



# East Rockhill Township

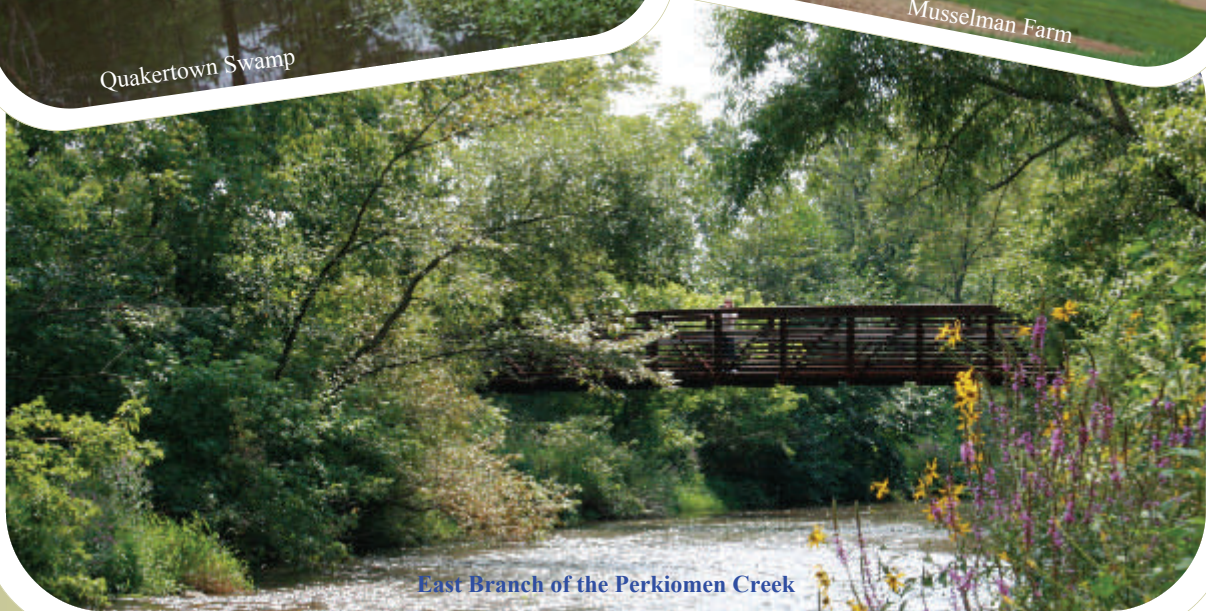
## *Open Space Plan*



Quakertown Swamp



Musselman Farm



East Branch of the Perkiomen Creek



# EAST ROCKHILL TOWNSHIP OPEN SPACE PLAN

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East Branch of the Perkiomen Creek – East Rockhill Township

Musselman Farm – Heritage Conservancy

Quakertown Swamp – Heritage Conservancy



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## PLANNING APPROACH

Anticipating increased development pressure that would lead to a loss of valuable open space and an increased demand for park and recreational facilities, the Board of Supervisors created the Open Space Task Force in 1996. The task force prepared the *East Rockhill Township Open Space and Recreation Plan* which was adopted in January of 1998 as a supplement to the *Comprehensive Plan of East Rockhill Township* (1987). The Township recognized the need for a plan to assist the current and future boards in the preservation, acquisition, and use of areas the Township presently owns or land suitable for preservation or acquisition. The 1998 plan was also prepared and adopted as the official open space plan to satisfy the guidelines mandated for the 1997 County Municipal Open Space Program. It served as a valuable benchmark for analysis of the open space preservation practices and opportunities within the municipality.

In January of 2002, the Board of Supervisors acknowledged the need to revise the 1987 comprehensive plan. In June 2005, the *East Rockhill Township Comprehensive Plan Update* was formally adopted. The plan provides guidance on future land use policy and decision-making, presents a vision for maintaining a high quality of life for its residents, and establishes strategies to meet the challenge of managing growth through the year 2015. The park and open space policies are an important component of the comprehensive plan.

In October 2006, the Board of Supervisors adopted the *East Rockhill Park and Recreation Plan*. The production of the *Park and Recreation Plan* was a recommendation in the 2005 *Comprehensive Plan Update*. The plan was also prepared to fulfill the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) requirement that prior to amending the zoning ordinance to include a fee in lieu of recreational facilities; the governing body has a formally adopted recreation plan. The Township's mandatory dedication of recreation land and fee in lieu of this land for major subdivisions and land developments is intended to help satisfy the recreational needs of future residents.

The plan contains various narrative and information from the *Comprehensive Plan Update* such as community background (regional location, population and housing trends), an inventory/analysis of park and recreational facilities, an inventory of protected open space, and greenway and trail planning. It also provides additional and up-to-date information obtained after the adoption of the comprehensive plan update. For instance, the park and recreational facilities analysis and recommended greenway and

trail routes from the *Comprehensive Plan Update* were updated in the *Park and Recreation Plan*. In January of 2007, Section 22-525 (Recreational Facilities and Land) of the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance was amended to incorporate mandatory dedication of recreation land and fee in lieu of this land and provisions for recreational land and facilities.

As the county and its municipalities continued to face ongoing challenges of population growth, rising land values, and increasing pressures to convert farmland, open space, and wildlife habitat, there was recognition for continued open space preservation. In November 2007, voters endorsed the borrowing of \$87 million to continue the Bucks County Open Space Program, which includes the following program areas: Farmland Preservation, Natural Areas, Municipal Open Space, County Parkland, and Delaware Riverfront. Out of the \$26 million allocated for the Municipal Open Space Program (MOSP), East Rockhill is eligible for \$430,112 (with a 25 percent match). This funding can be used for financial assistance to municipalities for open space planning, acquisition, and improvements. To become eligible to receive funding, municipalities are required to reexamine and where necessary, update existing open space plans according to the MOSP guidelines. These guidelines state that municipalities may choose to incorporate revisions as addendums or supplements to existing open space plans. Given the unique needs and resources of each municipality, county review and approval of individual plans will be flexible.

The intent of the *East Rockhill Township Open Space Plan* is to satisfy the MOSP guidelines *and* address all of the concerns of the Open Space Plan Committee. The purpose of this plan is to provide officials and the general public with direction and initiative on improving park and recreation programs, facilities, equipment, and financing. The plan provides an analysis of population and housing trends, an analysis of existing park and recreation resources, a recreational needs assessment, and appropriate recommendations.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since the adoption of the Township's previous open space plan in 1998, East Rockhill has preserved (or assisted in preserving) about 645 acres of open space. This represents over 7 percent of the land area of the Township. Open space has been preserved through various means including fee-simple purchase, deed-restrictions, and donation of land or easements.

The following provides a summary of significant issues, facts, and findings for each of the plan sections found in the *East Rockhill Township Open Space Plan*.

**Community Background**—This section discusses East Rockhill's regional context within the Pennridge Planning Area, land use characteristics, and population and housing trends. Predominately rural in nature, East Rockhill has a potential for increased development due to its proximity to the major arterial routes (Routes 313, 309, 563, and 113). There has been historic shift in the Township's land use characteristics. Between 1990 and 2003, the largest land use decreases were agricultural (406 acres or over 56 percent decrease) and vacant (411 acres or over 26 percent decrease). This can largely be attributed to the conversion of agricultural and vacant areas to single-family and multifamily residential development. During this same time period, Parks, Recreation, and Protected Open Space land use had the highest percentage increase (over 38 percent), due to in a large part to the purchase of open space and the creation of Markey Park, open space acquired in 2000 as part of the Bucks County Open Space Loan Program, and additional open space purchased by the Township.

East Rockhill also experienced its highest 10-year population increase of 1,446 persons or approximately 38.5 percent between 1990 and 2000. Housing units paralleled population growth with a 38.6 percent increase during this decade as shown in Table 1 below. East Rockhill's percentage increase for both population and housing are over three times that for Bucks County over this same time period.

Based upon housing forecasts prepared for the *East Rockhill Comprehensive Plan Update* (2005), approximately 774 additional housing units will be needed through the year 2015. Due to an unprecedented economic downturn at the end

of 2008, these forecasts may be somewhat inflated. However, proactive planning for the protection and preservation of open space resources is paramount.

**Goals and Objectives**—The goals and objectives form the basic framework for this open space plan. Collectively, goals and objectives provide a basis for officials to analyze and evaluate key decisions regarding open space resources and open space related resources (e.g., natural, historic, scenic and park and recreational resources) confronting the Township. The Township’s goals and objectives are sorted based upon the ten sections found in this plan.

**Inventory of Protected Lands**—East Rockhill has been committed to preserving land for open space, recreational, historic, and natural resource protection purposes. While approximately 68 percent of the Township contains rural residential, vacant, agricultural, and park and recreational land uses, a significant portion of this area may not be protected from further development. Permanently protected land comprises approximately 1,161 acres or 14 percent of the total land area of the Township. This section provides a comprehensive inventory of protected lands based upon parcel ownership and means of protection (e.g., deed restriction, conservation and agricultural easements).

**Inventory of Vulnerable Resources**—Collectively, East Rockhill’s natural, historic, and scenic/gateway resources shape the Township’s unique character and identity. However, these resources are susceptible to degradation if insensitive growth and development occurs nearby. This section provides an inventory and analysis of East Rockhill’s vulnerable resources that can assist Township officials in identifying the most suitable lands for preservation. While it is unrealistic for Township officials to preserve and protect all of these vulnerable resource areas, those that are the most important to the Township can be targeted. East Rockhill’s land acquisition priority process is highlighted in the Analysis of Resources section.

**Greenway and Trail Network**—East Rockhill is committed to greenway and stream corridor protection and establishing a Township-wide trail network that will connect points of interest (e.g., schools, commercial centers, residential developments, and recreational areas) within the Township as well as the region.

This section highlights the Township’s recommended greenway routes, which are typically located along the Township’s three major stream corridors—Three Mile Run, East Branch of the Perkiomen Creek, and Tohickon Creek. The Plumstead—East Rockhill Greenway, located along the Texas-Eastern pipeline

right-of-way, is the potential location of the Township's only east-west regional trail segment. In order to implement this greenway and trail network, Township officials will coordinate with developers to provide appropriate access and conservation easements. If property donation is not possible, Township officials will explore the available means to purchase public access easements from the respective property owners in order to implement a portion of the park and open space network. Township officials will also consider ordinance amendments for the provision of recreational trails and provide appropriate standards for trail facilities.

