Over time, bedrock is weathered and becomes the foundation for soils. Bedrock influences the infiltration rate, nutrient content, and agricultural capacity of the newly made soil. The resulting soil profile includes large swaths of prime farmland and farmland of statewide importance, designations from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Soil Survey. Hydric soils, those being soils that are periodically wet due to poor drainage, slow rates of permeability, or shallow water tables, are also prevalent across the township.

The majority of land within the township has gentle to moderate slopes, which are generally suitable for agriculture or development, but there are also areas with quite steep slopes with limited potential for development. There are many corridors of steeply sloped land, sometimes in excess of 25%, along the Schuylkill River, Stony Creek, and the many tributaries of both waterways. The largest and most dense areas of tree canopy within the township are located within these steeply sloped riparian corridors. As demonstrated in Figures 28 and 29, the areas of steep slope are roughly one and the same

as those with the densest tree canopy. These steeply sloped lands were very likely left alone throughout the township's long history, as it has always been inefficient to try to develop on such steeply sloped land.

## WATER RESOURCES

West Norriton Township is located in three watersheds: the Mingo Creek-Schuylkill River Watershed, Plymouth Creek-Schuylkill River Watershed, and the Stony Creek Watershed. The Stony Creek Watershed covers the northern half of the township, roughly, and the creek meanders throughout much of this area. The Mingo Creek-Schuylkill River Watershed extends across the Schuylkill River and quite a ways upstream, as far as Limerick Township to the northwest. The main surface waterways within this watershed in the township is the Indian Creek and the Schuylkill River. Lastly, a small section of Barbadoes Island falls within the Plymouth Creek-Schuylkill River watershed.

Wetlands and riparian corridors are key environmental features that act as filters to remove contaminants from water as it approaches and enters the waterway, moderate water temperature, aid in groundwater recharge, help prevent erosion, and are key habitats for wildlife. Wetlands are areas where hydric soil is present, hydric vegetation is present, and the area is regularly saturated with water.<sup>19</sup> A 2012 study by the Heritage Conservancy evaluated the status of riparian corridors on selected streams in Montgomery and Bucks counties. This analysis revealed that many areas lack vegetation on one or both sides of the waterways in West Norriton. The average precipitation in Montgomery County was 49.4 inches per year between 2010 and 2020; however,



*An unprotected riparian corridor within Centennial Park*

FIGURE 26 | SURFACE TEMPERATURES

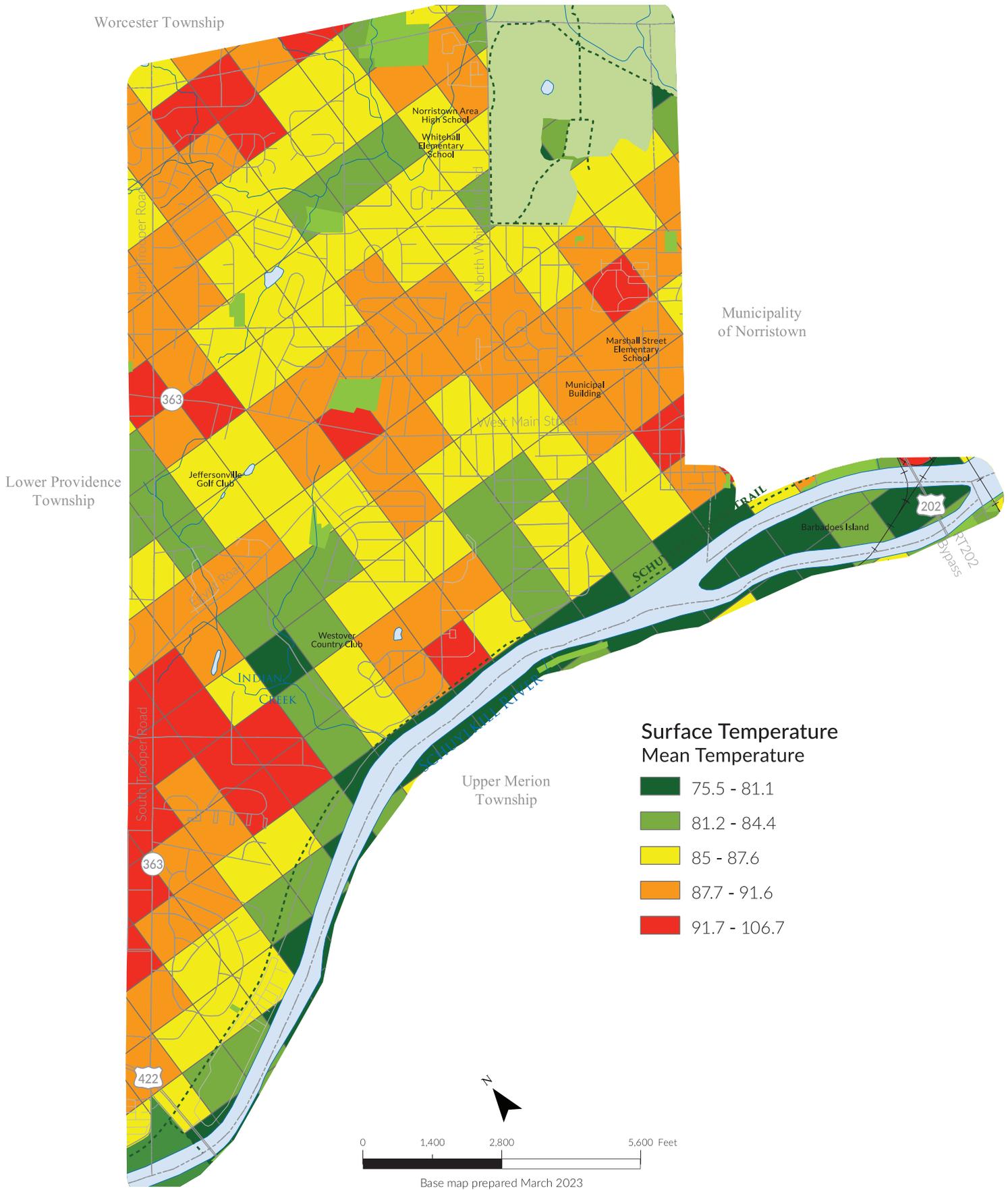


FIGURE 27 | IMPERVIOUS SURFACING

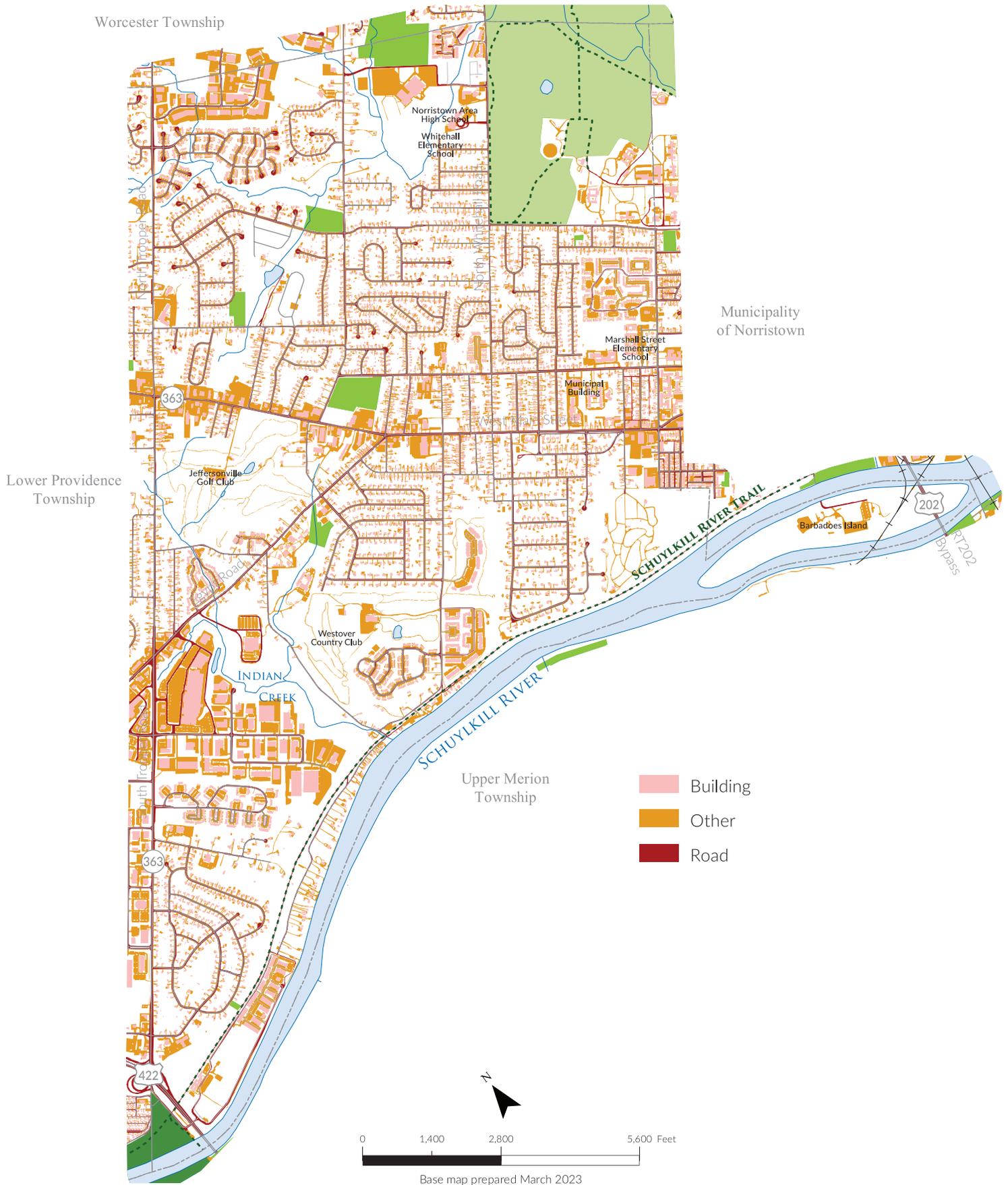


FIGURE 28 | STEEP SLOPES

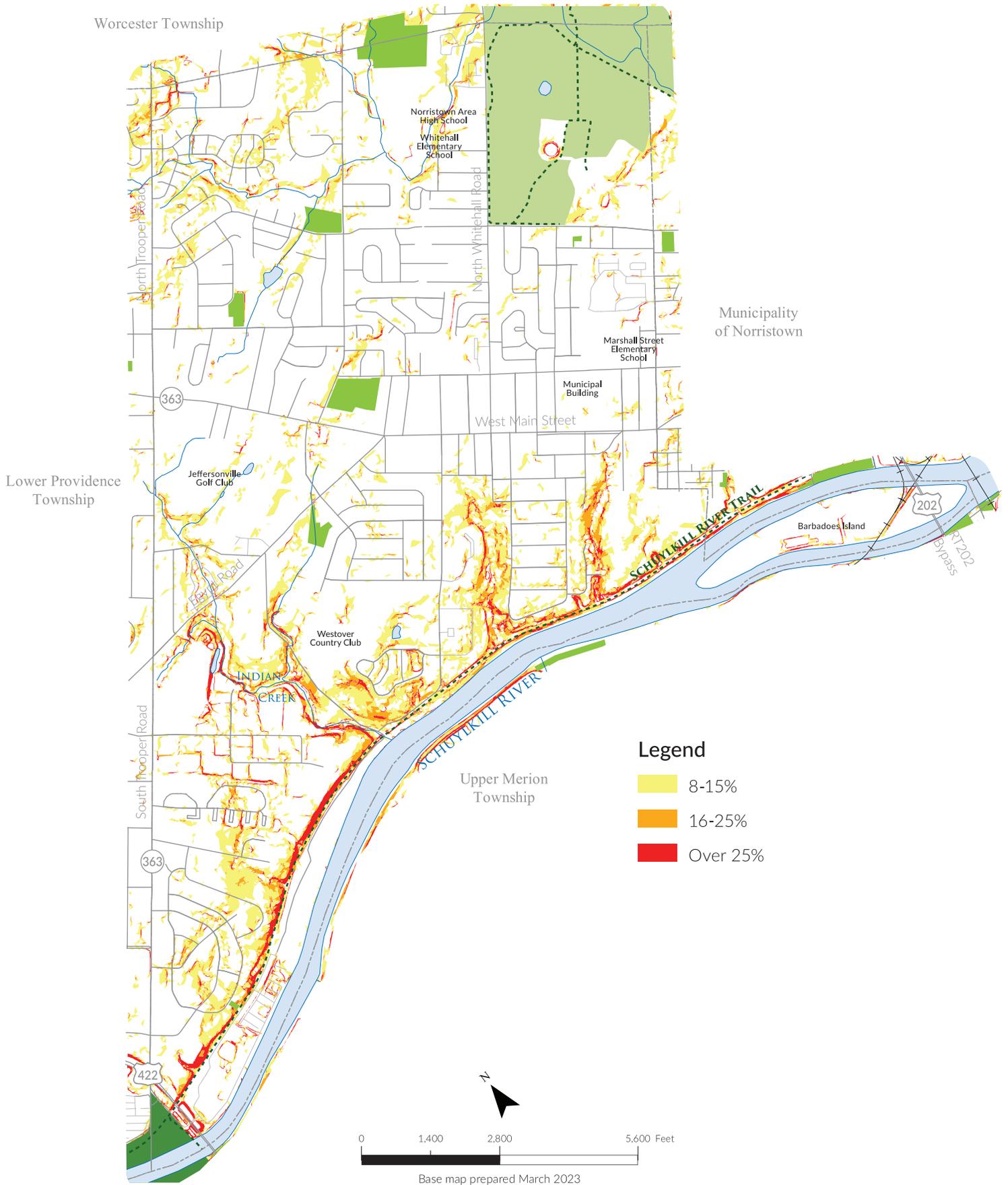


FIGURE 29 | CANOPY COVERAGE



the average annual precipitation has increased by 0.7 inches each decade over the last century.<sup>20</sup> In addition to this long-term trend, recent years have broken records:

2018 saw nearly 70 inches of precipitation, the most over the last 100 years and about 40% greater than the 10-year average. As extreme precipitation events continue to



The Riverview Landing at Valley Forge apartments include ground-level parking, elevating dwellings above the floodplain.

occur more often and in greater intensity, it will become increasingly important to properly manage stormwater and mitigate flood risk.

## CLIMATE CHANGE VULNERABILITY

The impacts of climate change are being felt today, as extreme weather events cause damage in excess of what would have been anticipated in the past. Climate change has increased the prevalence of extreme heat and intense precipitation/flooding, which has an outsized impacts on disadvantaged communities. The damage caused by recent events, such as Hurricane Ida and tropical storms Isias and Fay, are harbingers of how climate change will impact local communities if the course is not corrected.

Montgomery County's *Climate Change Vulnerability Analysis* explores climate change vulnerabilities throughout the county. Every community is vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, and the *Climate Change Vulnerability Analysis* uses heat risk, flood risk, and socioeconomic data to determine the most vulnerable areas of the county. The overall risk analysis reveals that the area bordering the Schuylkill River between Route 422 and South Schuylkill Avenue, and the area bordering Indian Creek to the south (off Willowbrook Drive) have above-average risk from climate change when considering all factors.