**Analysis of Resources**—The Township has chosen to designate general areas (rather than specific parcels) that the Township intends to target for open space acquisition. The top three factors in East Rockhill for land preservation and acquisition are Natural Areas Inventory (NAI) sites, greenway/riparian buffer corridors, and agricultural land areas. The Land Acquisition Priority Focus Areas shown in Figure 9 highlights the approximate location of these top three factors.

Township officials have developed an evaluation formula to assist in prioritizing future land acquisitions. This formula is intended to determine a parcel's relative importance or value based upon the Township's established goals and objectives identified in this plan. The individual goals and objectives have been weighted (or assigned point values) based upon their relative importance to the community.

If and when any parcel becomes available for acquisition, the parcel's preservation value is determined by the ultimate score that is achieved. Based upon eight separate categories, a parcel receives points based upon if they satisfy the criteria in Table 9. Parcels with the highest point total or score is deemed a priority. While the point system found in Table 9 is not scientific, it does provide Township officials with a sound basis for making decisions on future preservation and acquisition. The parcel evaluation formula is designed to be dynamic and flexible—allowing for adjustments to the process should events or circumstances dictate.

**Tools and Techniques**—Municipalities have an array of tools and techniques at their disposal for preserving land for open space, natural resource, historic, and scenic protection as well as park and recreational purposes. This section details various ways of preserving open space and resource lands. Non-acquisition means include local ordinance provisions and mandatory dedication/fee in lieu

contributions. Acquisition means include: fee simple purchase, lease, leaseback or resale, donation, and easements.

While the Township's ordinances provide natural resource protection standards, other tools and techniques will be explored that can enhance resource protection on an individual site.

**Government Organization and Financing**—The East Rockhill Township Park and Recreation Board serves in an advisory capacity and assists the Township supervisors in planning, regulating, and maintaining parks, recreation facilities and programs. The Park Board may recommend to the Board of Supervisors such plans and provisions it deems necessary to acquire, preserve, continue and expand park and recreation facilities, indicating the cost of such recommendations.

Township employees handle the day to day operations of the park system. This involves field scheduling, maintenance, and other duties. Staffing levels are determined by the Board of Supervisors and the Township administrative staff. With the acquisition and development of new facilities, expenditures for staffing and facility maintenance will increase, and the Township should budget accordingly. New programs at Township parks will also require additional staffing and expenditures. Township administration should analyze the costs related to the staffing and maintenance of any planned or proposed park and recreation facility that may be reasonably acquired or developed within the budget year. Currently, funding for open space preservation is supported by a voter-approved 0.25 percent earned income tax levy.

**Action Plan**—Finally, to implement the plan's goals and objectives, the Action Plan provides a complete summary of recommendations—sorted by the ten plan sections. The entity or entities responsible for completing the task and an approximate timeframe for action is also provided. Timeframes are broken into short term (0–1 year), mid term (2–4 years), long term (5–8 years), and ongoing.

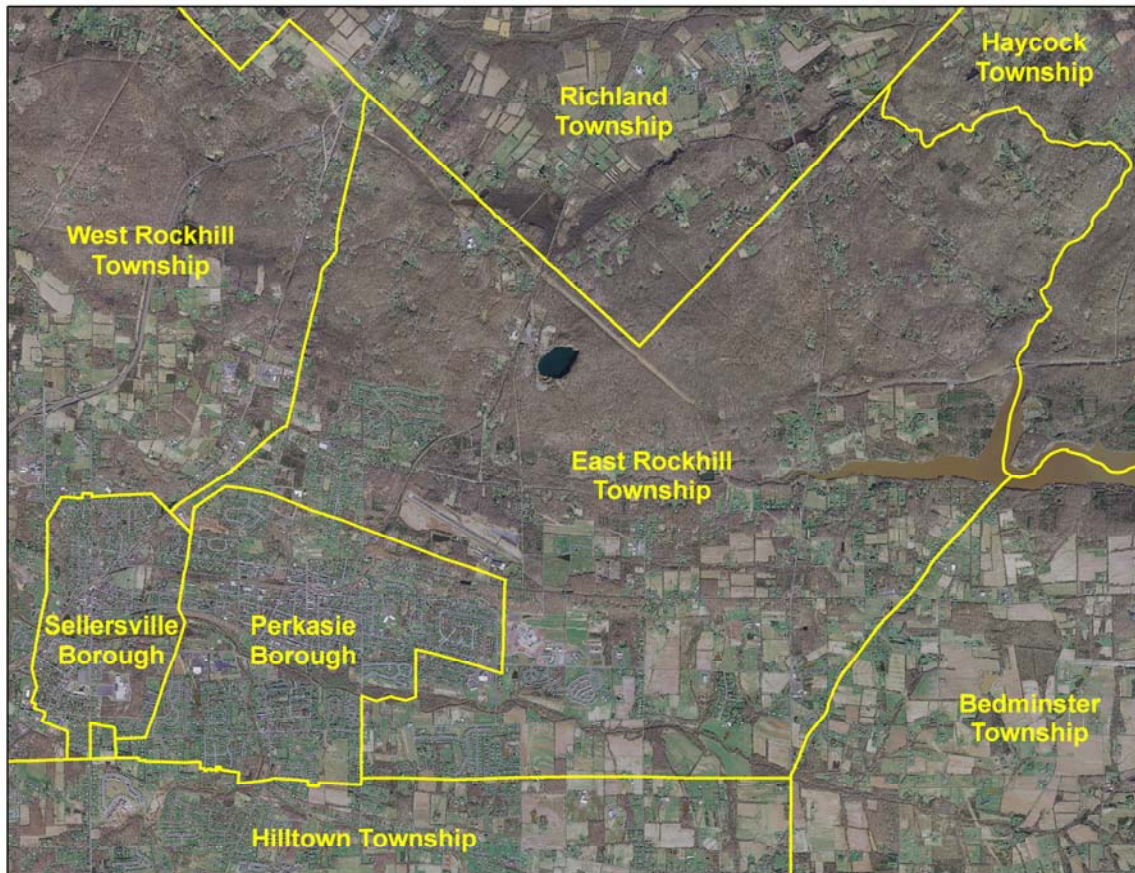
**Appendices**—A requirement of the MOSP guidelines is that open space plans must include a report that details the current use and condition of properties preserved by the municipality with funding from Bucks County Open Space Program. Therefore, a property status report with site photographs are provided for the Hildebrand site in Appendix A. Appendix B contains the Municipal Resolution for Plan Adoption.

## COMMUNITY BACKGROUND

### REGIONAL CONTEXT

Located in the northwestern region of central Bucks County, East Rockhill Township encompasses 12.95 square miles (8,288 acres). The Township lies within the following approximate boundaries: Rich Hill Road to the north, Tohickon Creek and Nockamixon State Park to the northeast, Old Bethlehem Road to the southeast, slightly below the East Branch of the Perkiomen Creek to the south, Callowhill Road to the southwest, and Old Bethlehem Pike to the west.

East Rockhill is part of the Pennridge Planning Area that includes nine municipalities (Bedminster, East Rockhill, West Rockhill, and Hilltown townships and Telford, Sellersville, Perkaspie, Silverdale, and Dublin boroughs). The Township also abuts Richland and Haycock townships located to the north in upper Bucks County.



East Rockhill is predominantly rural in nature; however, there is a potential for increased development due to the existing transportation system leading to and from the area. Pennsylvania Routes 313 and 309 provide access to the north and south, and PA Routes 563 and 113 provide access to the east and west.

## **LAND USE CHARACTERISTICS**

East Rockhill Township is still largely rural in character. In 2003, over half or 56 percent of the Township consists of three land use categories—rural residential (2,417 acres), agricultural (716 acres), and vacant (1,542 acres).<sup>1</sup> A majority of the agricultural land is concentrated in the southeastern portion of the Township.

The Single-Family Residential category consists of 1,543 acres or over 18 percent of the total land area of the Township, and consists of single-family detached dwellings on lots less than 5 acres. Multifamily Residential land use comprises 1 percent of the land area in the Township and consists of three or more attached units.

Parks, Recreation, and Protected Open Space land use constitutes 1,542 acres or over 12 percent of the Township. This is due to the extensive State and local park system. State-owned lands consist of a portion of Nockamixon State Park and State Gameland No. 139. Other protected open space includes the Township acquired common open space associated with residential subdivisions and land with conservation easements.

Nonresidential land uses represent only a limited land area and overall percentage of the Township. Government and Institutional accounted for the largest land area (316 acres or 3.8 percent), followed by Commercial (109 acres or 1.3 percent), and Mining and Manufacturing (26 acres or 0.3 percent).

Historically, there have been subtle shifts in land use characteristics in East Rockhill Township. During the 1990 to 2003 timeframe, the largest land use decreases were agricultural (406 acres or over 56 percent) and vacant (411 acres or over 26 percent). This can largely be attributed to the conversion of agricultural and vacant areas to single-family and multifamily residential development. Consequently, over this same timeframe, Single-Family Residential and Multifamily Residential land uses have increased significantly, to about 20 and 34 percent, respectively.

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<sup>1</sup> The rural residential category is a single-family residential lot comprising 5 acres or more in area that could potentially be further subdivided. The agricultural land use category is limited to parcels that are 20 acres or over for statistical and mapping purposes. Agricultural lands under 20 acres are classified as either Vacant or Rural Residential land uses.



Between 1990 and 2003, Parks, Recreation, and Protected Open Space land use had the highest percentage increase (over 38 percent), due to in large part to the purchase of open space and the creation of Markey Park, open space acquired as part of the 1997 Bucks County Open Space Program, and additional open space purchased by the Township.

## POPULATION AND HOUSING TRENDS

East Rockhill Township has experienced continued population growth over the past fifty years. Although growth rates were slow (3.6 percent) from 1970 to 1980, they surged during the next 20 years with an overall growth rate of 75 percent, until reaching the municipality’s 2000 U.S. Census population of 5,199. East Rockhill also experienced its highest 10-year population increase of 1,446 persons or about 38.5 percent between 1990 and 2000. Housing units paralleled population growth with a 38.6 percent increase during this decade as shown in Table 1 below. East Rockhill’s percentage increase for both population and housing are over three times that for Bucks County over this same time period.

**Table 1. Population and Housing Growth, 1990–2000**

East Rockhill	1990	2000	1990–2000 Change	
			Amount	Percentage
Population	3,753	5,199	1,446	38.5%
Housing Units	1,359	1,883	524	38.6%
Bucks County	1990	2000	1990 – 2000 Change	
			Amount	Percentage
Population	541,224	597,635	118,424	10.4%
Housing Units	199,934	225,498	60,060	12.8%

East Rockhill’s average household size fell from 2.92 persons per household in 1990 to 2.84 persons per household in 2000. This trend, which is occurring throughout the county, is due to an increase in the number of smaller families and singles living alone. It may also reflect an increased number of people whose children have grown up and left home.

U.S. Census data is released every 10 years; subsequently, the next Census release will be available shortly after 2010. However, the U.S. Census Bureau provides annual population estimates that can be used as indicator of population growth. The 2007 Census Bureau population estimate for East Rockhill is 5,687, which is an increase of 448 residents (or 8.5 percent). Since population growth is expected to continue, the Township should proactively plan to satisfy the future needs of its residents.

### Age and Gender Composition

According to the U.S. Census, the gender make up of East Rockhill residents remains consistent and nearly equal between 1990 and 2000. In 1990, there were 1,854 females (49 percent) and 1,899 males (51 percent). In 2000, the female and male populations increased to 2,573 and 2,626, respectively but the overall percentages stayed the same.

Census data indicate the composition of East Rockhill’s population is very similar to that of Bucks County and the surrounding municipalities within the Pennridge Area. Keeping to earlier trends, the median age within East Rockhill increased from 31.6 to 36.5 during 1980 to 2000. The following tables highlight the population by age cohort from 1980 to 2000, age cohort by percentage of population in 2000, and rank of age cohort by percentage of population in 2000.

**Table 2. Population by Age Cohort, 1980–2000**

Cohort	1990		2000	
	Population	% of Total	Population	% of Total
Under 5	314	8.4%	357	6.9%
5 to 9	325	8.7%	444	8.5%
10 to 14	252	6.7%	444	8.5%
15 to 19	228	6.1%	365	7.0%
20 to 24	188	5.0%	212	4.1%
25 to 34	676	18.0%	639	12.3%
35 to 44	666	17.8%	1,049	20.2%
45 to 54	430	11.5%	789	15.2%
55 to 59	168	4.5%	261	5.0%
60 to 64	139	8.2%	178	8.4%
65 to 74	242	6.5%	268	5.2%
75 to 84	103	3.3%	154	3.7%
85 and above	22	0.6%	39	0.8%
Total	3,753	100%*	5,199	100%*
19 and under	1,119	29.8%	1,610	31.0%
20–64	2,267	60.4%	3,128	60.2%
65+	367	9.8%	461	8.9%
Total	3,753	100%*	5,199	100%*

Source: U.S. Census, 1990 and 2000 Note: May not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.

**Table 3. Age Cohort by Percentage of Population, 2000**

<b>Cohort</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>Percent Change</b>
Under 5	8.4%	6.9%	-1.5
5 to 9	8.7%	8.5%	-0.2
10 to 14	6.7%	8.5%	1.8
15 to 19	6.1%	7.0%	0.9
20 to 24	5.0%	4.1%	-0.9
25 to 34	18.0%	12.3%	-5.7
35 to 44	17.8%	20.2%	2.4
45 to 54	11.5%	15.2%	3.7
55 to 59	4.5%	5.0%	0.5
60 to 64	8.2%	8.4%	0.2
65 to 74	6.5%	5.2%	-1.3
75 to 84	3.3%	3.7%	0.4
85+	0.6%	0.8%	0.2

Source: U.S. Census, 1990 and 2000

**Table 4. Rank by Percentage of Population, 2000**

<b>Age Cohort</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
35 to 44	20.2
45 to 54	15.2
25 to 34	12.3
5 to 9	8.5
10 to 14	8.5
60 to 64	8.4
15 to 19	7.0
Under 5	6.9
65 to 74	5.2
55 to 59	5.0
20 to 24	4.1
75 to 84	3.7
85 and above	0.8

**Summary of Recent Trends:**

Based upon an examination of the age composition in Tables 3 and 4 above, the following trends can be summarized between 1990 and 2000:

- Adults in the 35 to 44 age cohorts represent largest percentage of the Township’s population (20.2) and the greatest increase by percentage of population (3.7 percent).
- Adults 55 and over account for about 23 percent of the total population of the Township but their growth in the last 10 years has remained relatively neutral.

- School age cohorts, 5 to 19 has grown slightly over the 10-year period and account for 24 percent of the Township's population. This base of younger residents will continue to play an important role. There also remains the potential for younger families to start to move into the Township and reverse this demographic trend. The Township should continue to provide a variety of recreational facilities such as playgrounds, playfields for youth sports and activities and expand these facilities to satisfy potential increasing demands.
- With the future aging of the 35 to 54 cohorts, a higher demand for senior services including housing, healthcare, and transportation may be generated. The Township should consider activities that tend to interest older residents when planning for new park and recreation activities, such as golf, walking, and biking.
- Demographic trends suggest a steady increase in population and housing units in East Rockhill over the next decade. Township officials should ensure the adequate provision of open space with active and passive recreational facilities will satisfy resident's potential needs and demands.

### **Population and Housing Projections**

Based upon housing forecasts prepared for the *East Rockhill Comprehensive Plan Update* (2005), approximately 774 additional housing units will be needed through the year 2015. This is a conservative estimate since it is comparable to, and slightly higher than the 2000 to 2004 trend of dwelling units constructed in East Rockhill. Due to an unprecedented economic downturn at the end of 2008, these forecasts may be somewhat inflated.

According to the *East Rockhill Township Comprehensive Plan Update* (2005), the number of additional residents projected for 2015 based upon the low growth, medium-growth, high-growth scenarios is 1,571, 2,554, and 3,213, respectively. There are 774 additional dwelling units projected for this time period.

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The following goals and objectives form the basic framework for this open space plan. A goal is an ideal or desired condition that expresses the values of the Township in broad terms while an objective defines a purpose or commitment to achieve a desired goal or condition. Collectively, the goals and objectives provide a basis for officials to analyze and evaluate key decisions regarding open space resources and open space related resources (e.g., natural, historic, scenic and park and recreational resources) confronting the Township.

### GOALS:

- Preserve the intrinsic value of East Rockhill Township's open space resources by preserving and protecting its natural, cultural, historic, and scenic resources.
- Provide appropriate active and passive recreational facilities on Township open space lands.
- Coordinate open space planning with East Rockhill's park and recreational planning program.

### OBJECTIVES:

#### Natural Resources

- Protect significant natural resources (including, wetlands, floodplains, greenways, riparian buffers, woodlands, and steep slopes) from the adverse impacts caused by insensitive development.
- Allow the location of natural features to guide the type and intensity of land uses in the Township.
- Minimize negative environmental impacts related to growth and development.
- Evaluate the environmental impact of all planning, zoning, and development decisions, and to minimize adverse environmental impacts through sound design and planning.

- Highly prioritize the preservation and protection of significant natural resource areas and habitats.
- Emphasize the protection of surface and groundwater resources from point and nonpoint source pollutants through appropriate methods.
- Protect against further intrusion of hazardous materials into groundwater or other environmentally sensitive areas.
- Maintain the natural biodiversity within the Township that provides a healthy living environment for plants and animals.

### **Agricultural Preservation**

- Encourage and support the continuation of farming in the Township.
- Preserve farmland in strategic locations throughout the Township.
- Protect the Township's farmlands from development, which may remove fertile soils from production or interfere with the existing practice of farming.
- Support and strengthen the economic vitality of the Township's agricultural base.
- Promote the preservation of agricultural land through sound land use policies and regulations.
- Provide flexibility in the agricultural zoning regulations to promote alternative sources of income to farmers.
- Encourage farmland preservation through conservation easement purchase or donation.
- Encourage participation in the Bucks County Agricultural Preservation Program.

### **Historic and Scenic Resources**

- Plan for future development that safeguards historic and scenic resources.
- Protect the character and qualities of the historic villages through appropriate land use regulations, landscape buffering, or other appropriate methods.
- Protect scenic roadways from the negative impact of future development through appropriate regulatory measures.
- Promote private initiatives in conjunction with public funding sources to protect strategic historic resources.

- Pursue State funding sources to assist with the protection of historic resources (i.e., Sheard's–Clymer's Grist Mill)

### **Greenway and Trail Network**

(For more objectives related to park and recreation, see the 2006 *East Rockhill Township Park and Recreation Plan*.)

- Designate a linear greenway along each of the Township's major stream corridors to educate residents and enhance their protection.
- Establish a greenway and trail network that connects points of interest within the Township such as areas of protected open space, significant historic and scenic resources, and park and recreation facilities as well as point of interest located in adjacent communities.

### **Land Acquisition**

- Pursue alternative means for the preservation and protection of strategic open space resource lands.
- Continue collecting fees-in-lieu of dedicating land for recreational facilities if there is unsuitable land on a site to serve this purpose.

### **Government Administration and Cooperation**

- Implement the goals, objectives, and recommendations of related planning efforts, including the *East Rockhill Township Park and Recreation Plan* and Natural Areas Inventory of Bucks County, Pennsylvania.
- Provide a means of ongoing communication and coordination between the Township's board of supervisors, planning commission, and park and recreation board.
- Maintain a proactive commitment to open space acquisition within the Township.
- Promote intermunicipal cooperation and planning at the regional level.





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## INVENTORY OF PROTECTED LANDS

East Rockhill Township's park and open space resources include areas containing rural residential, vacant, agricultural, and park and recreational land uses. Approximately 68 percent of the total land area falls within these four land use categories. A significant portion of this area may not be protected from future development. In the resident survey distributed as part of the comprehensive planning process, over 90 percent of the respondents indicated that East Rockhill Township officials should acquire key open space areas, wildlife corridors, and trail linkages. Over 84 percent of the respondents indicated that both natural resources and open space should be given a high priority when planning for the future of East Rockhill. Subsequently, the preservation of significant open space and natural resources is an important issue in the minds of many residents.