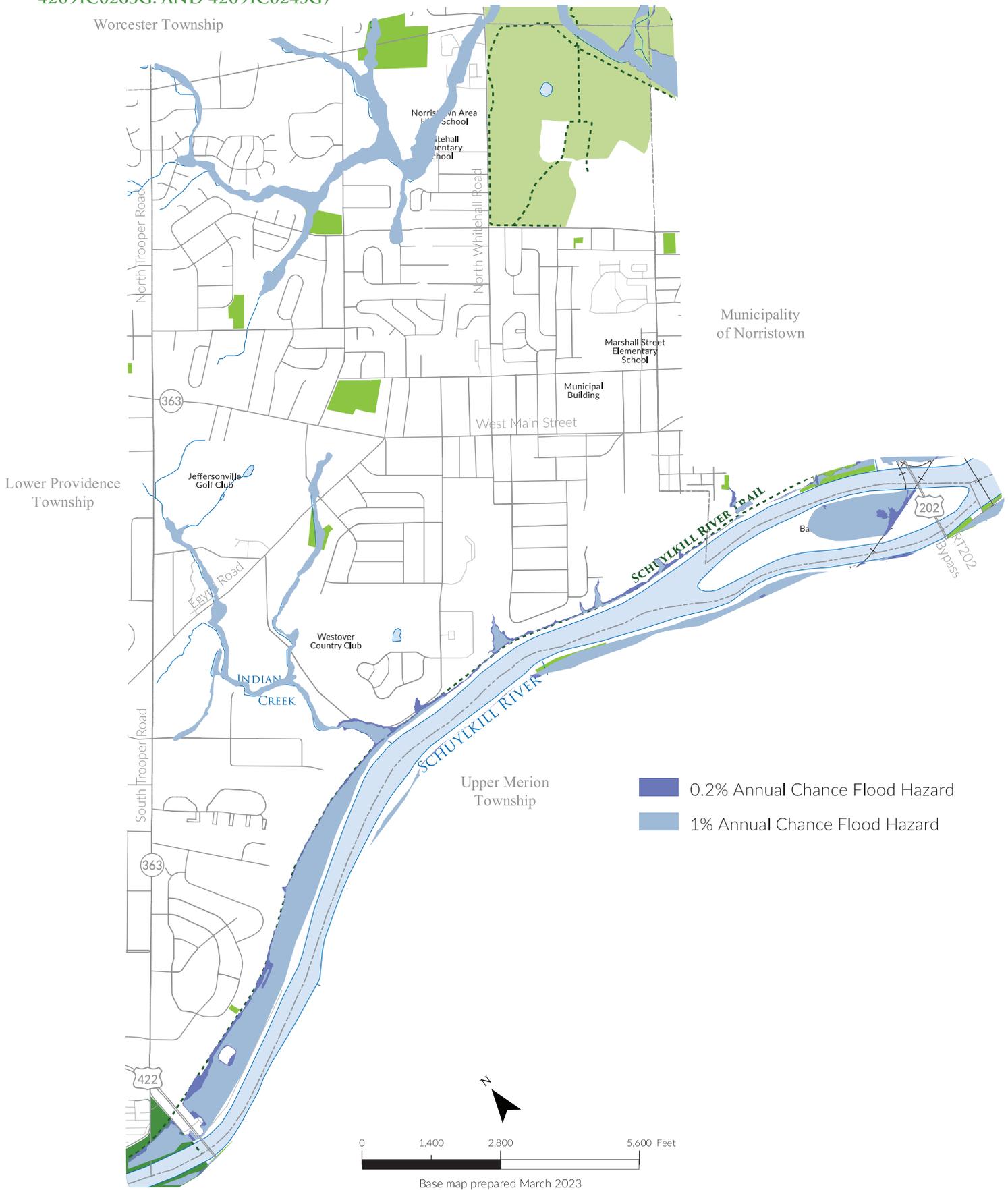
Turning to heat risk, the commercial areas around the

Boulevard of the Generals and Valley Forge Marketplace are at increased risk. This is due to the expansive areas of paving and limited landscaping. There are many areas of the township considered to be floodplains and, as such, are within the flood risk zone. As illustrated on Figure 30, some portions of the township fall within the Special Flood Hazard Area (1% Annual Chance Flood) and the Moderate Flood Hazard Area (0.2% Annual Chance Flood). In recent years, the township has seen significant flooding along Port Indian Road, at the apartment complex on Riverview Boulevard, and the apartment complex on Mill Road. Removing the danger to people and properties in the floodplain, whether through FEMA buy-outs of flood-prone properties or through floodproofing, will be key to reduce future flood risk.

Lastly, socioeconomic risk relies upon DVRPC's *Equity Analysis for the Greater Philadelphia Region*, which takes into account the following indicators of potential disadvantage: youth, older adults, female, racial minority, ethnic minority, foreign-born, limited English proficiency, disabled, and low-income.<sup>21</sup> These demographic indicators correlate with potential disadvantage, but each factor on its own does not imply that an individual is disadvantaged. West Norriton's neighborhoods generally have an average level of socioeconomic risk, yet the census tract that includes the Farm Park between Whitehall, Forrest Avenue, and Germantown Pike has an above-average socioeconomic risk. According to the analysis, this census tract has an above average percentage of residents 65 years or older (20.8%) for the region, an above average female population (54.3%), and an above average percentage of residents with one or more physical and/or mental disabilities (16.8%).

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) provides a similar analysis to that conducted by DVRPC in defining Environmental Justice Areas. Environmental justice is the concept that, "communities and populations should not be disproportionately exposed to adverse environmental impacts," which came to the fore because, "historically, minority and low-income Pennsylvanians have been forced to bear a disproportionate share of adverse environmental impacts."<sup>22</sup> This analysis only includes census tracts where 20% or more individuals live at or below the federal poverty line, and/or 30% or more of

**FIGURE 30 | FLOOD HAZARD ZONES (FEMA FIRM PANELS 42091C0331G, 42091C0332G, 42091C0351G, 42091C0263G. AND 42091C0245G)**



the population identifies as a non-white minority.<sup>23</sup> There are no Census Tracts meeting this Environmental Justice Area definition within the township at present; however, the township will ensure that future land use decisions include a focus on mitigating community impact and ensuring equity among stakeholders.

## MITIGATION & ADAPTATION

There are two sides to addressing climate change: mitigation, i.e. making the impacts of climate change less severe by reducing the source of greenhouse gas emissions, and adaptation, i.e. adjusting to the current and projected future effects of climate change. Both strategies are needed, and a municipal sustainability or climate action plan is a useful first step when determining how to best implement change. Strengthening emergency response services helps at the point-in-time of emergencies, which are likely to be needed more as extreme weather events increase in frequency and intensity, but proactive steps will also be necessary to avoid loss of life and property.

# SUSTAINABLE OPERATIONS & INFRASTRUCTURE

Township staff is dedicated to providing quality administrative, maintenance, and public safety services that serve the needs of the township's residents and businesses. The township offices are consolidated within the municipal complex at 1630 West Marshall Street. The township's public works department oversees many essential functions of the township, including maintenance of the township's 50+ miles of roadway, tree trimming, storm sewer inlets, and maintenance of township parks. By ensuring these facilities are resilient and using them as an example of how the municipal operations can be more sustainable, the township can be a leader for the community.

## WATER & SEWER INFRASTRUCTURE

PA American Water provides water service to the township. As of 2017, there were 5,866 service connections within the township and 33,835 connections throughout the service area (5,232 domestic, 314 commercial, 2 industrial, 16 institutional, 302 'other'

connections within the township).<sup>24</sup> Water is supplied by the surface waters of the Lower Schuylkill River. All of Montgomery County is part of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Groundwater Protected Area (SEPA-GWPA). The SEPA-GWPA was established in 1980, in part to help prevent long-term depletion of groundwater and protect stream flows during periods of drought. Within this area, the amount of groundwater that can be withdrawn is more closely regulated than in other areas of the Delaware River Basin.<sup>25</sup>

All wastewater generated within the township is treated at the Norristown Municipal Wastewater Authority (NMWA) Wastewater Treatment Plant in Norristown Borough. The plant has a total capacity of 9.75 million gallons per day (MGD), of which 1/3 or 3.25 MGD is apportioned to West Norriton Township. This assured capacity has been allotted to the township since 1985 when the two municipalities entered into a legal agreement ensuring such. The township's 1/3 interest in the Sewage Treatment Plant also requires the township to provide 1/3 of the funding for maintenance/upgrades. West Norriton Township owns and operates all sanitary sewer collection and conveyance within the township's borders, as well as 8,500 feet of force main within Norristown Borough.

There have been various studies of the wastewater system over the last few decades that have identified needed upgrades. From 2003 to 2019, the NMWA was placed under Consent Order and Agreement by PA DEP due to inflow and infiltration concerns. The Consent Order compelled significant maintenance/upgrades and, until compliance was reached in 2019, PA DEP review of new wastewater connections was required. The township's June 2023 Act 537 Plan aims to identify the best course of action to address maintenance concerns and ensure the continued operation of the system.

## ENERGY

The pipelines that transport natural gas and the transmission lines that transport electricity throughout the township and region are owned and maintained by the Pennsylvania Electric Company (PECO). A 220V kV PECO transmission line runs along the Schuylkill River and connects to Norristown Borough to the east and Lower Providence Township to the west. A 132 kV transmission line crosses Barbadoes Island and connects

FIGURE 31 | UTILITY LINES IN WEST NORRITON TOWNSHIP (DVRPC)

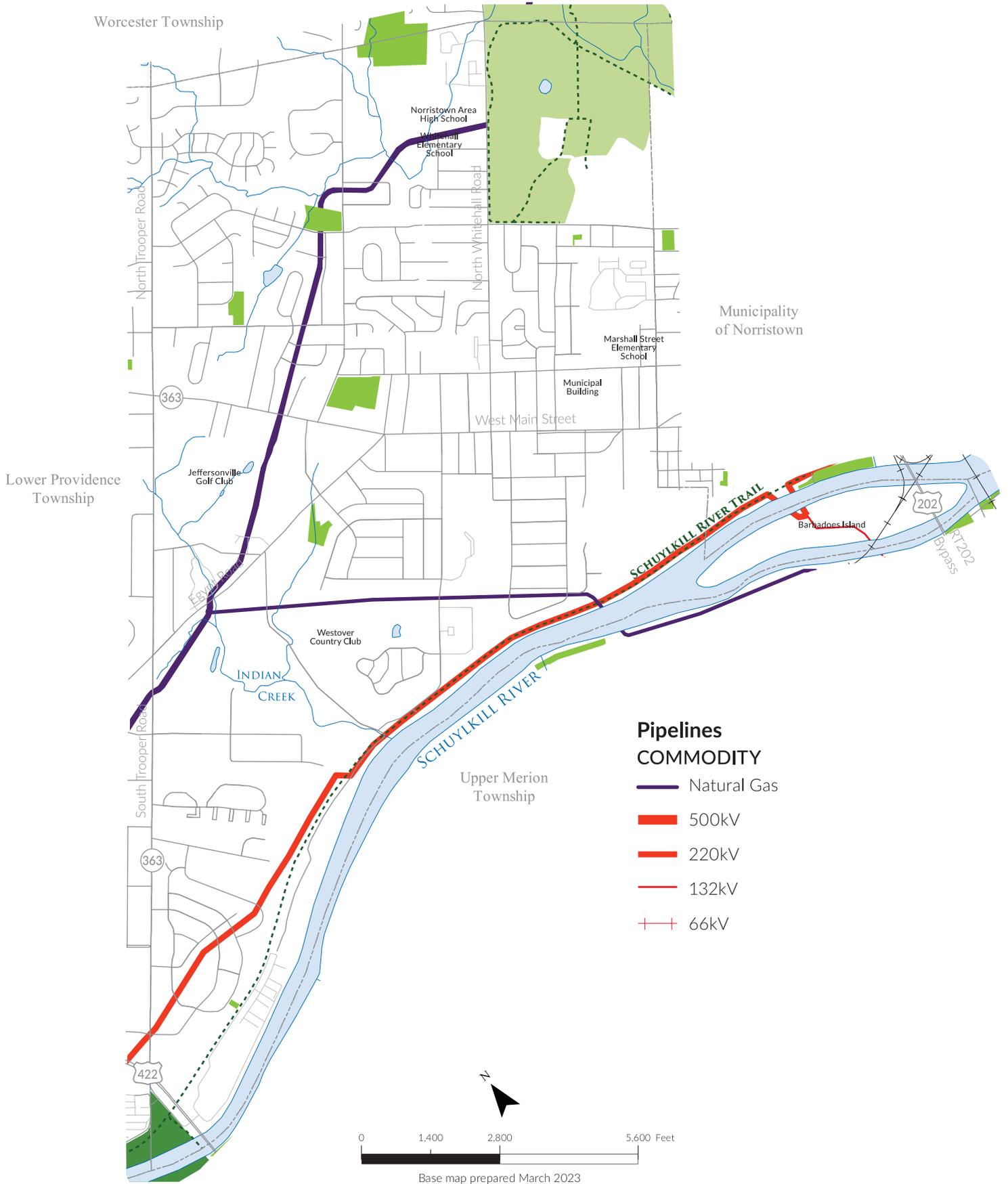


FIGURE 32 | RECYCLING STATISTICS, 2019-2021 (HOUGH ASSOCIATES)

		Paper: Office Paper	Paper: Cardboard	Paper: Mixed or Other	Plastic: Other	Plastic: Mixed	Single Stream*	Total Gross (Tons)
2019	Residential	-	-	101.7	-	-	1494.3	1596
	Commercial	26.8	863.4	97.8	12.7	0.2	629.1	1630.4
	Total	26.8	863.4	199.5	12.7	0.2	2123.8	3226.4
2020	Residential	-	-	40.5	-	-	1519.8	1560.3
	Commercial	3.9	922.5	0.6	-	0.8	414.5	1342.3
	Total	3.9	922.5	41.1	-	0.8	1934.3	2902.6
2021	Residential	-	-	29.1	-	-	1344.1	1373.2
	Commercial	8.8	1055.4	30.7	8.3	-	534.8	1638
	Total	8.8	1055.4	59.8	8.3	-	1878.9	3011.2

\*Aluminum cans, steel and bimetallic cans, clear, green, and amber glass, #1 and #2 plastics, mixed paper, cardboard.

to Upper Merion Township. Natural gas pipelines also cross the township. Utility lines are depicted in Figure 31.

The current level of utility service should be able to accommodate population growth, especially when considering that energy use in many sectors should decline over time as energy efficiency improves. Conversely, with the electrification of vehicles (and many other things), this reduced demand for electricity may be wholly counteracted. Dispersing energy generation can help reduce the burden on the primary utility system while making individual properties more resilient and sustainable. On-site generation would likely be limited to geothermal or solar energy at present, but future innovations may make wind or an alternative energy source more viable at a smaller scale. It will be important to regulate any localized energy generation, taking into account mitigation measures that may be necessary to ensure they fit within established neighborhoods and the community overall.

## TRASH AND RECYCLING

The township requires residents and businesses to contract with a municipally-approved waste collection company to pick-up their trash and recycling. All waste collectors must provide refuse and recycling collection no less than once per week. The township also requires the provision of leaf, branch, and Christmas tree removal throughout the year. In 2021, the township recycled 3,011 tons of waste (both residential and commercial)(Figure 32).