Since the adoption of the Township's previous open space plan in 1998, East Rockhill has preserved (or assisted in preserving) about 645 acres of open space (7.7 percent of the land area).

### PROTECTED LANDS

The following provides a brief description of all protected open space lands or areas that are permanently protected from future development. The protected lands comprise approximately 1,364.3 acres or about 16.5 percent of the total area in the Township.<sup>2</sup> The location and extent of these lands are illustrated in Figure 1 and a detailed summary and description of these sites are located in Table 5.

#### State-Owned Lands

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania owns significant land in East Rockhill in the form of State parklands and State game lands. Approximately 388 acres of Nockamixon State Park is located within East Rockhill Township. East Rockhill is also the site of State Game Land No. 139 that is open to the public for hunting during prescribed seasons. The total area of State Game Land No. 139 is about 131 acres. Therefore, the total acreage of State parklands and State game lands in the Township is approximately 519 acres.

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<sup>2</sup> The acres shown for both the Permanently Protected Lands and Other Lands are accurate as of March of 2009, when the data for these resources were compiled.

### **County-Owned/Leased Land**

Bucks County owns a one-quarter acre parcel adjacent to Nockamixon State Park, containing a radio tower. The county leases an 8-acre parcel from the Commonwealth. This is the site of the Weisel Youth Hostel located on Richlandtown Road adjacent to Nockamixon State Park. The total acreage of county owned and leased land is 8.2 acres.

### **Township-Owned Lands**

East Rockhill purchased the Gross Farm (31.36 acres) which is adjacent to the Hildebrand site (discussed in Township-Owned Lands with Joint Conservation Easement section below.) The Township has also acquired 63.8 acres along the East Branch of the Perkiomen Creek as part of the Country Hunt subdivision. This land will be used for stream corridor/greenway preservation. The site includes a portion of the Mervin C. Bryan Walking Path and Covered Bridge Park (a neighborhood park) containing a soccer field, walking path, and fishing areas along the East Branch of the Perkiomen Creek. A mini park with playground equipment is located within the Country Hunt development.

Other open space associated with residential developments that were dedicated to the Township is as follows: Pines at Pennridge (15.5 acres), Creek View (2.4 acres) and Pines II (23.0 acres). Iron Bridge Park (a neighborhood park) is located adjacent to the Pines II development and contains a basketball court, soccer field, and pavilion. There is a mini park with playground equipment located within Pines II development. The Township also purchased the High Tract (9.5 acres) located along Branch Road that is an existing farm.

Other lands owned by East Rockhill include the municipal building complex (11.5 acres), sewage treatment plant site (10.2 acres), and sewage pumping station site (0.3 acres).(For a complete listing of Township properties, see Table 5). The total acreage of land owned by the Township is 232.8 acres.

### **Township-Owned Lands with Joint Conservation Easement**

The Willard H. Markey Centennial Park (90.9 acres) located on Ridge Road is a popular community park with various recreational facilities serving residents throughout the region. The 110.7-acre Hildebrand site was obtained in part with funds from the initial Bucks County Open Space Program. Collectively, the Hildebrand and adjacent Gross sites (purchased separately by the Township) retains the potential to be developed into a regulation 18-hole public golf course with clubhouse and driving range or into a passive and/or active recreational facility. As part of the MOSP guidelines, open space plans must include a report that details the current use and condition of properties preserved by the municipality with funding from Bucks County Open Space Program.

Table 5. Summary and Description of Protected Lands

Form of Ownership / Site	Tax Map Number(s)	Description of Use(s)	Degree of of Public Access	Description of Recreational Facilities	Acreage
<b>State-Owned Lands</b>					
Nockamixon State Park	Various	Passive Recreation	Open to Public (during park hours)	Various (1)	± 388.0
State Game Land No. 39	12-5-22, -9-1, and -9-15	Hunting	Open to Public (during prescribed season)	Forested	131.0
<b>Subtotal =</b>					<b>519.0</b>
<b>County-Owned/Leased Lands</b>					
Radio Tower (owned)	12-11-21	Utility	Access Prohibited	N/A	0.2
Weisel Youth Hostel (leased)	12-6-76 (portion of)	Passive Recreation	Open to Public (fee required)	Various (2)	8.0
<b>Subtotal =</b>					<b>8.2</b>
<b>Township-Owned Lands</b>					
Country Hunt (portion of)	Various (4)	Detention Basin and Active/Passive Recreation	Open to Public (during park hours)	Neighborhood and Mini Parks (5)(7)	63.8
Creek View (portion of)	12-21-13 and -28	Open Space	Open to Public (during park hours)	Natural Area/Trail	2.4
Dell Drive Basin	12-20-93	Detention Basin	Access Prohibited	N/A	1.5
East Rockhill Township Sewage Pumping Station	12-9-94-2	Utility	Access Prohibited	N/A	0.3
East Rockhill Township Sewage Treatment Plant	12-13-6-1	Utility	Access Prohibited	N/A	10.2
Gross Property	12-9-197	Open Space/Existing Farm	Access Prohibited	Future Trail Network/Golf Course	31.3
High Tract	12-14-35	Existing Farm	Access Prohibited	N/A	9.5
Mervin C. Bryan Walking Path	12-14-23-1 (portion of), -68, and -213	Passive Recreation/Stream Corridor/Greenway Preservation	Open to Public (during park hours)	Trail, Benches, Natural Areas	63.8
Municipal Building Complex	12-9-163, -163-1	Administrative/Public Works	Open to Public (during office hours)	N/A	11.5
Pines at Pennridge I (portion of)	12-22-86 and -29-73	Open Space	Open to Public (during park hours)	NA	15.5
Pines II (portion of)	12-29-158, -159, and -213	Open Space and Active/Passive Recreation	Open to Public (during park hours)	Natural Area/Neighborhood and Mini Parks (6)(7)	23
<b>Subtotal =</b>					<b>232.8</b>
<b>Township-Owned Lands with Joint Conservation Easements</b>					
Hildebrand Site	12-9-190	Open Space/Existing Farm	Access Prohibited	Future Trail Network/Golf Course	110.7
Three Mile Run Road, Site #1	12-9-92-1	Open Space/Educational Purposes Only	Open to Public (during park hours)	Forested/Future Passive Recreation	14.4
Three Mile Run Road, Site #2	12-9-157	Open Space/Educational Purposes Only	Open to Public (during park hours)	Forested/Future Passive Recreation	36.3
Three Mile Run Road, Site #3	12-9-93	Resource Protection	Open to Public (during park hours)	Forested/Future Passive Recreation	37.1
Willard H. Markey Centennial Park	12-9-166	Active/Passive Recreation	Open to Public (during park hours)	Various (3)	90.9
<b>Subtotal =</b>					<b>289.4</b>
<b>Conservation Easements Held by Township</b>					
Clymer Mill Estates (portion of)	12-9-40	Resource Protection and Buffer Areas	Access Prohibited	Natural Area	20.0
Perkasie Borough Authority (PBA)	12-9-9; -89; -94	Resource/Well Field Protection	Access Prohibited	N/A	167.6
Petit Horse Farm	12-14-37	Existing Farm	Access Prohibited	N/A	35.5
Wisner Subdivision (portion of)	12-14-23-1	Resource Protection and Riparian Buffer	Open to Public (during park hours)	Natural Area/Trail	7
<b>Subtotal =</b>					<b>230.1</b>
<b>Agricultural Preservation Easements Held by Township</b>					
Gulla Farm (portion of)	12-11-57 and -57-1	Agricultural Easement	Access Prohibited	N/A	13.0
Lake Wind Farm (portion of)	12-9-249	Agricultural Easement	Access Prohibited	N/A	11.0
<b>Subtotal =</b>					<b>24.0</b>
<b>Conservation Easements Held by Heritage Conservancy</b>					
Musselman Farm	12-14-11 and -36	Conservation Easement	Access Prohibited	N/A	60.8
<b>Subtotal =</b>					<b>60.8</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL =</b>					<b>1,364.3</b>

(1) Recreational facilities include hiking and biking trails, picnicking, biking, boating, fishing, and swimming.

(2) Recreational facilities include fishing, skating, and hiking.

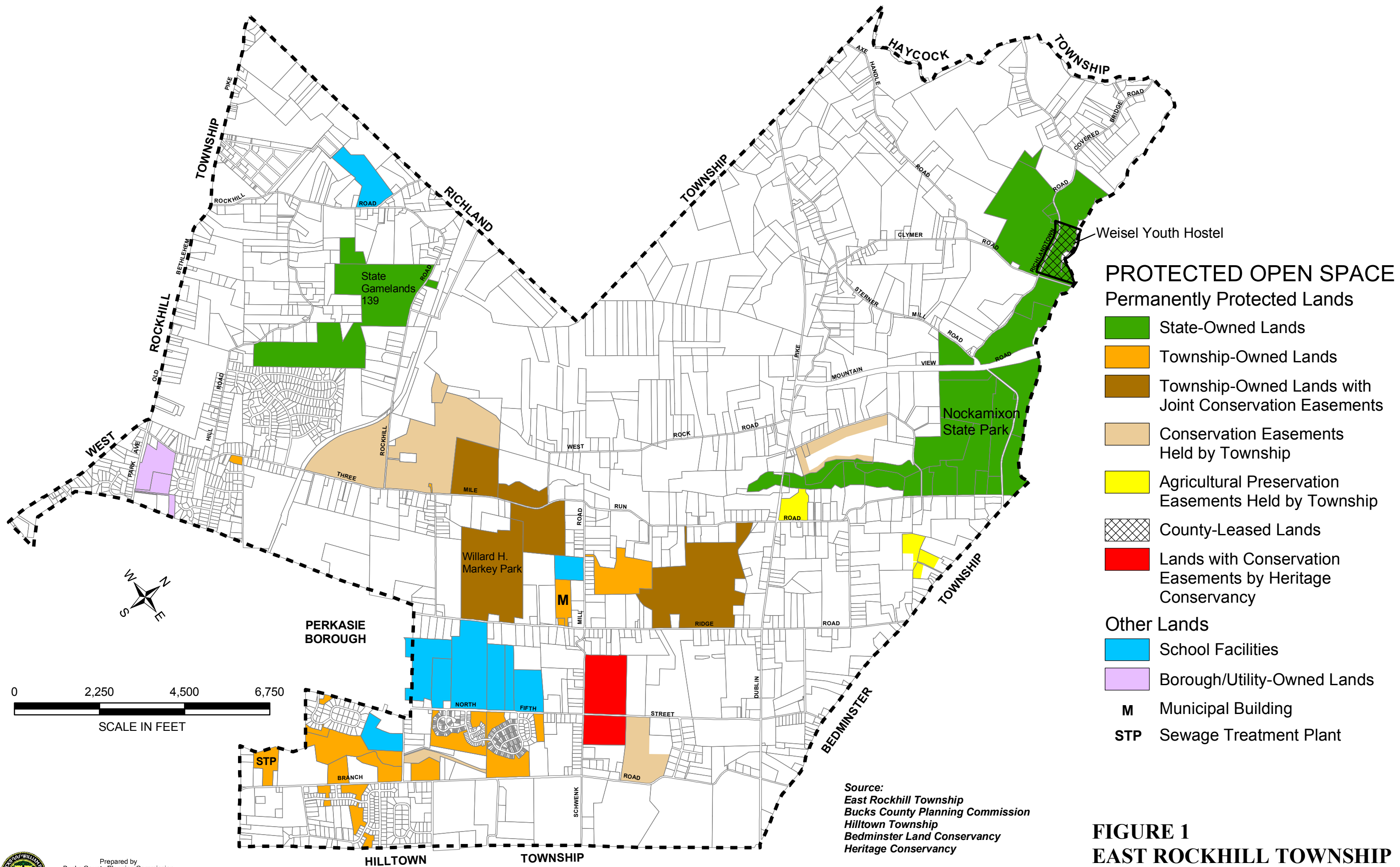
(3) Recreational facilities include walking trails, pavilion, play equipment, picnic areas, golf driving range, volleyball courts, and soccer, football, multi-purpose fields and a skateboard park.