## OPEN SPACE

### TOWNSHIP PARKS

The township has a total of over 43 acres of parks and open space, exclusive of the Jeffersonville Golf Course. The township provides recreational amenities for users of all ages, with ample playground and playfields available. West Norriton offers many courts and fields for team sports, as well as passive recreation amenities like walking paths. The Parks and Recreation Department is constantly exploring ways to enhance existing parks. Figure 33 summarizes township park amenities, and Figure 34 shows the location of all township, county, and national parks.

The township's last comprehensive review of the parks and open space system occurred in 2006, when the *Parks and Open Space Plan Update* was published (an update to a 1995 plan by the same name). More recently, in 2017, the township commissioned a master plan for the 15.1-acre Van Landeghem Tract. The plan provides for streambank stabilization, invasive plant removal, native plantings, a half-mile pedestrian trail, and pedestrian connections to the sidewalk network. The plan was recently modified to include a dog park.

### JEFFERSONVILLE GOLF CLUB

The Jeffersonville Golf Course is an 18-hole, par 70 golf course that was designed by Donald J. Ross. It was first opened in 1931, and has been owned by the township since 1972. The course saw extensive renovations in 2000. The township is once again in

FIGURE 33, | PARKS AND OPEN SPACE INVENTORY, 2023

	Total Acreage	Baseball Field(s)	Softball Field(s)	Batting Cages	Soccer Field(s)	Basketball Court(s)	Tennis Court(s)	Walking Track	Playground(s)	Pavilion(s)	Picnic Tables	Restrooms	Water Fountain	Parking
Betzwood Park	1.2					•			•					
Centennial Park	13.5	•	•	•				•						
Firehouse Rec. Site	3.5					•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•
Oxford Circle Park	0.25								•					
Padden Park	8.5		•		•			•	•		•	•	•	•
Squire Croft Park*	1													
Van Landeghem Tract*	15.1													
<b>TOTAL**</b>	<b>43.05</b>													

the process of significantly enhancing the 150-acre grounds. Enhancements include a new 12,950 square foot clubhouse, a new 800 square foot “halfway house”, a nearly 3,000 square foot event tent, and an expanded parking area.

### NORRISTOWN FARM PARK

The 690-acre Norristown Farm Park straddles East and West Norriton Township, and it is owned by the state and operated by Montgomery County. The park includes a working farm, seven miles of trails, a picnic area, a ballfield, as well as both a trout nursery and opportunities for fishing. The Farm Park is an important recreational resource for the township and region.

### MUNICIPAL PARKS



The Schuylkill River Trail and former Betzwood Film Studio

### WESTOVER GOLF CLUB

Westover Golf Club, located between Port Indian Road and South Schuylkill Avenue, is a public, 18-hole golf course designed by George Fazio. In addition to the course, Westover Golf Club offers the Restaurant at Westover as well as banquet and meeting rental spaces.

### VALLEY FORGE NATIONAL PARK

A section of Valley Forge National Park is located in the southwest tip of the township. The Betzwood Park trailhead, not to be confused with the Township Park of the same name, connects to both the Schuylkill River Trail and to Valley Forge National Park across the river via Sullivan’s Bridge.



Playground at Betzwood Park, the smallest township park



*Park Master Plan posted at the Van Landeghem Tract*



*The Stony Creek runs through the Norristown Farm Park*



*Exercise equipment and multiuse playfield at Padden Park*



*Zachary Wallace Playground at Padden Park*

## SCHUYLKILL RIVER TRAIL

The Schuylkill River Trail, part of the 800+ mile Circuit Trails Network, traverses the township. The SRT is discussed in more detail in **Chapter 8, Transportation**.

FIGURE 34 | TOWNSHIP PARKS AND OPEN SPACE WITH SIDEWALK NETWORK



## KEY FINDINGS

The natural resources, parks, and open space of West Norriton Township contribute to the character of the community and benefit residents through their natural beauty, recreational value, and through the many ecosystem services offered. These natural systems manage stormwater, improve air and water quality, moderate ambient air temperatures, and provide innumerable other benefits to physical and mental health. Balancing development pressure with the conservation of open space and natural resources within the township will be an ongoing effort, but the township is well on the way with an active EAC and recently established Ready for 100 Initiative.

With the effects of climate change already being felt (i.e., through recent storm events, particularly from hurricanes and tropical storms), both mitigation and adaptation are top-of-mind. The township has a large and visible footprint in the community, and can leverage this position to promote sustainable development practices. Township facilities and parks can be enhanced with naturalized solutions, such as recent tree planting throughout the riparian corridor at the Jeffersonville Golf Club and energy efficiency upgrades at the township complex.

The township can also incentivize green building practices and expedite the switch to renewable energy sources for the private sector. The township can act as a conduit to connect eligible property owners to existing energy efficiency programs that administered at the county, state and federal level. In terms of adaptation, naturalized solutions such as increasing tree canopy and other greening methods can help with the effects of heat and extreme weather (e.g., stormwater capture). Many of these concepts can be integrated into township land use regulations.



## IMPLEMENTATION GOALS

The following overarching goals will guide the township in addressing concerns identified by the community throughout the comprehensive planning process:

1. Encourage the establishment of a strong mix of businesses on West Main Street
2. Improve the streetscape in the township’s commercial areas

*Please refer to Chapter 2, Implementation Plan, for detailed information on implementation goals and strategies.*

## TRENDS

The following trends in commercial development are impacting communities across Montgomery County and are therefore relevant for West Norriton’s future.

### INCREASE IN E-COMMERCE

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that e-commerce sales accounted for 15.4% of total retail sales in the second quarter of 2023, up from 4.2% of total retail sales in 2010. This change in retail demand has caused many stores and malls across the county to close and forced retailers to alter their strategies, often offering a mix of online and in-person shopping with curbside pickup. Nevertheless, there is still demand for in-person shopping and retailers that are offering more community events and experiential shopping experiences to attract shoppers such as art shows, wine tastings, and demonstrations are doing well.

## INTRODUCTION

While the COVID-19 pandemic influenced employment and job growth trends in West Norriton, job growth is expected to match population growth going forward. Vacancy rates are low for retail and industrial properties, but have been increasing for office space (CoStar, 2023). The township is primarily a car-oriented bedroom community, although the number of employment centers has increased in recent years. The township’s shopping centers and industrial parks are major employment centers for people commuting into the community for work, but most township residents work elsewhere. West Main Street remains a priority area for commercial growth and increased walkability.



## WALKABLE COMMERCIAL AND OFFICE

Although some Main Street areas in the county have been declining due to online shopping, areas that have added elements to make them walkable and accessible for all users are doing well. Some of these elements include outdoor dining, good sidewalks with street trees and benches, public art and events, and a variety of uses like entertainment, artisan manufacturing, and retail. A shift in workplace culture towards more walkable mixed-use developments allow office workers to patronize local businesses and eateries, take a walk on their breaks, and potentially live nearby. Office and commercial environments that have access to public transportation and nearby quality housing are likely to be competitive going forward.

## FLEXIBLE COMMERCIAL AND OFFICE SPACES

With the rise of remote work, there is a demand for more flexible commercial and office space. Offices need less space for employees and retailers need fewer stores to reach their customers. This means that companies and businesses are leasing smaller spaces. Co-working spaces, where users pay a fee to share office space and associated amenities, are becoming more common.

## SMALL-SCALE INDUSTRY

Recent years have seen the rise of artisan manufacturing, which involves the conversion of older industrial buildings to accommodate small-scale (less than 5,000 square feet) production of pottery, metalworking, woodworking, screen-printing, industrial design, makerspaces, and small-scale production of beer, wine, and spirits. Tech incubators are yet another category of smaller industry that has gained prominence recently. These spaces provide office space and communal amenities and often include labs and other facilities to encourage research and development.

## EVOLVING WAREHOUSE NEEDS

The increase in e-commerce has changed the design and use of warehouses and distribution facilities and increased demand for them. Types of warehouses being built today include logistics and distribution/fulfillment centers, automated high-cube or high-bay warehouses, data centers, and e-commerce micro-fulfillment centers.



*Amazon warehouse in West Norriton*

Although warehouses have decreased in the township over the past decade, this emerging trend may become more relevant for West Norriton going forward. With the completion of the 422 interchange, the industrial park on South Trooper Road might be a more appealing location for warehousing in the future.

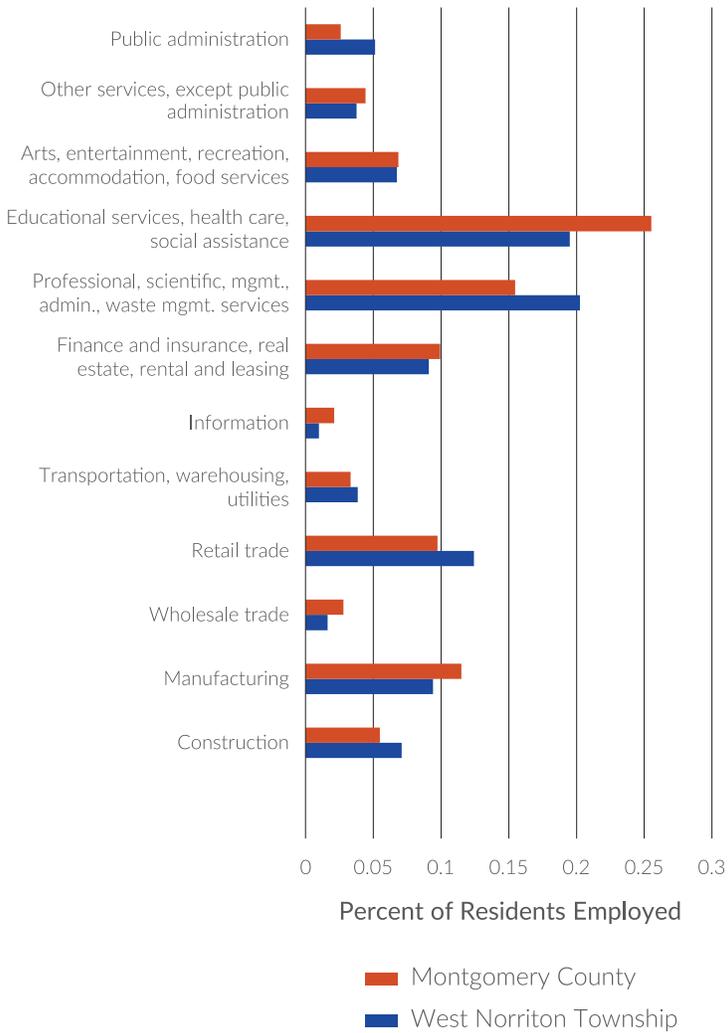
## EMPLOYMENT

Jobs within the township are distributed across a variety of industries, including, in decreasing order: healthcare and social assistance, professional, scientific, and technical services, and educational services. These trends match county-wide employment patterns.

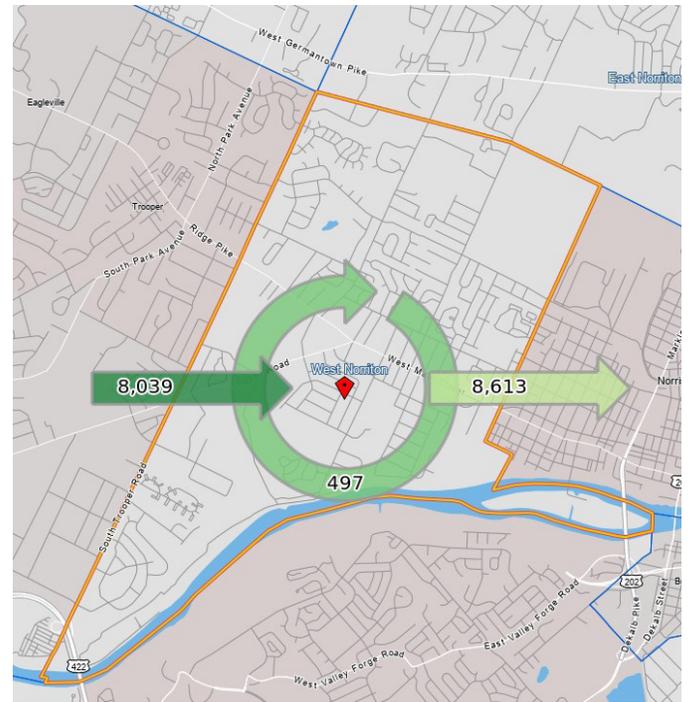
Twenty percent of residents are employed in the professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services industry, followed by 19% in educational services, health care, and social assistance (Figure 35). Since 2002, employment growth in the township has been concentrated in the healthcare and professional services and information sectors. Employment in the manufacturing and wholesale trades industries has decreased by 75% and 31% respectively. The decrease in manufacturing matches nation-wide trends, while the decrease in employment in the wholesale trade industry could be due to the decrease in availability of larger tracts of land in the township.

The majority of residents that work in the township live elsewhere (94.2%). Only 5% of employed residents work within the township, while 94% of township residents are employed elsewhere. The most common places that

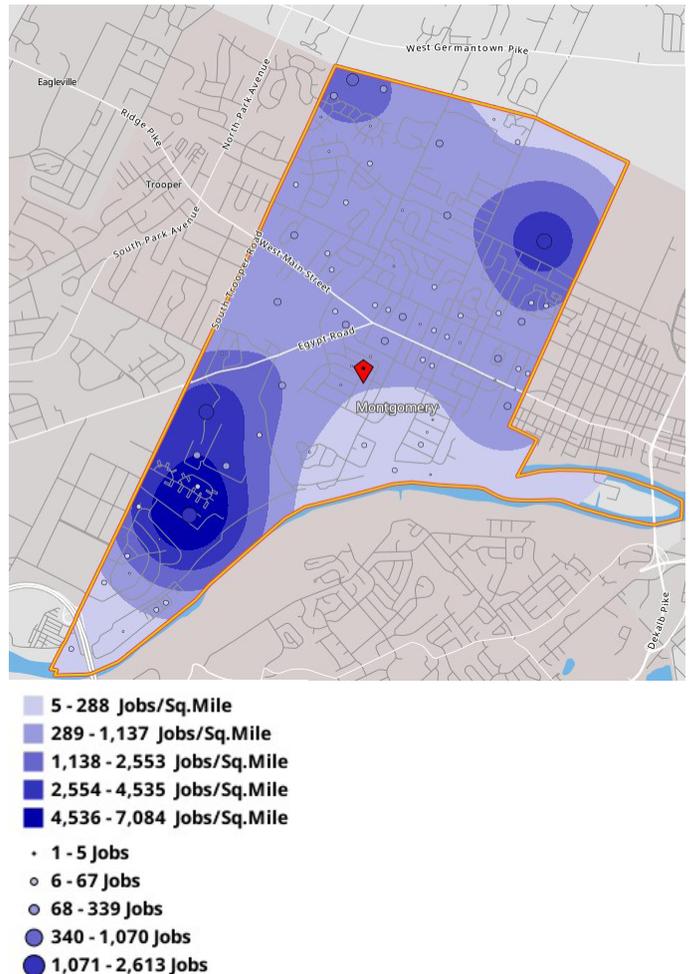
**FIGURE 35 | RESIDENT JOB INDUSTRY (ACS 5-YEAR, 2020)**



**FIGURE 36 | INFLOW/OUTFLOW OF EMPLOYEES TO WEST NORRITON (ACS 5-YEAR, 2021)**



**FIGURE 37 | JOB CONCENTRATION (ACS 5-YEAR, 2021)**



people commute from include Philadelphia (11%) and Norristown (5%), with smaller percentages commuting from King of Prussia, Phoenixville, and Pottstown. The most common places of employment for residents include: Philadelphia (12%), King of Prussia (7%), Norristown (3%), and Audubon (3%). Figure 36 shows the inflow/outflow of employees to West Norriton Township.