(4) TMP#s 12-21-33, -22-95, -27-117, -27-118, and -30-17.

(5) Covered Bridge Park (TMP# 12-14-68) contains a neighborhood park with a soccer field, fishing areas, and walking trail along the East Branch of the Perkiomen Creek.

(6) Iron Bridge Park (TMP # 12-29-213), located adjacent to Pines II development is a neighborhood park containing a basketball court, soccer field, and a pavilion.

(7) Subdivisions that contain mini parks with playground equipment.



**PROTECTED OPEN SPACE**  
 Permanently Protected Lands

- State-Owned Lands
- Township-Owned Lands
- Township-Owned Lands with Joint Conservation Easements
- Conservation Easements Held by Township
- Agricultural Preservation Easements Held by Township
- County-Leased Lands
- Lands with Conservation Easements by Heritage Conservancy

- Other Lands**
- School Facilities
  - Borough/Utility-Owned Lands
  - M** Municipal Building
  - STP** Sewage Treatment Plant

Source:  
 East Rockhill Township  
 Bucks County Planning Commission  
 Hilltown Township  
 Bedminster Land Conservancy  
 Heritage Conservancy

**FIGURE 1**  
**EAST ROCKHILL TOWNSHIP**  
**OPEN SPACE PLAN**



Therefore, a property status report is provided for the Hildebrand site. (See Appendix A.)

The Township recently acquired three parcels located along Three Mile Run Road. One parcel is located adjacent to Willard Markey Park, and the other two are located on the northwest side of Three Mile Run Road. While owned by East Rockhill, two of the three parcels (TMP#s 12-9-92-1 and 12-9-157) are protected by a joint conservation easement held by the Bedminster Land Conservancy. The easement agreement stipulates that these two lots may not be further subdivided or developed for residential use. Instead, the parcels must be used for educational purposes only, with no buildings to exceed 10,000 square feet. The third parcel (TMP# 12-9-93) is protected by an easement held jointly with Bucks County and is intended to be restricted to future passive recreational purposes. These parcels form a contiguous land holding that may be used to provide a trail network into Willard Markey Park.

In total, there is 289.4 acres of land that contain conservation easements on land owned or jointly owned by the Township.

### **Conservation Easements Held by Township**

The Wismer subdivision located adjacent to Blooming Glen Road contains a 7-acre privately-owned utility/trail easement that is held by East Rockhill Township.

In April of 2007, Township officials acquired approximately 20 acres of conservation easement area associated with the Clymer Mill Estates subdivision located southeast of East Rock Road. The conservation easement protects the vista along East Rock Road and the Nockamixon Lake frontage.

The Perkasio Borough Authority (PBA) currently owns four parcels in East Rockhill Township. PBA has exclusive easement rights on another parcel that is owned by East Rockhill Township. On two parcels, PBA operates three active wells, one test well, and one well that is anticipated to be completed in March of 2009. These wells provide public water supply to both Perkasio Borough and East Rockhill Township. In February of 2009, Perkasio Borough Authority (PBA) agreed to place a conservation easement that is to be held by East Rockhill, totaling 167.6 acres over three parcels (TMP#s 12-9-9; -89; -94). This is a significant accomplishment given that the easement restricts future development and activities that could negatively affect the water quality of several wellheads providing public drinking water to area.

In March of 2009, a conservation easement to be held by East Rockhill was approved for the Petit Tract. The easement covers 35.5 of the 40.5 acres and contains an existing horse farm.

In total, there is 230.1 acres of land with conservation easements held by the Township.

### **BUCKS COUNTY AGRICULTURAL LAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM**

The Bucks County Agricultural Land Preservation Program (BCALPP) seeks to acquire agricultural conservation easements on viable farmland within the county. An agricultural conservation easement secured through acquisition is a legally binding document that is filed in the land records with the deed of a farm property, restricting its use substantially to agricultural and directly associated uses. As an easement in gross, restrictions are binding upon the owners and future owners, carrying with the land. A conservation easement allows a landowner to protect his farmland for agricultural uses while retaining private ownership of the farm.

Once a farm is accepted into the program, the property owner may sell or convey a conservation easement and receive cash for the respective development rights. The easement is placed in perpetuity. As of February 2003, approximately 6,530 acres of agricultural land in Bucks County (consisting of 60 farms) have been preserved through the BCALPP. In East Rockhill Township, there are no properties that are protected under this program. However, several properties may be eligible for future designation.

### **Agricultural Preservation Easements Held by Township**

There are two properties that have set aside agricultural preservation easements within the Agricultural Preservation District. The Gulla Farm subdivision located on the western side of Old Bethlehem Pike has 13 acres of preserved land. Lake Wind Farm subdivision located on the northeastern corner of Three Mile Run Road and Dublin Pike (Route 313) has 11 acres preserved. Collectively, there is 24 acres of land containing agricultural preservation easements held by East Rockhill.

### **Conservation Easements Held by Heritage Conservancy**

In June of 2003, Heritage Conservancy with the assistance from East Rockhill, obtained a conservation/façade easement on the Musselman Farm. Located on the northwestern and northeastern corner of Schwenk Mill and North Fifth Street, the property consists of two parcels totaling 60.8 acres. The agreement stipulates that no residential activities (with the exception of the existing dwelling unit) are permitted on the site.

## OTHER LANDS

The Other Lands category shown in Figure 1, represents lands that are not protected by a legal mechanism such as an easement, but are unlikely to be developed in the future due to the nature of the existing use or its ownership. These include school facilities and borough/utility-owned lands as discussed below.

### School Facilities

Public school facilities in East Rockhill include Pennridge High School and The Robert B. Deibler Elementary School. The Pennridge High School/North Middle School campus is located at the corner of Blooming Glen Road and North Fifth Street and totals 141.4 acres. The Robert B. Deibler Elementary School contains 12 acres and is located on Schwenk Mill Road. The Upper Bucks Christian School (and Bethel Baptist Church) is a private facility located on Rockhill Road, containing 27.6 acres. Lastly, the Bucks County Community College—Upper County Campus located adjacent to the Glenwood Village Shopping Center consists of 14.4 acres and shares adjacent Township-owned recreation land. The total land area for school facilities is about 195.4 acres.

### Borough/Utility-Owned Lands <sup>3</sup>

Along the northeastern side of Park Avenue near its intersection with Three Mile Run Road, Pennsylvania Power and Light Company (PP&L) owns a 17.8-acre substation site. To the southeast of the PP&L site, Perkasio Borough owns two parcels — a 6.2-acre parcel that contains an electric substation and a 2.2-acre parcel containing an electrical distribution system. Borough and utility-owned lands that are not permanently protected total 26.2 acres.

### Inventory of Protected Lands Summary

East Rockhill has been committed to preserving land for open space, recreational, and natural resource protection purposes. Approximately 16.5 percent (1,364.3 acres) of the land area of the Township has been permanently protected in some form or another. However, there are still significant natural, historic, and scenic resources that are not protected from future development.

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<sup>3</sup> As mentioned in the Protected Lands discussion above, Perkasio Borough Authority (PBA) owns three parcels that are permanently protected with conservation easements held by East Rockhill Township.





## INVENTORY OF VULNERABLE RESOURCES

### NATURAL RESOURCES

East Rockhill has a wealth of natural resources that affect the quality of life of its residents. Farmland, woodlands, steep slopes, and stream valleys are some of the resources that contribute to the aesthetic and rural character of the Township. Land use planning should balance future development with the protection of the Township's inherent natural resources. Conventional subdivisions and nonresidential development often place a maximum on density and intensity of land use without regard to the natural resources on a site. While the Township's zoning ordinance requires that proposed development comply with natural resource protection standards and site capacity calculations for certain types of residential development, there are other tools and techniques that can enhance resource protection on an individual site. For instance, the implementation of Low Impact Development or LID, is a concept that stresses the utilization of a site's natural drainage system while minimizing grading and site disturbances. Site fingerprinting and minimum disturbance are two development techniques that can greatly reduce the impacts of grading.

The purpose of this section is to provide an inventory of the existing natural resources in East Rockhill and suggest implementation strategies that aid in their protection and enhancement. Natural resources have been broken into two categories—land and hydrological resources. Land resources include geology, steep slopes, woodlands, and agricultural soils. Hydrologic resources consist of watersheds/streams, floodplains, and wetlands.