Employment is largely concentrated in the Valley Forge Marketplace with between 1,000 and 2,000 jobs, and the North Trooper Road Industrial Park with between about 400 and 1,000 jobs. There also is a high concentration of jobs at the state hospital site, and the upcoming proposed redevelopment in the township is set to bring in even more jobs there (Figure 37). This presents an opportunity for redevelopment in this area of the township for supporting land uses for employees.

While unemployment rose to 6.7% in 2021, it has likely dropped since then to be more aligned with the county's 2.5% in July 2023. Going forward, job growth is projected to increase 13% by 2050, matching county-wide projections.

### INCOME

Median household income in the township was \$77,188 in 2020, significantly lower than the county median household income of \$102,896. The mean per capita income was \$47,784. A more detailed discussion of income is found in the Population report.

### NONRESIDENTIAL VACANCIES

In 2023, vacancy rates for office were 15%, 3% for retail, and 1.3% for industrial properties (CoStar, 2023). The high vacancy for office space matches that of the county's, and can be attributed to the increase in remote work. The low vacancy rate for industrial properties is an indication of the strength of the market, and shows that the township could accommodate growth in this sector, especially given the proximity of the Valley Forge Business Center to 422.

### COMMERCIAL LAND USE & TAXES

Commercial properties make up 11% of the township's total land area (Figure 38). As shown in Figure 39, 5% of the commercial properties are industrial, 3% are retail, 2% are office, and 1% are mixed use. Mixed use properties have one or more nonresidential uses and may or may not have a residential component.

Overall, only 3.1% of the township's taxable land area is dedicated to commercial land uses, making up 15% of the total estimated municipal property tax (Figure 39).

Property taxes accounted for 42% of the township's 2022 revenue. The township is quite reliant on residential property taxes for its revenue (83%), so diversifying the tax base going forward will increase revenue stability.

### WEST MAIN STREET CORRIDOR

West Main Street is an important commercial area, and the township has taken some steps to improve the design and accessibility of the corridor. The township finished the West Main Street Vision Plan in 2019, which outlines guidelines to manage future development and create a pedestrian-friendly mixed-use corridor. In 2022, the

FIGURE 38 | COMMERCIAL LAND USES (MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOA)

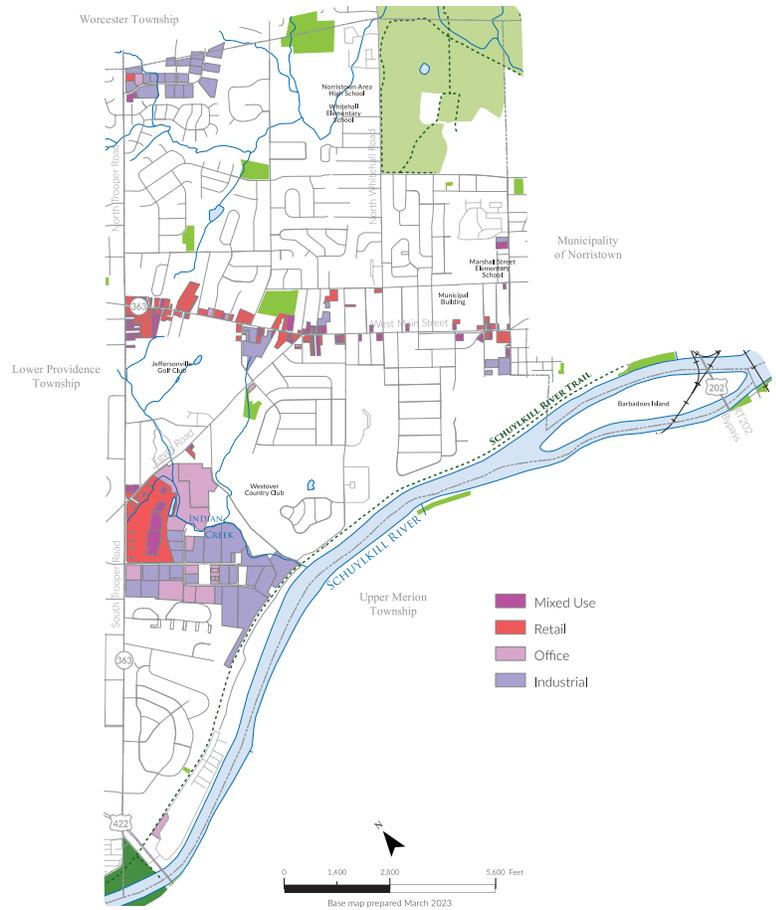


FIGURE 39 | BREAKDOWN OF COMMERCIAL LAND USES (MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOA)

Use	Acres	Percent of Total Acreage in Township	Percent of Taxed Land	Real Estate Tax Percent
Industrial	178	5%	0.7%	5.2%
Office	76	2%	0.5%	5.3%
Retail	102	3%	1.1%	3.7%
Mixed Use	38	1%	0.8%	1.0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>394</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>3.1%</b>	<b>15.1%</b>



*Pedestrian infrastructure on West Main Street*

township adopted the West Main Street Commercial District, a new zoning district along Main Street that includes design standards to create a more attractive streetscape and establish pedestrian amenities, as well as to allow for a greater mix of uses. This zoning ordinance amendment represents a major step towards implementing the vision outlined in the 2019 plan. Infill and redevelopment are most likely seen along this corridor. The township should revisit the zoning standards in the Main Street Commercial District every couple of years, in particular if it has not spurred change.

## KEY FINDINGS

While West Norriton is predominately a residential community, there is interest in creating more economic opportunities within township borders. The township is very reliant on residential property taxes, so encouraging economic development opportunities will help create a more resilient tax base. Residents have expressed a desire for a more vibrant, walkable Main Street. The rezoning of West Main Street includes better parking, circulation, and streetscape standards to encourage a more walkable and accessible street. However, additional steps will be needed to create a more pedestrian-oriented corridor with a vibrant mix of businesses. These steps are outlined in the Implementation Chapter of this plan.





## IMPLEMENTATION GOALS

The following overarching goals will guide the township in addressing concerns identified by the community throughout the comprehensive planning process:

1. Promote alternative modes of transportation such as biking and walking, and enhance related bicyclist and pedestrian infrastructure.
2. Consistently maintain township roads and bridges in good condition to enhance safety and ease of travel.
3. Increase the safety and convenience of using available public transportation options.

*Please refer to Chapter 2, Implementation, for detailed information on implementation goals and strategies.*

## TRENDS

The following trends in multimodal transportation are impacting communities across Montgomery County and are therefore relevant for West Norriton's future.

### ALL STREETS SHOULD BE COMPLETE STREETS

A complete street is one that is designed to enable safe use by all, regardless of mobility level or mode of transportation. The complete streets concept involves analyzing what the best fit may be in a given location or situation and is designed to be appropriate for its context. A complete street may include sidewalks, bike lanes, enhances bus stops, crosswalks, pedestrian refuge islands, accessible pedestrian signals, curb extensions or bumpouts, modified vehicle travel lanes (such as a road diet, as noted below), streetscape furnishings,

## INTRODUCTION

West Norriton Township strives to create an equitable transportation system that promotes the mobility of residents of all ages and abilities. The township has an established roadway network that works quite well for automobiles, but that often lacks in pedestrian and bicyclist infrastructure. This background report provides a point-in-time summary of existing transportation infrastructure, as well as analysis of transportation trends that have been observed locally and at the county, state, and national level.



*Many neighborhoods offer excellent pedestrian connectivity*

and landscape treatments. These design choices work together to reduce collisions between roadway users and improve safety and comfort for all.

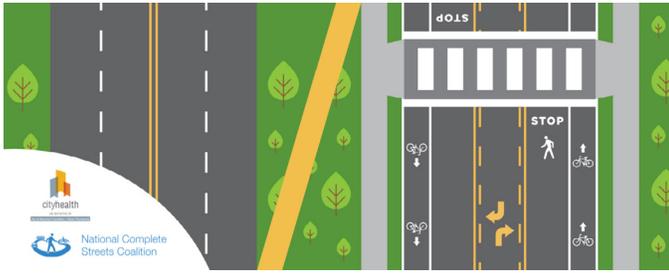


Diagram of complete streets implementation, Smart Growth America

## SAFE TRANSPORTATION FOR EVERY PEDESTRIAN

Building on complete streets efforts, PennDOT has embraced the Federal Highway Administration’s Safe Transportation for Every Pedestrian (STEP) concept. STEP includes several safety improvements actions, which are context-dependent: rectangular rapid flashing beacon at mid-block crossings, leading pedestrian intervals at signalized intersections, crosswalk visibility enhancements, raised crosswalks, pedestrian refuge islands, and road diets to convert four-lane, two-way roadways to a single lane in either direction with a middle turning lane. All of these concepts have been proven to improve safety of pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers through measurable positive outcomes.

## MAIN STREET IS BACK

Traditional pedestrian-oriented Main Streets are seeing a resurgence. When these core commercial areas see revitalization, the entire community benefits. West Main Street revitalization efforts culminated in the 2019 *West Main Street Vision Plan*, which resulted in substantial changes to the zoning ordinance and zoning map. Many of the recommendations for revitalizing West Main Street related to vehicle traffic control (e.g., consolidating driveways) and its relationship to pedestrian mobility and safety. As the plan is implemented through capital



The pedestrian amenities provided as part of the new Citadel and Wawa on West Main Street is demonstrative of best practices in pedestrian design

expenditures and through private development, a more pedestrian-oriented Main Street will emerge.

## RECREATIONAL RESOURCES PROMOTE MOBILITY

West Norriton enjoys the benefits of having the Schuylkill River Trail run across the entire east-west length of the township. Multi-use trails can act as a key connection for those seeking to bike or walk to work in addition to offering a place to recreate. There is a need to connect trailheads/trail access points to other destinations via sidewalks and/or bike lanes.



Walking Trail at Centennial Park

## TRANSIT RIDERSHIP IS REBOUNDED

After experiencing low ridership as a reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic, transit ridership is rebounding. When compared to March 2019 data, SEPTA’s proxy for pre-pandemic ridership, bus ridership had returned to 86% and system-wide ridership had returned to over 75% as of June of 2024.<sup>29</sup>



A bus shelter on Boulevard of the Generals

## ELECTRIC VEHICLES ARE COMING

Electric Vehicles, or EVs, are becoming increasingly popular among consumers. Pennsylvania saw a 45% increase in electric vehicle ownership between 2022 and 2023, with over 63,000 registered EVs.<sup>30, 31</sup> The township will need to explore ways to address electric vehicle supply equipment (EVSE). EVSE grant funding has been prioritized for high-traffic corridors, such as Route 422, and the township may be able to leverage its location along key transportation corridors to pursue grant funding to expand EV infrastructure.



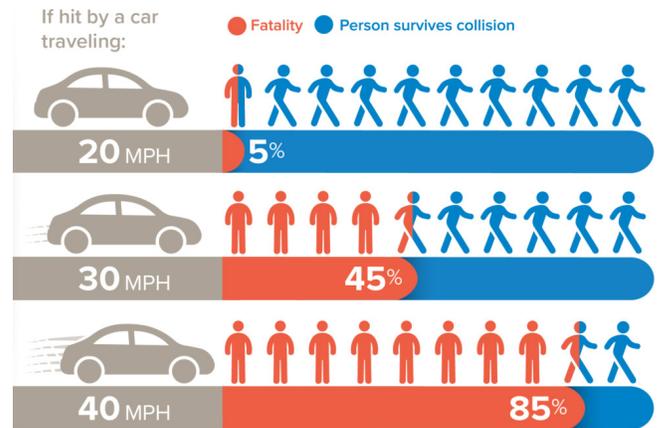
*Increased attention on expanding EV infrastructure will be necessary*

## AUTOMOBILE INFRASTRUCTURE

The majority of the roads in the township are municipally-owned, and thus are maintained by the Public Works Department. State-owned roads include West Main Street (SR 3009), Egypt Road (SR 4002), North Whitehall Road (SR 3006), Burnside Avenue (SR 3004), Marshall Street (SR 3019), Forrest Avenue between Main Street and Marshall Street, Trooper Road (SR 363), and Route 422.

The busiest roadways within the township are Egypt Road, Trooper Road, and Main Street (Route 422 is excluded).<sup>32</sup> These roadways, as well as North Whitehall Road, are classified as arterial roadways and are designed to efficiently move a high volume of vehicle traffic across a long distance (i.e., east to west across the township). Collector roadways, the most notable of which are Burnside Avenue and Marshall Street, offer connectivity between arterial roadways and local roadways, but also act as connectors to certain final destinations. Most

FIGURE 40 | VEHICLE SPEED IMPACT ON PEDESTRIAN SAFETY (NATIONAL TRAFFIC SAFETY BOARD , 2017)



National Traffic Safety Board (2017) Reducing Speeding-Related Crashes Involving Passenger Vehicles. Available from: <https://www.nts.gov/safety/safety-studies/Documents/SS1701.pdf>

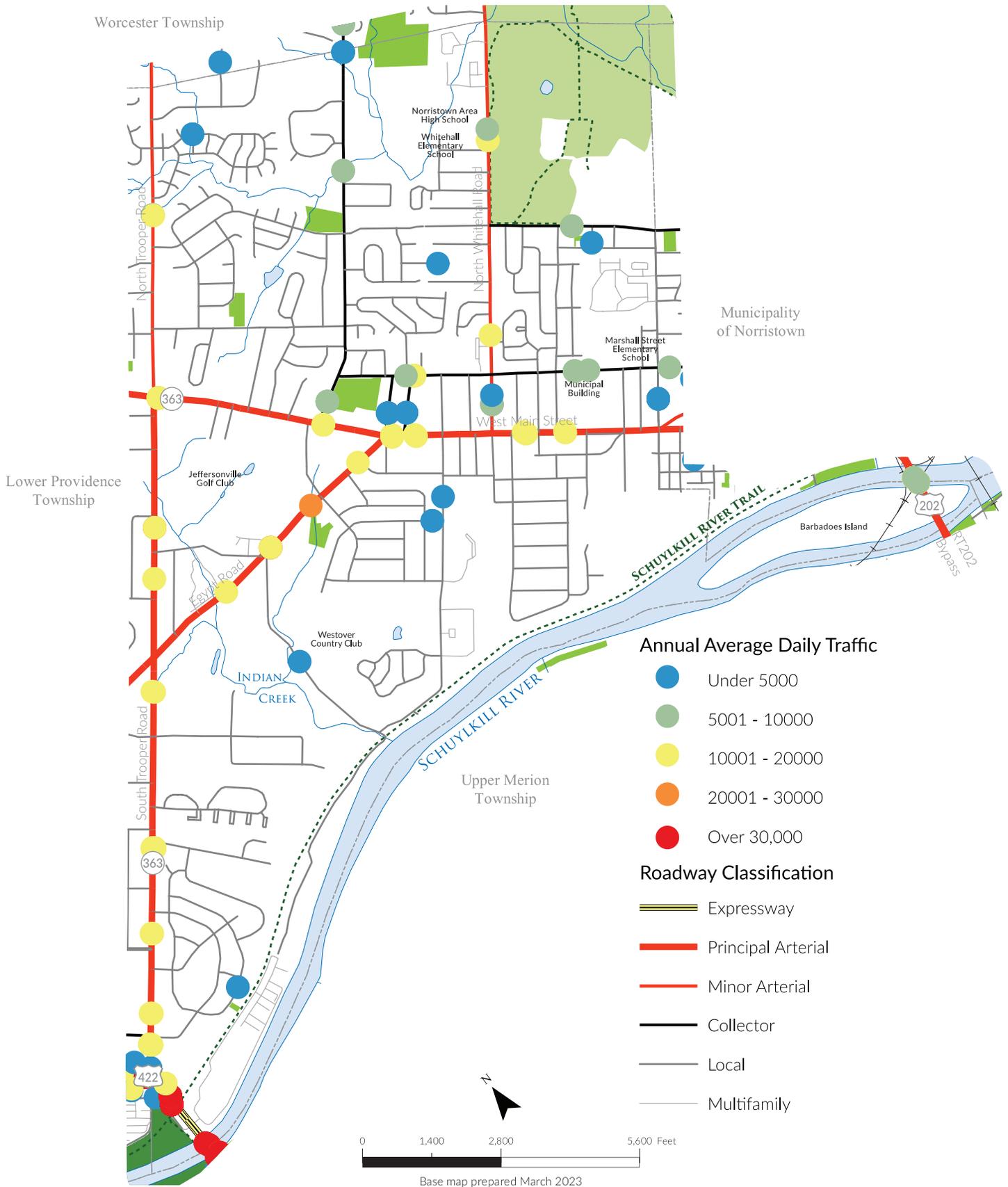
roadway mileage is made up of local roadways, which are designed for lower traffic volumes and provide access to final destinations, such as residential neighborhoods. Road classification and Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) counts are included in Figure 41, below.

Increased vehicle traffic and speeds unfortunately leads to increased crash incidence, a premise that is supported by the data (Figure 40). Roadways with the highest frequency of recent crashes between 2017 and 2021 include West Main Street, Trooper Road, and West Marshall Street. Higher speeds inevitably result in a greater likelihood of fatalities, and therefore ensuring roadway design that calms traffic will be a key strategy to improve safety.

## CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

The township has two primary programs that provide funding for roadway maintenance activities: PennDOT's Municipal Liquid Fuels Program and Act 209 Transportation Impact Fee. Municipal Liquid Fuels funding is allocated proportionally to a community's population and mileage of qualifying roadways. In 2023, funding totaled over \$415,000. Act 209 allows municipalities of the commonwealth to collect transportation impact fees to mitigate the costs of off-site roadway improvements made necessary by new development. The impact fee within West Norriton Township has been established at \$734.44 per peak hour

FIGURE 41 | ROADWAY FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION & AADT (DVRPC; MCPC)



trip created by new development. This fee was calculated after extensive analysis of existing conditions and anticipated impacts from future growth. The allowance from Municipal Liquid Fuels, bolstered by transportation impact fees enabled by Act 209, enables the township to maintain roadways in good repair, as well as plan for and implement capital improvements.

In addition to these locally controlled funding sources, the township can also seek funding by way of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), the region’s capital budget for use of state and federal transportation funds. The 2025 TIP includes project #110971: West Main Street Safety Improvements, which is a proposed PennDOT project. PennDOT is proposing a 4-lane partial road diet on Main Street between Egypt Road and Forrest Avenue. Two through-lanes are proposed to remain going westbound, one lane will remain going eastbound, and a shared left-turn lane will be installed with dedicated turn lanes at signalized intersections. The intersection of Main Street and Egypt Road is proposed to be reconfigured into a roundabout, with a 2-lane exit from Main Street and a single lane exit for Egypt Road. ADA and pedestrian facilities will also be updated along the corridor. The project is currently slated for construction to begin in 2026. Montgomery County has also preliminarily explored improvements to Trooper Road, from Route 422 to Egypt Road, due to congestion and safety concerns. The township will support implementation of both of these transportation improvement projects.

# PEDESTRIAN INFRASTRUCTURE

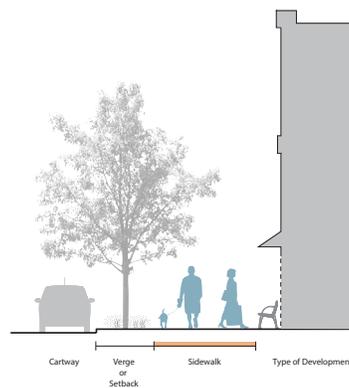
Walking should be safe, easy, and convenient for everyone. Unfortunately, there are often gaps or deficiencies in pedestrian infrastructure that affect the pedestrian experience. For those who use mobility aids, obstacles to wheelchair or walker accessibility are around every corner, whether that be uneven sidewalk or an absent curb ramp. For those who cannot drive, households without access to a vehicle, and people with health conditions that do not permit driving, walkability is essential to their mobility. Improving pedestrian infrastructure has measurable positive impacts for economic development<sup>33</sup>, health<sup>34</sup>, and safety<sup>35</sup>.

Some areas of the township offer excellent pedestrian infrastructure, whereas other areas of the township lack sidewalks altogether. As displayed in Figure 43, many low-traffic residential neighborhoods within the township offer excellent sidewalk networks. On the other hand, the roadways that see the greatest automobile volume—West Main Street, Egypt Road, and Trooper Road—feature numerous gaps in the sidewalk that inhibit pedestrian travel. Moving forward, the township should ensure that all new development provides pedestrian infrastructure that is suitable for that location. These improvements can be required as part of the land development process and may also be funded by numerous grant programs.

**FIGURE 42 | SIDEWALK LOCATION GUIDELINE BY TYPE OF DEVELOPMENT (WALK MONTCO, 2016)**

**Sidewalk Location Guidelines by Type of Development**

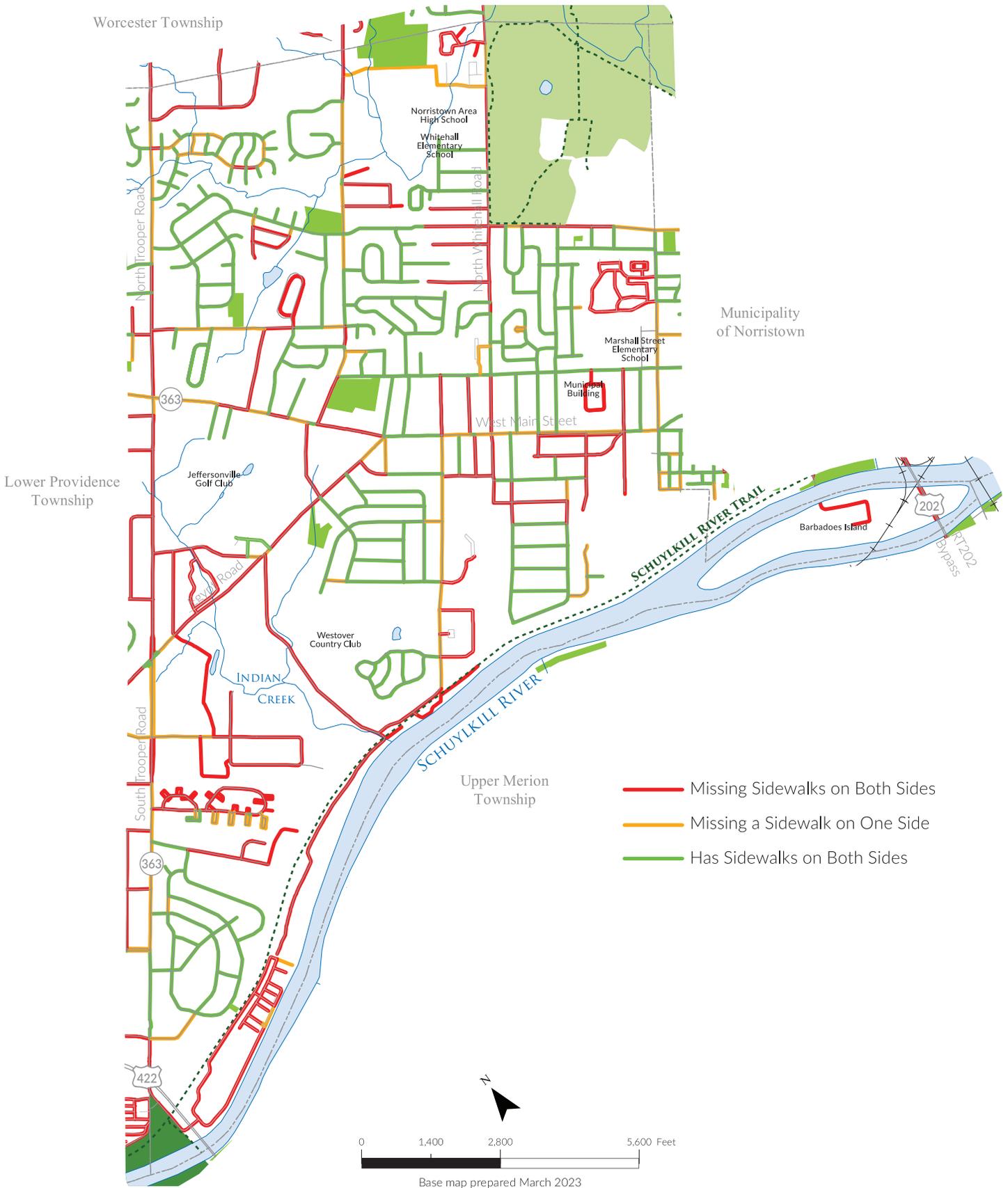
TYPE OF DEVELOPMENT	SIDEWALK LOCATIONS FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT*	SIDEWALK LOCATION FOR EXISTING DEVELOPMENT*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commercial, Office, and Industrial</li> <li>Residential (along arterial roads)</li> </ul>	Both sides of streets.	Both sides of streets. Every effort should be made to add sidewalks where they do not exist and complete missing links.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Residential (along collector roads)</li> </ul>	Both sides of streets.	Apartments, townhouses, or twins—both sides of street. Single family detached homes—prefer both sides of streets; require at least one side.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Residential (along local streets)</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– More than 4 units/acre</li> </ul>	Both sides of streets.	Prefer both sides of streets; require on at least one side.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 1-4 units/acre</li> </ul>	Prefer both sides of streets; require at least one side.	Prefer both sides of streets*; require on at least one side of 6 foot shoulders* on both sides.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Less than 1 unit/acre</li> </ul>	One side of street preferred, shoulder on both sides required.	One side of street preferred, at least 6 foot shoulders on both sides.



TYPE OF DEVELOPMENT	VERGE WIDTH	SIDEWALK WIDTH
CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT SIDEWALKS	5'	8'
COMMERCIAL, OFFICE, AND INDUSTRIAL SIDEWALKS OUTSIDE OF CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT	5' - 8'	5'
RESIDENTIAL SIDEWALKS ALONG MAJOR STREETS	5' - 8'	5'
RESIDENTIAL SIDEWALKS ON LOCAL STREETS WITH MORE THAN 4 HOMES PER ACRE	2'	5'
RESIDENTIAL SIDEWALKS ON LOCAL STREETS WITH 4 HOMES PER ACRE OR LESS	2'	4' - 5'

Adapted from guidelines published in the Institute of Transportation Engineers' Design and Safety of Pedestrian Facilities  
 \* Changes made from the guidelines to reflect Montgomery County conditions are noted with an asterisk.

FIGURE 43 | EXISTING SIDEWALK NETWORK (DVRPC, 2023)



Any upgrades to the pedestrian network will necessarily follow the United States Access Board publication *Public Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG)*;<sup>36</sup> however, the township should strive to exceed the minimum guidelines for key locations such as West Main Street where a wider sidewalk with additional amenities would be warranted. Sidewalk location and design best practices are noted in Figure 42. There are many crosswalk designs, but research has proven that certain “high-visibility” crosswalk styles provide greater benefit than other styles.<sup>37</sup> These standards are based on the recommendations of Montgomery County’s 2016 walkability plan, *Walk Montco*.

## BICYCLIST INFRASTRUCTURE

Although the township’s many arterial and collector roadways provide convenient and direct access between destinations for vehicles, the lack of bicycle infrastructure and high traffic volumes on these roadways makes bicycling through the township quite challenging. The Schuylkill River Trail provides a valuable bicycling opportunity for both recreational and commuting needs; however, the limited opportunities to get on and off the trail from local roadways limits its use.

*Bike Montco*, the 2018 bicycle plan for Montgomery County, provides key policies and recommended design improvements to enhance bicycle safety in the county. The county-wide planned bicycle network, which was identified using an analysis of level of traffic stress data and other best practices, consists of 783 miles of roadways where on-road bicycle infrastructure is recommended in order to connect citizens to the county trail network and other destinations.

There is no on-road bicycle infrastructure in the township, although Burnside Avenue from Main Street to Eagle Lane is slated for bike lanes. The Schuylkill River Trail provides a direct east-west bicycle route on an off-road, multi-use trail. Sections of several roadways in West Norriton Township are identified as part of the Bike Montco planned bicycle network including: Trooper Road (North and South), Chestnut Avenue, South Schuylkill Avenue, West Marshall Street, Sterigere Street, North

Whitehall Road, and a small section of Burnside Avenue and West Main Street.



*Bicyclists on the Schuylkill River Trail in West Norriton*

## TRANSIT SERVICE

The Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) currently operates four bus routes within the township: Routes 90, 93, 99 and 131. These routes service West Main Street, Egypt Road, Trooper Road, and Marshall Street. Ridership varies extensively across the township, with some stops seeing as much as 48 daily users on average (Boulevard of Generals & Trooper Road) and others seeing an average of zero.

SEPTA recently finalized an extensive analysis of their bus network that resulted in an overhaul of routes, which was titled *Bus Revolution*.<sup>38</sup> The planned changes within West Norriton would offer fewer routes but offer greater frequency, and would create an on-demand transit zone within the eastern portion of the township. The new network has been adopted and implementation will occur starting in 2025. SEPTA is undertaking a similar planning process for regional rail, titled *Reimagining Regional Rail*.

SEPTA also offers paratransit service for senior citizens and individuals with disabilities through the Customized Community Transportation Program (CCT Connect). This is a low-cost door-to-door service available to people unable to use regular means of transit. It is only available within ¼ miles of a fixed-route bus or service and during the hours that fixed-route service operates.

There are no railway stations within the township; however, residents can access the Norristown High

Speed Line and the Manayunk/Norristown Line at one of the stations in nearby Norristown.

## COMMUTING PATTERNS

West Norriton has a higher percentage of households with just one vehicle than any of its neighboring municipalities.<sup>39</sup> About 49% of West Norriton households own two or more vehicles, while about 3% of households do not have a vehicle available at all.