#### Land Resources

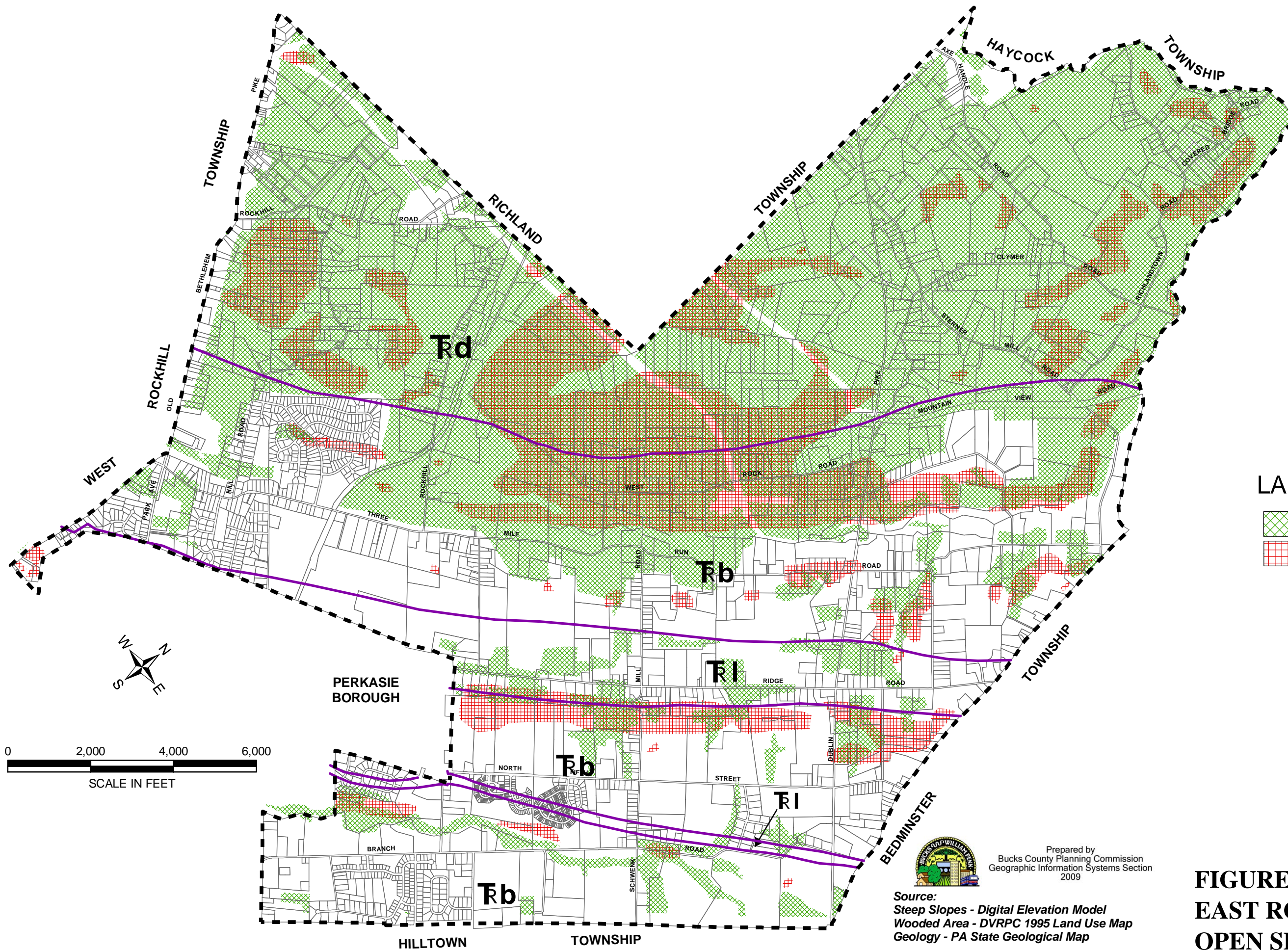
##### *Geology*

In East Rockhill, there are three major geologic formations, all formed in the Triassic Period: diabase (igneous intrusions), Brunswick (sedimentary shale and sandstones), and Lockatong (sedimentary argillite) (See Figure 2.) Inherently, geology affects future planning and land use decisions through impacts on water supply, topography, and soil characteristics. Groundwater supplies largely depend upon geology, surface characteristics, water use and seasonal precipitation. The capacity of these aquifers to transmit and store water is directly related to the specific physical and chemical properties of the underlain geologic formation. The descriptions and water bearing characteristics of each are described below:



- **Brunswick Formation**—Interlaced with bands of Lockatong, the Brunswick formation composes the majority of the eastern and southern portions of the Township. A sedimentary rock consisting mostly of red to reddish-brown shale, gray to greenish-gray mudstone, and siltstone. Brunswick shale is nonporous rock moderately resistant to erosion and weathering. However, because it is highly fractured, the Brunswick Formation is considered a more reliable source of groundwater than Lockatong with well yields often greater than 100 gallons per minute (gpm). Yields in the fractured rocks of Brunswick shale are more predictable than in areas of dense, hard, poorly fracture rocks such as diabase or Lockatong argillite.
- **Lockatong Formation**—More resistant to weathering than the Brunswick formation, the Lockatong formation defines two distinct ridges in the East Rockhill Township, one along Ridge Road and a smaller band parallel to the East Branch of the Perkiomen Creek. Characterized by a gray to black argillite and containing tightly cemented sediment. The Lockatong Formation is a less reliable source of groundwater. Storage areas within the fractures are generally small and often obstructed by the formation itself that weathers to a dense clay-like soil that fills joints and prevents water flows. Therefore, the Lockatong formation has a low capacity to transmit and store water. Median well yields from Lockatong formations are about 10 gpm.
- **Diabase**—This formation covers more than one third of East Rockhill Township, covering the extreme northern and western portions of the Township. Diabase consists of a dense, erosion-resistant crystalline, which is the primary rock type underlying many wooded ridges, steep slopes, and narrow stream valleys. Most Diabase is too dense and the fractures and fissures too narrow to provide reliable well water on a large scale. Thus, Diabase is considered a poor source of groundwater, which is only available within the weathered zone to 30 feet deep. The average well yield is 5 gpm. The shallow depth to bedrock also presents difficulties for excavation of on-site septic systems.

### *Steep Slopes*

East Rockhill's topography may be characterized by two geologic systems: the hilly terrain of the Diabase intrusion and the alternating ridges and valleys of the parallel Lockatong and Brunswick formations. The dominant topographic feature of the Pennridge Area is the Rockhill chain, a major outcropping of Diabase running across upper Bucks County from Haycock Mountain through East and West Rockhill, where the major hills are the so-called Rock Hills. Rock Hill, located in the northern portion of



**LAND RESOURCES**

-  Woodlands
-  Steep Slopes (15% and Greater)

**Geology**

- Td** Diabase
- Tb** Brunswick lithofacies
- Tr** Lockatong lithofacies



Prepared by  
Bucks County Planning Commission  
Geographic Information Systems Section  
2009

Source:  
Steep Slopes - Digital Elevation Model  
Wooded Area - DVRPC 1995 Land Use Map  
Geology - PA State Geological Map

**FIGURE 2  
EAST ROCKHILL TOWNSHIP  
OPEN SPACE PLAN**

East Rockhill Township, between Three Mile Run Road, PA Route 313, and Rockhill Road, has the highest elevation in the Pennridge Area (over 840 feet above mean sea level). It is a striking geologic formation, identified by the Pennsylvania Geological Survey as an Outstanding Scenic Geological Feature of Pennsylvania. A second major ridge parallels most of the length of PA Route 563/Ridge Road, forming a steep natural barrier. Three Mile Run is a very sharply defined valley between Rockhill and Ridge Road. The lowest elevation in the Township is 310 feet above mean sea level located at the western most edge of the East Branch of the Perkiomen Creek. Approximately 1,557 acres or 19 percent of the Township is covered by slopes of 15 percent or greater (See Figure 2.)

If improperly regulated and designed, development on steep slopes can lead to accelerated erosion, instability of structures, limited access, and obstruction of scenic views. The East Rockhill Township Zoning Ordinance (Sections 27-1900 and 27-1901) restricts development of areas with slopes of 15 percent or greater as shown in the Table 6 below:

**Table 6. Steep Slope Regulations**

<b>Slope</b>	<b>Allowable Disturbance</b>
15 to 25 percent	No more than <b>30</b> percent
15 to 25 percent <i>tracts less than 10 acres in Agricultural Preservation District</i>	No more than <b>75</b> percent
26 percent or steeper	No more than <b>20</b> percent
26 percent or steeper <i>tracts more than 10 acres in Agricultural Preservation District</i>	No more than <b>70</b> percent

Township officials may wish to examine these existing provisions to determine if the zoning ordinance should be amended to incorporate additional protection measures and/or allowances for limited disturbance areas. For instance, for sites containing slopes of 26 percent or steeper that are located outside the Agricultural Preservation District, decreasing the maximum allowable disturbance from 20 to 15 percent would be consistent with Bucks County’s policy in the *Natural Resources Plan* (1999). Furthermore, the county plan recommends that minimal disturbance areas (e.g., areas of steep slopes that are less than 3000 square feet) to be exempted from steep slope standards.

**Woodlands**

In East Rockhill Township nearly 4,892 acres (59 percent of the Township) contains woodlands (See Figure 2.) Much of these woodlands are concentrated in the northwest of the Township, northwest portion of Three Mile Run Road. The predominant woodland cover is oak-hickory association. These woodland resources provide numerous benefits to the environment including water and air purification, local and regional climate control, open space, erosion control, wildlife habitat, and providing a commercial value as timber and firewood. Vegetative cover also enhances groundwater recharge by reducing the volume and rate of runoff, which is invaluable, especially in the low-yielding aquifers of the Diabase formation.

The wooded hillsides in East Rockhill Township dominate the landscape and contribute to its rural character. Woodlands provide visual and audible buffering while contributing to the Township’s scenic value. When woodlands are located in environmentally sensitive areas, such as steep slopes areas, along tributaries and wetlands, even minor disturbances can lead to serious environmental degradation.