The commuting habits for residents vary a bit from neighboring communities and Montgomery County. The average commute time for residents of West Norriton is 26.5 minutes, an increase of just over two minutes since 2010. The vast majority of commuters, 75%, drive alone to work. This figure is roughly on par with its neighbors, but nearly 9% higher than Montgomery County residents overall. Residents are also more likely to carpool and less likely to take public transportation, walk, or bike to work than residents in neighboring communities or the county as a whole.<sup>40</sup>

Despite these figures, the percentage of residents that drive alone to work has dropped over time; falling from 89% in 2010 to 75% in 2021. This may be explained, to some extent, by the increase in telecommuting, which has become commonplace as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. As of 2021, it was estimated that over 16% of residents primarily work from home rather than having a traditional commute. For more information on commuting habits of the resident workforce, please refer to Chapter 7, Economic Development.

## KEY FINDINGS

West Norriton Township was largely developed as a car-dependent, suburban community. The needs of residents have changed over time, and people are now looking to replace or supplement vehicle trips by biking or walking. As improvements are planned and implemented, the interrelated needs of motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, and other potential transportation system users must be considered. Given that West Norriton is largely built-out and has not experienced development pressure as of late, the challenge going forward will be retrofitting existing streetscapes to facilitate walking and biking to reduce residents' dependence on personal vehicles.

The township's sidewalk network is fairly well developed in many areas, particularly in residential neighborhoods, but is lacking along many high-traffic roadways. These key roadways - Egypt Road, South Whitehall Road, West Main Street, and South Montgomery Avenue - lack sidewalks in many locations, limiting their effectiveness as a multimodal transportation route. Other sidewalks in the township are in need of repair, especially along the West Main Street corridor, where many sections of sidewalks are cracked, inconsistent, and narrow. Generally speaking, sidewalk repairs will fall upon the property owner; however, proactive enforcement may be necessary.

Bicycle infrastructure is all but absent in the township, with the exception of the Schuylkill River Trail. The township is working with Montgomery County and PennDOT to install bicycle lanes, sharrows, and signage as repaving

projects occur. This will improve the state of bicycle infrastructure steadily over time.

West Main Street, particularly between Egypt Road and North Highland Avenue, is a priority area for transportation safety improvements. The high traffic volumes, coupled with the number of intersections and the design of the roadway, result in numerous conflicts. Fortunately, the West Main Street Safety Improvements project (see the Capital Improvements section for additional information) was accepted into the TIP for the region, and PennDOT intends to begin construction within the next few years. The township will support implementation of this project, when possible.

New and emerging technologies, particularly electric vehicles, will need to be proactively planned for as well. As electric vehicles become more commonplace, residents will demand better access to charging infrastructure away from their homes. The township will need to address this through development regulations, but likely also through a public charging network. Montgomery County will support communities seeking to address issues related to electric vehicles.

The transportation network in the township works quite well for automobiles, with certain identified concerns, but is lacking in many areas for pedestrians and bicyclists. Moving forward, the township will consider the needs of bicyclists and pedestrians when approaching all transportation projects. Transportation improvements will ensure mobility for residents, promote safety of all users, and promote economic development.





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## APPENDIX B: RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANS

### MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMPRE- HENSIVE PLAN

Montco 2040: A Shared Vision is Montgomery County's comprehensive plan, adopted in 2015. The plan provides a vision for land use and growth management across the county to inform local plans, as well as guidance on regional issues like transportation. It is organized around three themes: connected communities, sustainable places, and vibrant economy.

The West Norriton future land use map is consistent with Montgomery County comprehensive plan's future land use map. Both maps show the same distribution of residential areas, open space preservation areas, and commercial areas. The county's comprehensive plan shows most of the township to be part of a designated growth area, where future growth and development should be directed, with a couple of open space

preservation areas that match the township's existing open areas. The county's future land use map identifies most of West Norriton as a suburban residential area, with parts of West Main Street and Trooper Road as mixed use areas, and the Valley Forge Marketplace and the industrial park on Trooper Road as business areas. The suburban residential areas include a variety of housing types but single-family detached homes are the most prominent, matching the predominant housing found in West Norriton's neighborhoods.

### MUNICIPAL COMPREHENSIVE PLANS

#### EAST NORRITON TOWNSHIP

East Norriton is located to the east of West Norriton. East Norriton's future land use plan from their 2019 comprehensive plan shows the eastern boundary to have a suburban industrial area to encompass the Trooper Road industrial park, coinciding with West Norriton's economic center area. The rest of East Norriton's eastern boundary is a mixture of gateway corridor areas (transition areas to accommodate a mix of uses while preserving residential character), suburban single family areas, and parks and open space along the Farm Park. This largely matches West Norriton's boundary, which is a mixture of institutional, suburban residential and parks and open space. There is an area of high density residential adjacent to the farm park that borders a mixed suburban residential area in East Norriton. Mixed suburban residential areas allow for a mix of housing types, including townhomes and multifamily, so these areas are compatible.

## LOWER PROVIDENCE TOWNSHIP

Trooper Road marks the boundary between West Norriton and Lower Providence. Lower Providence's future land use map along this corridor from the 2023 comprehensive plan ranges from office industrial areas, suburban commercial, and mixed use areas south of Egypt Road, matching West Norriton's economic center area there, to primarily suburban residential north of Egypt Road, matching West Norriton's suburban residential areas. West Main Street traverses Lower Providence, and along the border with West Norriton it is shown to be a suburban commercial area. These are areas that include large clusters of retail establishments, which largely matches West Norriton's vision for this corridor.

## NORRISTOWN BOROUGH

West Norriton shares its southern boundary with Norristown. The West Main Street corridor travels through both municipalities, and the state hospital site and farm park are located in both. Norristown's comprehensive plan is from 2009. The future land use along West Main Street is designated as lower intensity mixed use or retail, which is consistent with West Norriton's vision for mixed-use development along the corridor. While the state hospital site is also shown as a mixed use area, West Norriton designates their side to institutional uses. Much of the rest of the western side of Norristown is shown as residential, matching West Norriton. The recent public and private redevelopment projects for the campus will result in substantial changes to the area, which may inform future comprehensive planning efforts.

## UPPER MERION TOWNSHIP

Upper Merion is located across the Schuylkill River from West Norriton. The township is currently working on an updated comprehensive plan that is slated to go through 2025. The township will coordinate with Upper Merion Township, as needed, to ensure consistency with *West Norriton Township 2050*. The township's last long-range plan was adopted in 2005.

## WORCESTER TOWNSHIP

Worcester's Fairview Village is adjacent to West Norriton to the northeast of N. Trooper Road. This is a village center in the future land use map of Worcester's 2022 comprehensive plan. West Norriton has an economic

center adjacent to this area, which, as an employment-oriented land use, is compatible with Worcester's population and commerce center.

# APPENDIX C: COMPREHENSIVE PLAN PROCESS & SUMMARY OF PUBLIC INPUT

## TIMELINE

This comprehensive plan has been in development since the winter of 2023 when the Planning Commission, serving as the steering committee for the plan, began reviewing background information. The analysis and compiling of background information continued through the fall of 2023. The first round of public engagement occurred during this time as well, with a booth at the May 2023 Community Day, a public open house in September, and the subsequent launch of the community survey. All public engagement focused on gathering input from residents on what they like about West Norriton and what they want to see change going forward. The winter and spring of 2024 were dedicated to synthesizing input and generating goals and strategies. Once goals were drafted, an open house was held in June to hear the community's prioritization. Summer and fall of 2024 were spent drafting and reviewing the final plan document.

## PUBLIC INPUT SUMMARY

West Norriton Day, held on May 21, was a highly successful outreach event. The goal was to spread awareness of the comprehensive plan generally, but also to attract responses to the community survey. MCPC provided an interactive game that allowed visitors, mostly families with children, to spin a wheel and then respond to the applicable prompt. Visitors were also asked to place a dot on a map of certain locations in



*A few photos from West Norriton Day*



Photos from the first Comprehensive Plan Open House, September 18, 2023



Photos from the second Comprehensive Plan Open House, June 17, 2024



the township—businesses, parks, neighborhoods, or transportation. Throughout the course of the event, dozens of people visited the table. Most visitors, as well as many passersby, also took a postcard with information on the comprehensive planning process and a link to the community survey.

More than 40 visitors attended the open house throughout the course of the evening (per the sign-in sheet), not including the planning commissioners, steering committee members, supervisors, and MCPC staff that guided the discussions with residents. MCPC prepared posters on the following topics: a community vision board, demographics, transportation, housing, economic development, and parks, trails and open space.

The community survey was open from April 18 through September 30 of 2023. A total of 213 responses to the survey were logged.

Public outreach concluded with a second public open

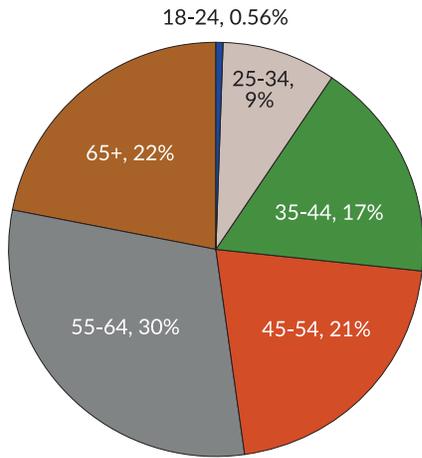
house on June 17, 2024. Members of the public helped to provide feedback and rank draft goals for transportation, economic development, sustainability and green space, and housing and neighborhoods. They also provided input on the future land use map.

A summary of survey results is found below.

### COMMUNITY SURVEY RESPONDENTS

A total of 213 unique responses to the community survey were logged. Nearly 99% of the 213 community survey respondents (210) were residents of the township. Only three nonresidents responded, one business owner and two workers. If it is assumed that each of the 210 resident responses represent a household and that the average household has 2.09 persons (2020 Decennial Census), it can be estimated that 439 individuals were accounted for. Given that there were 7,682 households (16,201 people) at the time of the 2020 Census, this represents roughly 2.7% of all households in the

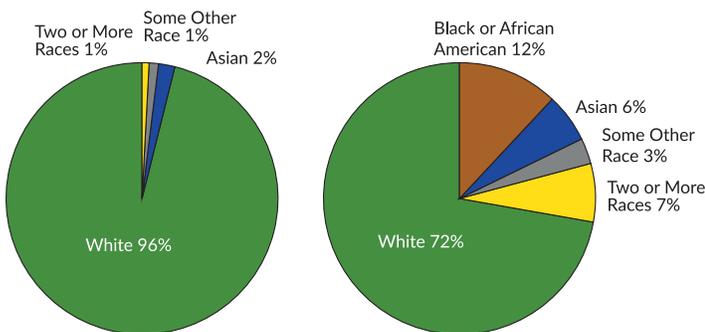
**FIGURE 44 | COMMUNITY SURVEY RESPONDENT AGE**



township. Figure 44 shows the breakdown of ages of respondents to the community survey.

177 of 213 survey respondents (83%) chose to provide demographic information. Over 92% of those that responded identified as white, 3% identified as African American or Black, 2% identified as Asian, and less than 2% identified as being of two or more races (Figure 45). These rates indicate an overrepresentation of the white population, which amount to 72% of the 2020 Decennial Census population count, and an underrepresentation of most other racial groups. Less than 2% of respondents indicated that they identify as Hispanic or Latino, a figure much lower than the 7% observed in the 2020 Decennial Census.

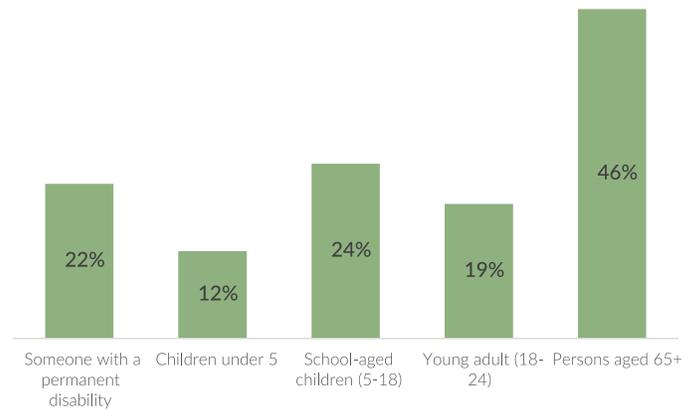
**FIGURE 45 | RACE BREAKDOWN, 2020 (LEFT) VS. COMMUNITY SURVEY RESPONDENT REPORTED RACE (RIGHT)**



Approximately 22% of respondents indicated that they are over 65, which aligns closely to the 20% figure observed in the township (2016-2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates). In total, the population over age 55 accounted for just over half of survey responses (Figure 44). The under-18 population constitutes 13% of the total

population (2016-2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates), and zero responses were logged for this age group. To mitigate this anticipated outcome, question 29 requested information on those living in the respondent's households, shown in Figure 46. Through these responses, it would appear that households with children under 18 might be overrepresented: 12% had children under 5 and 24% had children aged 5-18. Households with at least one family member with a permanent disability account for 20.6% of all households in 2020 (2016-2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates), and a similar share of respondent households—21.5%-- indicated the same. The community made it very clear through their input that additional attention needs to be paid to accessibility along sidewalks and at community facilities.

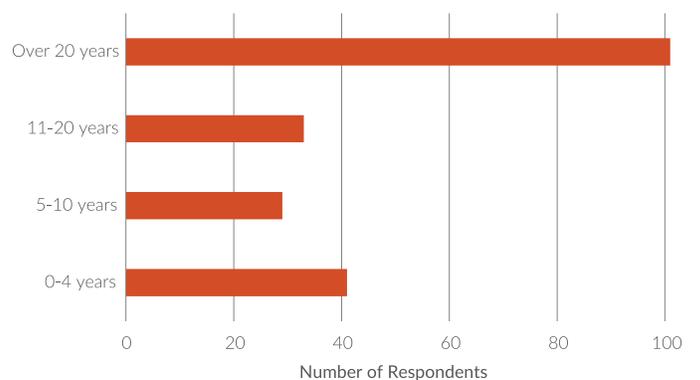
**FIGURE 46 | "DOES YOUR HOUSEHOLD INCLUDE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING?"**



**RESIDENT-ONLY QUESTIONS**

Residents of various tenures responded to the survey, though long-time residents were the most well represented group: 20% were 0-4 year residents, 14% were 5-10 year residents, 16% were 11-20 year residents, and about 50% were 20+ year residents (Figure 47). Most resident respondents, 82%, do not work

**FIGURE 47 | RESPONDENT TENURE**

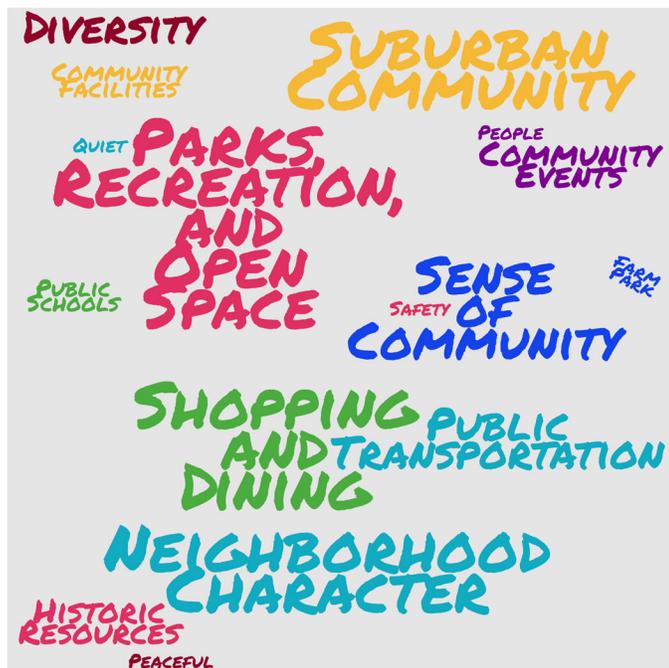


or own a business within the township. Three in four respondents live within a single-family detached home, 17% live in townhomes, 7.4% live in apartments, and the remainder was split between other housing types. 54% of all dwelling units in the township are single-family detached (Montgomery County BOA), so there would appear to be an overrepresentation of that group. There was also a strong skew towards homeowners rather than renters, with less than 5% of respondents indicating that they are renting their home. This figure is vastly different from the 33% renter occupancy rate observed in the township (2016-2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates). Targeted outreach to apartment complexes in the future may be a way to mitigate this observed phenomenon.

### POSITIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TOWNSHIP

The most popular reason to choose to live in West Norriton, with more than 50% support, was the neighborhoods and community character. The next highest choices were housing affordability (38%), close to work (29%), close to family (25%), grew up in the township (22%), and outdoor recreation opportunities (14%). Less than 1% of respondents noted desirable schools or school district. Approximately 20 respondents made use of the 'other' text box, and many of these

FIGURE 48 | WORDCLOUD OF POSITIVE CHARACTERS OF THE TOWNSHIP, PER COMMUNITY SURVEY RESPONSES (LARGER WORDS APPEARED MORE OFTEN)



related to the township's proximity to Philadelphia, transit, major highways, and recreation.

Respondents were forthcoming with what they felt were the most important positive characteristics of the community, as shown in Figure 48. Three choices had over 50% support among respondents: Suburban community with easy access/proximity to the city (69%); parks, recreation, and open space (60%); and neighborhood character (53%). The variety of shopping and dining choices (33%), sense of community (27%), diversity (24%), and the community events and social programming (18%) also saw a lot of support.

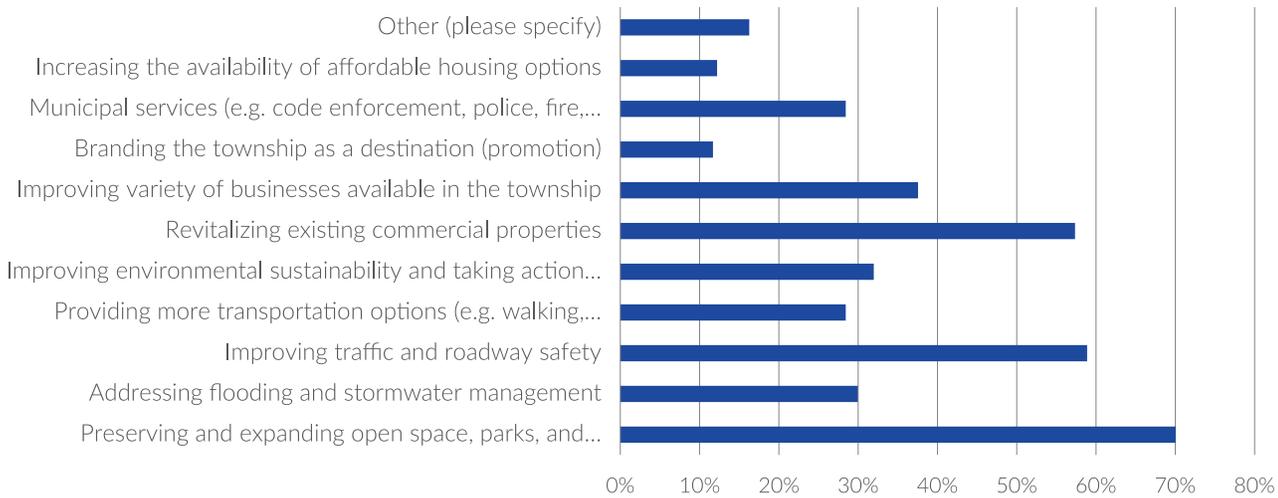
### 20-YEAR GOALS

Although respondents were quite happy with many characteristics of the community, there were also many topics that they would like to continue to improve upon (Figure 49). Preserving and expanding open space, parks, and recreation opportunities was an extremely high priority with over 70% support. Improving traffic and roadway safety, as well as revitalizing existing commercial properties each had nearly 60% support. No other area exceeded 50%. The write-in box was also well utilized for this question, with around 30 responses. Several related to the business district, which included transitioning to an "entertainment" district and other broader requests such as increased street sweeping, requiring businesses to provide litter cleanup, and having stricter standards on sign lighting. Several residents also used this space to provide additional input on the school district, and requested that the township work more closely with the district to ensure student success.

### SERVICES

The many institutions of the township received quite high overall satisfaction and, perhaps more significantly, very low dissatisfaction rates. Public safety services-- Fire, Police, EMS--each saw less than 3% dissatisfaction. Township services saw somewhat mixed results. The township's communications, accessibility, and recreational programming all had less than 10% disapproval, with township government slightly less favorable with 10.4% disapproval and property maintenance enforcement at 18.4% disapproval. The transportation system, responsibilities of which are split between the township and PennDOT, also had mixed

**FIGURE 49 | "WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE THE TOWNSHIP TO FOCUS ON OVER THE NEXT 20 YEARS?"**



results. Snow removal was a nonissue, with less than 6% disapproval, while road maintenance had over 25% disapproval. Apart from the township, the library fared quite well while the school district had nearly 50% disapproval (47.4%).

Based on these results, it seems safe to say that residents are overall quite satisfied with the quality of life offered in the township. There is strong support in municipal government, both in the programs offered and in overall administration. Several write-in responses related to property maintenance concerns and the perception that zoning and property maintenance laws are unequally applied. Residents have concerns with the transportation system, which will be discussed in more detail below, but many write-ins decried the opposing issues of maintenance issues (potholes or design flaws) and the disruption that roadwork causes. Residents expressed discontent with the Norristown Area School District (NASD) both through their selected and written-in responses to this question and in their reasons for moving to the township (which did not generally include public schools). Many of the write-in responses related to the product offered by the school district and the price tag (taxes). There were also many responses that called for a single trash/recycling hauler throughout the township to address both quality concerns with service and to avoid too many trash trucks on the road.

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Residents express strong support for shopping locally, with two out of three respondents indicating that they

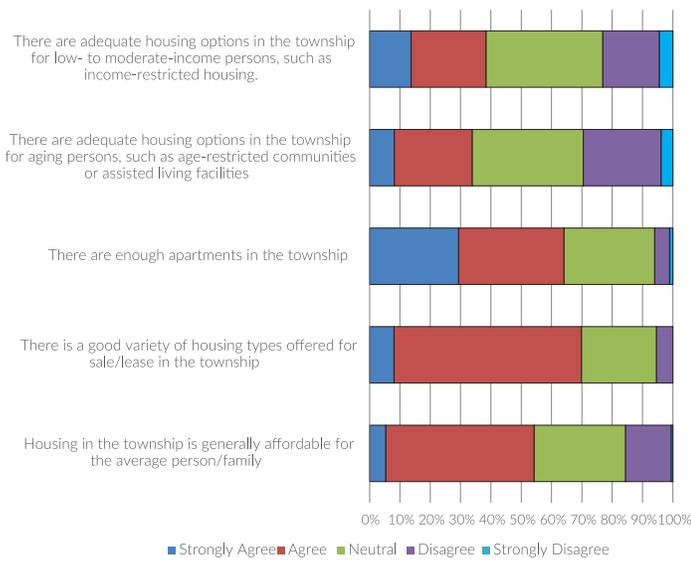
shop within the township several times per week or more. Fewer than 8% of respondents indicated that they rarely or never shop within the township. Although residents frequent shopping centers throughout the community, there was a strong sentiment that greater diversity in businesses/commercial options was needed. More than 6 in 10 respondents wanted to see more coffee shops/bakeries/cafes and entertainment options in the community. The number of restaurants and taverns, retail clothing/shoe stores, and home goods/furnishings appears to be well balanced with an even split wanting more or fewer. Only auto repair/sales, bank/financial institutions, and convenience stores had 5-10% of respondents indicate that there are “too many.”

Apart from diversifying the commercial options in the community, residents also wished for certain improvements to be made. Roughly two in three respondents indicated that it is “very important” that West Norriton (1) enhance the mix of uses and attract new types of businesses, (2) enhance the design of commercial areas through street furnishings and landscaping, and (3) improve the pedestrian experience and ensure accessibility by all users. Coordinating vehicle access and parking between adjacent uses had roughly equal support and indifference. The sentiment that the community has the “quantity” but not “quality” of businesses was common, with upscale dining and grocery stores like Trader Joe’s or Wegmans as a clear desire along with increased amounts of landscaping (especially trees).

# HOUSING

The majority of respondents agree with the idea that there are a good variety of housing types offered within the township, that there are enough apartments, and that housing is generally affordable for the average person or family (Figure 50). This level of agreement contrasts with much lower agreement that there are affordable options for low/moderate-income persons and the elderly; both of these prompts had more than 25% of respondents disagreeing with the premise.

FIGURE 50 | SURVEY RESPONSES RELATED TO HOUSING



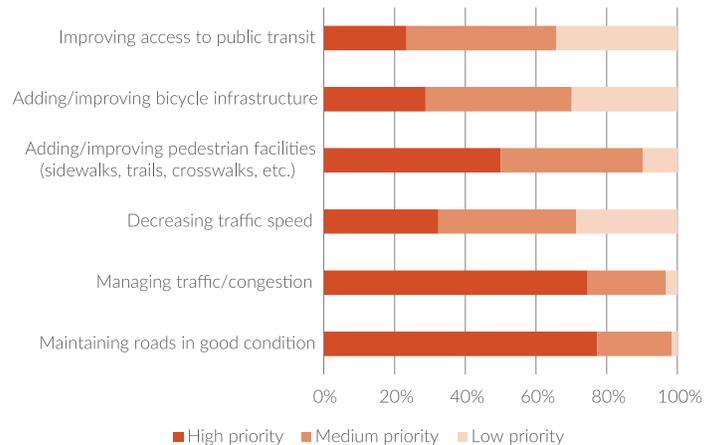
# TRANSPORTATION

Survey respondents and open house attendees identified specific intersections that they were worried about: Port Indian Road & Egypt Road, W. Main Street & Trooper Road, and W. Main Street & Whitehall Road in particular. In addition to troublesome intersections, residents felt that traffic light timing needed to be analyzed due to long waits at intersections such as those listed above. Another common concern was enforcement of traffic laws, with respondents indicating that stoplights and stop signs are often disregarded, that the center turn lane is sometimes utilized illegally to cut ahead and that speed limits are constantly being flouted (and alleged illegal races may be occurring). The road diet plan for West Main Street was displayed prominently on the poster at the open house, and the prospect of this improvement was viewed positively (as demonstrated by two write-in responses).

The community survey asked respondents to rank the relative priority of several broad transportation policies (Figure 51). Maintaining roads in good condition and managing traffic/congestion were deemed high priorities by 3 in 4 survey respondents. Adding and improving pedestrian facilities also had over 50% support as high priorities, and all three of these concepts enjoyed over 90% support as at least a medium priority. More than a quarter of respondents thought that decreasing traffic speed (29%), adding/improving bicycle infrastructure (30%), and improving access to public transit (34%) were low priorities; none of these options had over 35% support as a high priority. Overall, respondents have a vision for a transportation system that is in good repair, where traffic flows smoothly, and where pedestrians are provided with adequate options. Some within the community also yearn for improvements benefiting cyclists and transit users (or prospective users as the case may be), though advocacy by and for this group lags behind those seeking pedestrian-oriented improvements.

As discussed above, there is a strong desire for pedestrian infrastructure in the township. Residents would like to be able to safely walk to and throughout the commercial district on W. Main Street, walk or bike to the Schuylkill River Trail (SRT) and Valley Forge National Park, walk or bike to Norristown Area High School (NAHS), or would simply like to be able to walk throughout their neighborhood. The community identified the following roadways for pedestrian improvements: West Main Street, Trooper Road, Egypt Road, Whitehall Road, Burnside Avenue, Butler Avenue, and blocks meeting W. Main Street. Write-in responses to the survey illustrated that there was less cohesion behind the idea of adding

FIGURE 51 | COMMUNITY SURVEY TRANSPORTATION PROMPTS

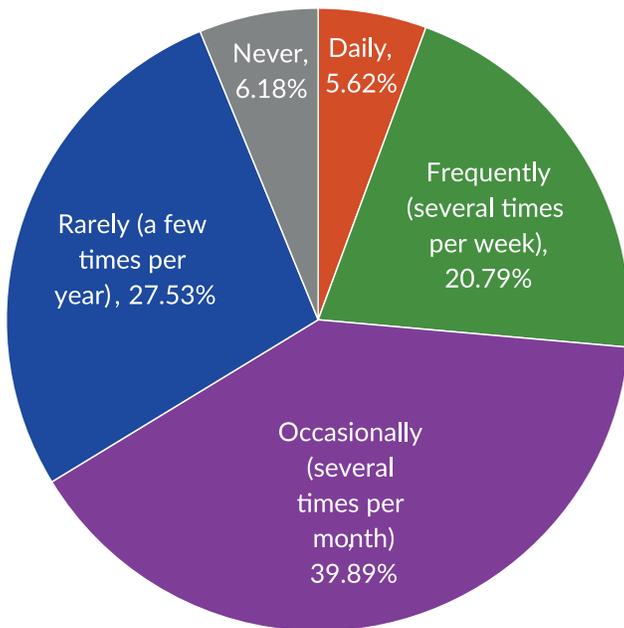


bicycle infrastructure, apart from connections to the Schuylkill River Trail.

### PARKS, RECREATION, TRAILS

The township's parks appear to be quite popular, though there are some desired amenities that the township may wish to consider in the future. Park visitation represented a classic statistical bell curve, with most respondents (40%) falling within the median option of "occasional" park use. A combined 27% of respondents visit parks more frequently, at least several times per week, and just 6% visit a park daily, as shown in Figure 52. A similar segment of the population visits parks less frequently than the median option, with a combined 34% of respondents indicating that they visit parks less than several times per month. Of this subset, 6% indicate that they never visit a park.

FIGURE 52 | PARK USAGE RESPONSES



The most popular park for community survey respondents was the Norristown Farm Park with over 80% of respondents indicating that they visit this park. Due to the size of the park, it is very likely that the Farm Park attracts visitors not only from throughout the township, but also from neighboring communities. The most popular township parks were, in order: Betzwood Park (30%), Padden Park (27%), Centennial Park (20%), Jefferson Firehouse Recreation Site (16%), and Oxford Circle Park (7%). Survey respondents were overall quite satisfied with the recreational opportunities

afforded to all age groups, with satisfaction outweighing dissatisfaction in all cases.

90% of survey respondents participate in walking/jogging/running/hiking trails at township parks. Bicycling was the next most popular activity at just under 30%. Birding or nature viewing was the third most popular choice, with nearly one in four respondents indicating that they participate in such activities. These three most popular options can all take place on a multiuse trail, which indicates that there may be demand for new trails. Township events and using playgrounds or tot-lots rounds out the top five activities. Respondents also expressed an interest in a community or rec center, more recreational opportunities for older adults, and better access to the Schuylkill River Trail, especially from Betzwood.