The East Rockhill Township Zoning Ordinance (Section 27-1900.d) provides for the protection of woodlands as shown in the Table 7 below:

**Table 7. Woodland Protection Regulations**

Zoning District	Allowable Disturbance
Resource Protection (RP) Rural Residential (RR) Suburban (S) Agricultural Preservation (AP) <i>tracts less than 10 acres</i>	No more than <b>20</b> percent
Residential (R-1) Commercial-Office (C-O) Extraction (E) Industrial (I-1, I-2) Agricultural Preservation (AP) <i>tracts 10 acres or larger</i>	No more than <b>40</b> percent
All other zoning districts	No more than <b>75</b> percent
	No more than <b>20</b> percent

Forestry use (Use A4) in the zoning ordinance includes commercial logging operations; clearing or destruction of forested or wooded areas; selective cutting or clearing for commercial or development purposes, or clearing of vegetation in reserved open space or resource protection areas. A reforestation plan is required that will provide a reestablishment of the forest on a sustained yield except where clearing is for agricultural use. All plans are required to illustrate how the general habitat and visual appearance of the forest is to be maintained so that the forest retains its visual and habitat qualities at all stages of the long-term cutting plan. Clear cutting of vegetation is restricted to no more than 5 acres or more than 20 percent of the forest in any one calendar year, whichever is less. Township officials may wish to review these regulations to provide more restrictive clear-cutting standards. For instance, the Forestry use regulations could be revised to establish a maximum area limit for tree removal (e.g., 20 percent of the site) for the lifetime of the lot, and require a deed restriction be placed on the remaining lot area to restrict further clear-cutting. Also, a permanent forested buffer area (e.g., 50 feet) could be required along adjacent roadway that will function to preserve forested areas and minimize the visual impact to passing motorists.

In 2008, a TreeVitalize<sup>4</sup> grant was awarded to East Rockhill Township to create a Master Tree Plan consisting of an amendment to the subdivision and land development ordinance for afforestation/reforestation and an accompanying map indicates suggested sites for afforestation/reforestation. In June of 2008, Township officials adopted an ordinance amendment that strengthens existing tree protection/replacement requirements and establishes reforestation/afforestation standards. The protection of existing plant materials regulations were revised by requiring the delineation of a tree protection zone (TPZ) in the field that conforms to the approved development plans. No grading, construction activity, or storage of topsoil or materials is permitted within the TPZ.<sup>5</sup>

Reforestation standards require that if trees with a diameter of six inches or more that are to be removed or destroyed during any stage of development, grading and/or construction within a subdivision or land development shall be replaced with tree(s) of the caliper specified.

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<sup>4</sup> Southeast Pennsylvania TreeVitalize is a public-private partnership to help restore tree cover, educate citizens about planting trees as an act of caring for our environment, and build capacity among local governments to understand, protect, and restore their urban trees.

<sup>5</sup> The tree protection zone is measured 15 feet from the trunk of a tree to be retained, or the distance from the trunk to the dripline, whichever is greater.

Afforestation standards require that applicants conduct afforestation on a site if the existing forested area does not meet an establish forest cover threshold for all proposed major subdivisions or land developments. In the R-1 Residential, Commercial-Office, Extraction, or Industrial zoning districts, a site must have at least 20 percent forest cover. In all other zoning districts, a site must have 25 percent forest cover. Otherwise, the site must be afforested (planted) with trees to satisfy these percentages. When the forest cover on a site is currently below these prescribed afforestation percentages, any existing removal by the applicant shall be reforested at a rate of two to one (2:1). Trees used in the afforestation or reforestation shall be native to the Township. Where appropriate, the preference is to provide trees of the same species on the site.

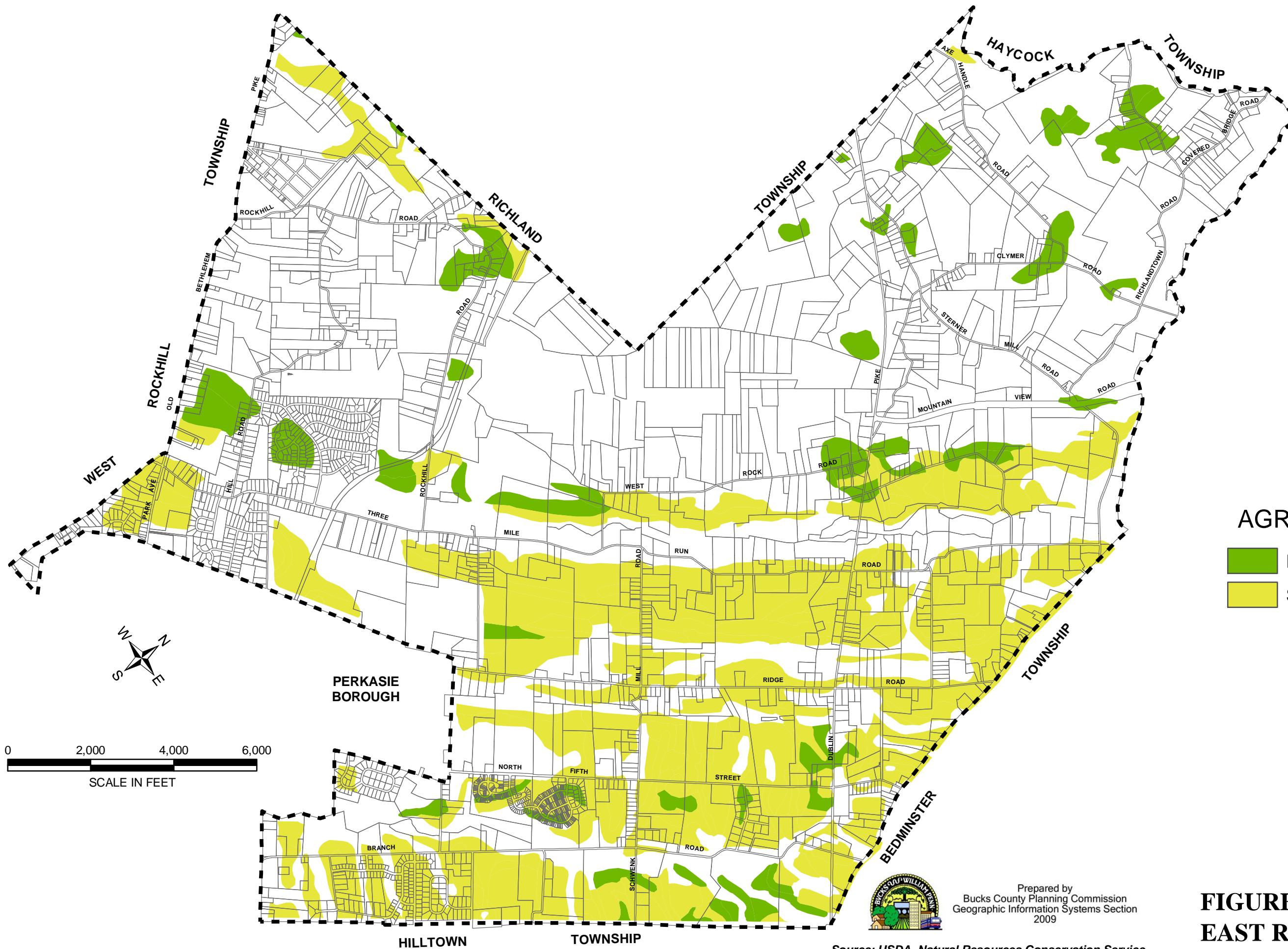
If the applicant demonstrates that afforestation or reforestation cannot be reasonably accommodated onsite, the applicant shall contribute a fee in lieu of into the Township's Forest Conservation/Street Tree Fund. At its discretion, the Board of Supervisors may permit an applicant to meet all or part of this fee in lieu of requirement by enhancing existing forest or other natural areas on the site or other Township-owned property (as shown on afforestation/reforestation sites map) through the removal of noxious and nonnative plants, the planting of native plants or other means.

These recent amendments are intended to enhance the preservation and protection of woodlands and forested areas within the Township.

### ***Agricultural Soils***

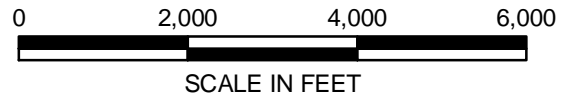
The U.S. Department of Agriculture—Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has recently recertified the soils in Bucks County and has identified and mapped important farmlands. This identification takes into account not only soil quality but also other environmental conditions that affect agricultural productivity, such as climate and soil acidity. Generally, in Bucks County, the important farmlands surveyed by the NRCS include soil capability classes I through IV, grouped into two classifications—Prime Farmland (soils with land capability class 1 and 2 soils) and Additional Farmland of Statewide Importance (soils with land capability class 2 and 3 soils). Class 3 soils and class 2 soils that do not qualify as Prime Farmland are classified as Additional Farmland of Statewide Importance.

NRCS defines Prime Farmland as land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops, and is also available for these uses (the land could be cropland, pastureland, rangeland, forest land or other land, but not urban built-up land or water. Additional Farmland of Statewide



**AGRICULTURAL SOILS**

- Prime Farmland
- Statewide Important Farmland



Prepared by  
Bucks County Planning Commission  
Geographic Information Systems Section  
2009

Source: USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service

**FIGURE 3**  
**EAST ROCKHILL TOWNSHIP**  
**OPEN SPACE PLAN**



Importance generally includes those lands that are nearly prime farmland and that economically produce high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods. Some may produce as high a yield as prime farmlands if conditions are favorable.

As shown in Figure 3, the highest concentration of agricultural soils is located in the central and southeast portions of the Township. Based upon the NRCS soil classification, there are 459 acres of Prime Farmland and 2,530 acres of Additional Farmland of Statewide Importance in East Rockhill Township. This accounts for 31 and 6 percent of the area of the Township, respectively.

### **AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION IN EAST ROCKHILL**

A primary goal of the *East Rockhill Township Comprehensive Plan* (2005) is to promote the preservation of prime agricultural land. In 2000, Township officials created a new zoning district—AP, Agricultural Preservation District that is intended to promote the preservation of agriculture as a primary use. Limited residential uses are permitted. The standards and densities are intended to provide a positive incentive for the preservation of large amounts of open space and agriculture. In May 2003, the Agricultural Preservation district regulations (Ordinance No. 201) were revised to prohibit no more than 40 percent of the Prime Farmland and Additional Farmland of Statewide Importance soils to be developed.