# APPENDIX D: ACCOMMODATION OF FUTURE HOUSING DEMAND & FAIR SHARE ANALYSIS

## THE FAIR SHARE ANALYSIS CONCEPT

The concept of the “fair share analysis” was codified in 1988 with an amendment to the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) that requires municipalities to provide, “... residential housing of various dwelling types encompassing all basic forms of housing, including single family and two family dwellings, and a reasonable range of multiple family dwellings in various arrangements,” (MPC § 604-4). Put simply, municipalities are obligated to zone an adequate portion of land to allow for multifamily developments (three or more dwelling units) and townhomes. Twins, duplexes, and single-family detached homes do not qualify as “fair share” options.

Although the MPC clearly states the need to zone for these housing types, it lacks a clear threshold or minimum requirement to prove compliance. The commonwealth courts have clarified the fair share analysis somewhat:

cases involving Warwick Township, Marshall Township, and Upper Southampton Township were found to be in compliance by zoning 2.9%, 2.7%, and 3.5% of their gross acreage, respectively, for fair share housing types. It has been further established by case law that the amount of land actually available for development is critical in reviewing the fair share obligation.

The basis for discerning compliance with this fair share obligation emerged from a 1977 Pennsylvania Supreme Court Case, *Surrick v. Zoning Board of Upper Providence Township* 776 Pa. 182, 382 A.2d 105, which made use of a three-part analytical test that continues to be relevant today:

- 1. Is the municipality a logical area for population growth and development?** West Norriton Township is a logical area for population growth and development based on the sustained growth of the population and its location in the Greater Philadelphia Region. The township population has grown by over 8% over the last 20 years, and is forecasted to grow by another 8% by 2050 according to the best available estimate.<sup>1</sup>
- 2. Is the municipality developed or developing?** Courts have found that a community is not considered “developed” until 95% or more of its land is consumed, and therefore the community must continue to provide for fair share housing options. MCPC estimates that just over 250 acres or about 6.5% of the gross acreage in the township remains undeveloped.<sup>2</sup> Although this

1 Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission. (2020). County and Municipal-Level Population Forecasts, 2020-2050. <https://www.dvrpc.org/webmaps/PopForecast>

2 Montgomery County Planning Commission. (2020). Growth and Preservation Plan. <https://data-montcopa.opendata.arcgis>.

is quite close to the “developed” threshold, it is necessary to operate under the assumption that the fair share mandate continues to apply until the 95% developed threshold is exceeded.

3. **Is the amount of land available for multifamily development disproportionately small, in relation to population growth pressure and present level of development?** This calculation requires further explanation, which is provided in the following section on the accommodation of future housing demand, but the township easily passes this test. Roughly 85% of the township is zoned to allow for fair share housing types and there is an adequate proportion of the developable land available (47%) for said purposes.

### ACCOMMODATION OF FUTURE HOUSING DEMAND

In order to determine compliance with the third and final factor of the *Surrick* fair share analysis, a few steps are necessary:

1. **Future Housing Demand:**

Several factors must be considered when calculating the number of dwelling units required to house the population in 2050. The most important factor and the starting point for this calculation is the forecasted 2050 population as provided by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission.<sup>3</sup> Those living in group quarters do not require traditional dwelling units<sup>4</sup>, so this share of the population is then subtracted from the total population to discern the household population. Next, the 2050 average household size is projected using American Community

[com/datasets/montcopa::montgomery-county-growth-and-](https://www.dvrpc.org/webmaps/PopForecast)

3 Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission. (2020). County and Municipal-Level Population Forecasts, 2020-2050.

<https://www.dvrpc.org/webmaps/PopForecast>

4 Group quarters are defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as “noninstitutional living arrangements for groups not living in conventional housing units or groups living in housing units containing ten or more unrelated people or nine or more people unrelated to the person in charge.” Source: <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/technical-documentation/subject-definitions.html#groupquarters>

FIGURE 53 | FUTURE HOUSING DEMAND

2050 Forecasted Population <i>Source: DVRPC</i>	17,576
2050 Forecasted Group Quarters Population (2020 Value: 1.06%) <i>Source: Decennial Census, 2020; MCPC</i>	186
2050 Forecasted Household Population <i>(Forecasted population minus forecasted group quarters population)</i>	17,390
2050 Forecasted Average Household Size <i>Source: ACS 5-year, 2010-2020; MCPC</i>	2.08
2050 Forecasted Number of Households <i>(Forecasted household population divided by forecasted average household size)</i>	8,361
Estimated Total Number of Housing Units Needed by 2050 (2020 vacancy=4%) <i>(Forecasted number of households plus the number of forecasted vacant units)</i> <i>Source: Decennial Census, 2020; MCPC</i>	8,695
2021 Total Number of Housing Units <i>Source: Decennial Census, 2020; MCPC</i>	8,119
Estimated Number of Housing Units Remaining to be Built by 2050 <i>(Total estimated number of housing units minus housing units built as of 2021)</i>	576

Survey data, which is then used to calculate the total number of dwelling units required to house the household population. After accounting for a 4% vacancy rate, the existing dwelling units are subtracted from the estimated total number of housing units needed to accommodate the 2050 population. This calculation reveals that 576 new dwelling units will be necessary to accommodate the 2050 population. The calculation is summarized below.

2. **The current breakdown of the housing stock reveals that 40.8% of units qualify as fair share**

FIGURE 54 | CURRENT BREAKDOWN OF LOW-DENSITY AND FAIR SHARE DWELLING UNITS

	2021 Count	Percentage
Low-Density Dwelling Units*	3,415	59.20%
Fair Share Dwelling Units**	2,354	40.80%

\*Single-family detached dwellings, twins, and duplexes

\*\*Townhomes and multifamily units

Note: there are zero mobile homes in the township

housing types:

3. If the current ratio from calculation #2, above, continues, it is estimated that 256 additional “fair share” dwelling units will be required to accommodate the 2050 population:

As calculated under #1, above, the township should plan for the construction of an additional 627 dwelling units in order to accommodate the 2050 population. Of these 627 dwellings, it can reasonably be assumed that the same breakdown of dwelling unit types will persist, with 40.8% or

rate up to seven dwelling units per acre. The A, RR, BP, and MSC Districts allow for even higher residential density; however, these districts are considered “developed” for the purpose of this calculation. The RE Recreation and LC & I Limited Commercial & Industrial districts are the only two districts that do not allow for residential development altogether, and these total just 15% of the gross acreage of the township. It is estimated that 722 new fair share residential dwellings could be constructed given the acreage of developable land that is zoned to allow fair share residential development.

**FIGURE 55 | ANTICIPATED DEMAND FOR LOW-DENSITY AND FAIR SHARE DWELLING UNITS IN 2050**

	Percentage	Estimated New Units By Category, 2050
Low-Density Dwelling Units*	59.20%	371
Fair Share Dwelling Units	40.80%	256

256 dwellings coming in the form of fair share housing types:

4. **Build Out Scenario:**

The final step in this process is discerning the number of fair share dwelling units that *could* be built given current zoning regulations and the amount of developable land available. The township’s adopted zoning regulations allow for fair share housing types throughout 85% of the gross acreage of the township and nearly every zoning district. The R-A, R-1, R-2, R-3, C and I districts all permit development of dwellings at a

## DISCUSSION

So, is the amount of land available for multifamily development in West Norriton Township disproportionately small in relation to population growth pressure and present level of development? The answer is a resounding ‘no.’ The township more than meets its obligation to allow for the development of multifamily dwelling units, thereby ensuring compliance with the fair share obligation under the PA MPC.

The potential for infill and redevelopment was intentionally omitted from this calculation for a few reasons, most importantly because courts have not recognized this option; however, the majority of new dwelling units will likely come with infill, adaptive reuse, or redevelopment. In recent years, nearly 60% of new dwelling units built in Montgomery County come in the form of infill, redevelopment, or adaptive reuse. If this trend was applied to the township, only 250 of the 627 dwelling units required for 2050 would be built on undeveloped land (“greenfield development”).

**FIGURE 56 | BUILD OUT SCENARIO**

Permitted Uses	Gross Acreage	Gross Acreage as Percentage	Gross Developable Acreage *	Developable Land as a Percentage	Fair Share Dwelling Construction Potential **
Fair Share Residential	3341	85%	102	47%	722
Nonresidential	594	15%	113	53%	N/A

\*Gross developable acreage includes the “development potential” area as identified on the 2020 Growth and Preservation Plan.[1]

\*\*The net developable acreage was calculated for each zoning district, 15% of the gross acreage was subtracted to allow for site development loss (roads, utilities, etc.) and then the maximum permitted residential density was applied. Any districts with inadequate developable tract area were omitted.

Due to changing demographics and the market-driven nature of residential development, it will always be somewhat difficult to accurately forecast the future housing needs of a community; however, the calculation outlined herein is intended to be fact-based, replicable, and conservative.

**FIGURE 57 | FAIR SHARE ANALYSIS SUMMARY**

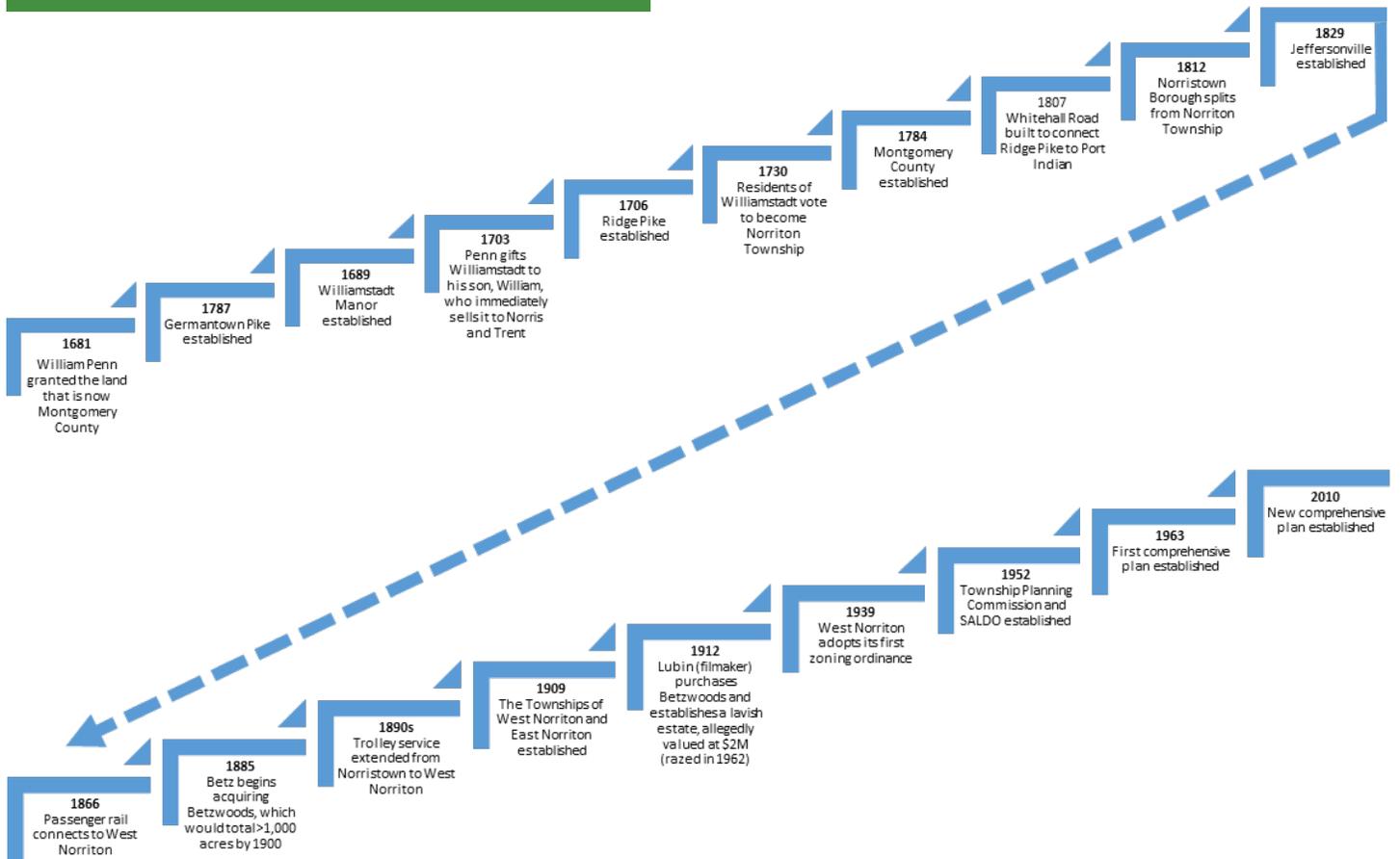
<b>Developable Land Remaining in Community:</b>		
Total acres of developable land	254 acres	
Developable land as percentage of gross acreage	6.50%	
<b>Multifamily Units:</b>		
Multifamily units as a percentage of existing housing stock	40.8% (2,354 units)	
New dwelling units needed to house the 2050 population	576 units	
Estimated number of potential new multifamily units (40.8%)	256 units	
Total housing units of all types possible at build-out	6,491	
Total multi-family units possible at build-out	3,076	
<b>Percentage of Land Available for Multifamily Development:</b>		
	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Developable land zoned for multifamily units	120	47%
Total land zoned for multifamily units	3,341	85%

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<sup>5</sup> Montgomery County Planning Commission. (2020). Growth and Preservation Plan. <https://data-montcopa.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/montcopa::montgomery-county-growth-and-preservation-2020/about>

# APPENDIX E: A BRIEF HISTORY OF WEST NORRITON TOWNSHIP

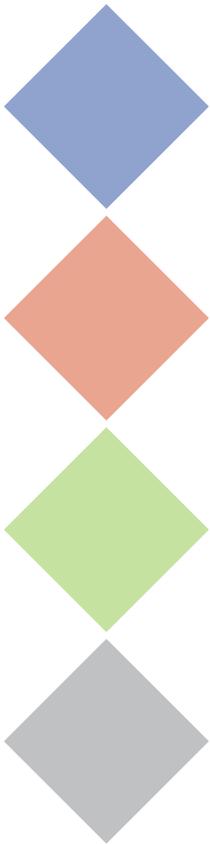
The history of the township dates all the way back to 1681, when William Penn was granted a vast tract of land in what is now modern day Pennsylvania. In 1689, Penn directed his surveyor to lay out a tract of land along the navigable portion of the Schuylkill River. This tract of land, known as Williamstadt Manor, included what is now modern day West Norriton, East Norriton, and Norristown. In 1704, Penn gifted the land to his son; however, the son sold the tract to Isaac Norris and William Trent that very same year. Norris would eventually purchase Trent's share and it was not until 1730 that there was a movement to create the Township of Norriton. Then, in 1812, Norristown Borough split off from Norriton Township and established their own government. On March 9, 1909, West Norriton and East Norriton split into their modern boundaries and this date now acts as the formal anniversary of founding.







WEST  
NORRITON  
TOWNSHIP  
2050  
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



MONTGOMERY  
C O U N T Y  
P E N N S Y L V A N I A