## **Hydrological Resources**

### ***Watersheds/Streams***

East Rockhill Township contains two primary watersheds—Tohickon and East Branch Perkiomen (See Figure 4) The Tohickon Watershed originates in the northern portion of Bucks County, includes Lake Nockamixon (a man-made impoundment), and discharges its stream flow into the Delaware River at Point Pleasant in Plumstead Township. In East Rockhill, the Tohickon Watershed contains two secondary watersheds—Three Mile Run and Bog Run. Runoff within the Three Mile Run Secondary Watershed starts in West Rockhill Township, crosses East Rockhill Township, and flows directly into Lake Nockamixon. The Bog Run Secondary Watershed is located in portions of East Rockhill and Richland townships and generally corresponds to the environmentally sensitive area known as the Quakertown (Great) Swamp. The headwaters of Bog Run originate in East Rockhill and flow eastward across the northern tip of the Township to Tohickon Creek.

The dividing line between the Tohickon and East Branch Perkiomen watersheds generally parallels Ridge Road. The latter is located to the southeast. A small portion of the Morris Creek Secondary Watershed corresponding to the confluence of Morris Creek and the East Branch of the Perkiomen Creek is located along East Rockhill's border with Hilltown Township.

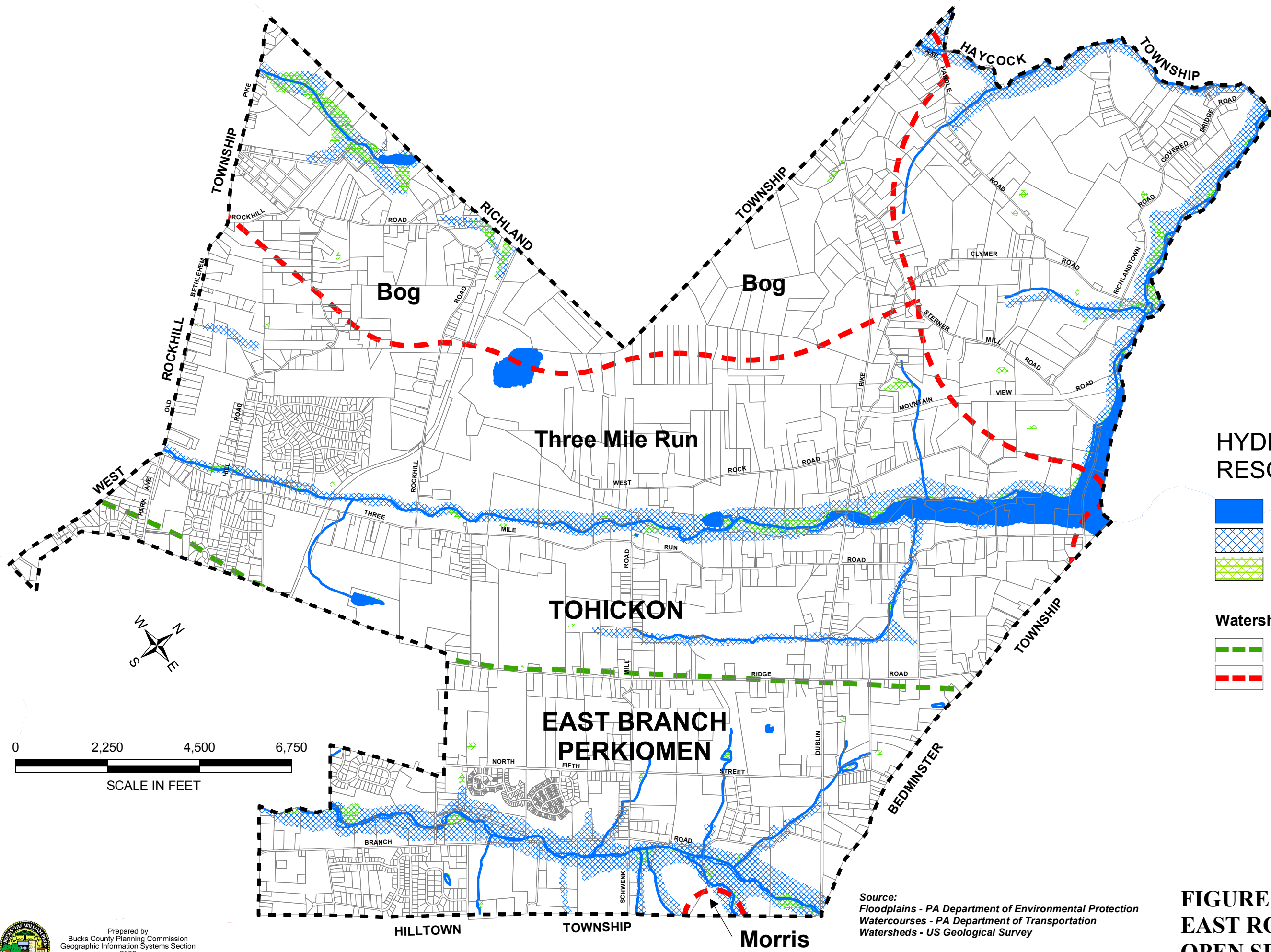
The juxtaposition of the two primary watersheds in East Rockhill Township has significance for water supply planning. Currently, public water is being withdrawn through a series of wells that are owned by the Perkasio Borough Authority (PBA) but located in East Rockhill (within the Three Mile Run Secondary Watershed). These wells primarily serve homes and businesses in Perkasio Borough and East Rockhill Township within the East Branch Perkiomen Watershed. Subsequently, public water withdrawn from Three Mile Run Secondary Watershed is consumed by these household and businesses and converted to wastewater that is treated and discharged into the East Branch Perkiomen Creek. These wells also supply water to certain businesses in the East Rockhill portion of Tohickon Watershed, which discharge wastewater into Three Mile Run interceptor. Ultimately, this wastewater is also treated and discharged into the East Branch of the Perkiomen Creek. These transfers of water across watershed boundaries have implications for development district and infrastructure planning in the Township. Conservation easements are being pursued for the PBA sites to prevent future development or improvements that may have a negative impact on the water quality of the respective wells.

### ***Floodplains***

Floodplains and alluvial soils indicate where flooding has occurred in the past. These soils are composed of a mix of other soil types that have been eroded from the land and deposited along streambeds by stormwater. Floodplain/alluvial soils are crucial for the protection of water quality and aquatic life and they store water and accommodate fluctuations of stream volume during heavy rains. Floodplain soils indicate where flooding has occurred in the past. Many of East Rockhill's scenic areas are found within the floodplain of stream valleys with their lush vegetation, steep slopes, and attractive open space. There are approximately 693 acres (or about 8 percent of the area in the Township) of floodplains East Rockhill Township. (See Figure 4.)

### ***Wetlands***

Typically, wetlands occur as marshes, swamps, and bogs. Often, they are saturated lands or areas that display a seasonal high water table. Wetlands are important resources providing habitat for wildlife, filtering stormwater runoff and improving water quality, reducing potential flood damage, and increasing groundwater recharge. Wetland areas greater than 10 acres in size are dispersed throughout the Pennridge



- HYDROLOGICAL RESOURCES**
- Watercourses/Waterbodies
  - Floodplains/Alluvial Soils
  - Wetlands/Hydric Soils
- Watershed Classifications**
- PRIMARY
  - Secondary

0 2,250 4,500 6,750  
SCALE IN FEET



Source:  
Floodplains - PA Department of Environmental Protection  
Watercourses - PA Department of Transportation  
Watersheds - US Geological Survey

**FIGURE 4  
EAST ROCKHILL TOWNSHIP  
OPEN SPACE PLAN**



Area, though many are located along the area’s streams. There are a few concentrations of wetland areas greater than 10 acres in the headwater area of Bog Creek in East Rockhill Township, as part of the Quakertown (Great) Swamp. (See Figure 4.)

The Quakertown Swamp is one of the few significantly large wetlands in upper Bucks County. The majority of this significant natural feature is located in Richland and East Rockhill townships, but a small portion is located in northeastern part of West Rockhill Township. (For more discussion on this important resource, see Natural Areas Program below).

The Natural Resource Protection Standards in the Township zoning ordinance (Sections 27-1900 a, b, f, g, h, i, and j) includes provisions for the preservation of hydrologic resources. Encroachment and disturbances are prohibited within floodplain and floodplain soils, streams, watercourses, lake, ponds, wetlands, and riparian buffer zones,<sup>6</sup> except as noted below. A maximum of 20 percent disturbance is allowed for lake and pond shorelines and wetland margins for wetlands over an acre in size as shown the Table 8 below.<sup>7</sup>

**Table 8. Hydrologic Resources Regulations**

Hydrologic Resource	Allowable Disturbance
Floodplain/Floodplain Soils	None*
Streams, Watercourses, Lakes, and Ponds	None**
Lake or Pond Shorelines	No more than 20 percent
Wetlands	None**
Wetlands Margins <i>wetlands 1 acre and over</i>	No more than 20 percent
Riparian Buffer Zones	None***

\* Except disturbances that are permitted by Section 27-1902 of the zoning ordinance.

\*\* Except that roads and utilities may cross streams and watercourses where no other reasonable access is available and where design approval is obtained from the Township, as well as State and Federal permitting agencies.

\*\*\* Except for road and utility crossings where design approval is obtained from the Township.

Overall, Township officials may wish to examine the natural resource protection standards in order to enhance the protection of the Township land and hydrological resources.

<sup>6</sup> A riparian buffer is a wooded, natural area within 75 feet of the top of stream/watercourse bank of any perennial or intermittent stream or watercourse identified on USGS or NRCS mapping.

<sup>7</sup> Wetland margins is an area that extends 100 feet from the wetland boundary or to the limit of hydric soils, whichever is less (in no case shall the margin be less than 50 feet).

### **Natural Areas Program**

In June of 1999, an inventory was undertaken to identify and rank the most significant natural areas remaining in Bucks County, including those in East Rockhill. This survey, titled *Natural Areas Inventory of Bucks County*, provides guidance for implementation of the natural areas protection component of the Bucks County Open Space Initiative. The individual site evaluation to determine the significance of natural areas is based upon 13 criteria addressing biological, ecological, hydrological, and geological components. Sites were assigned one of four levels of importance.

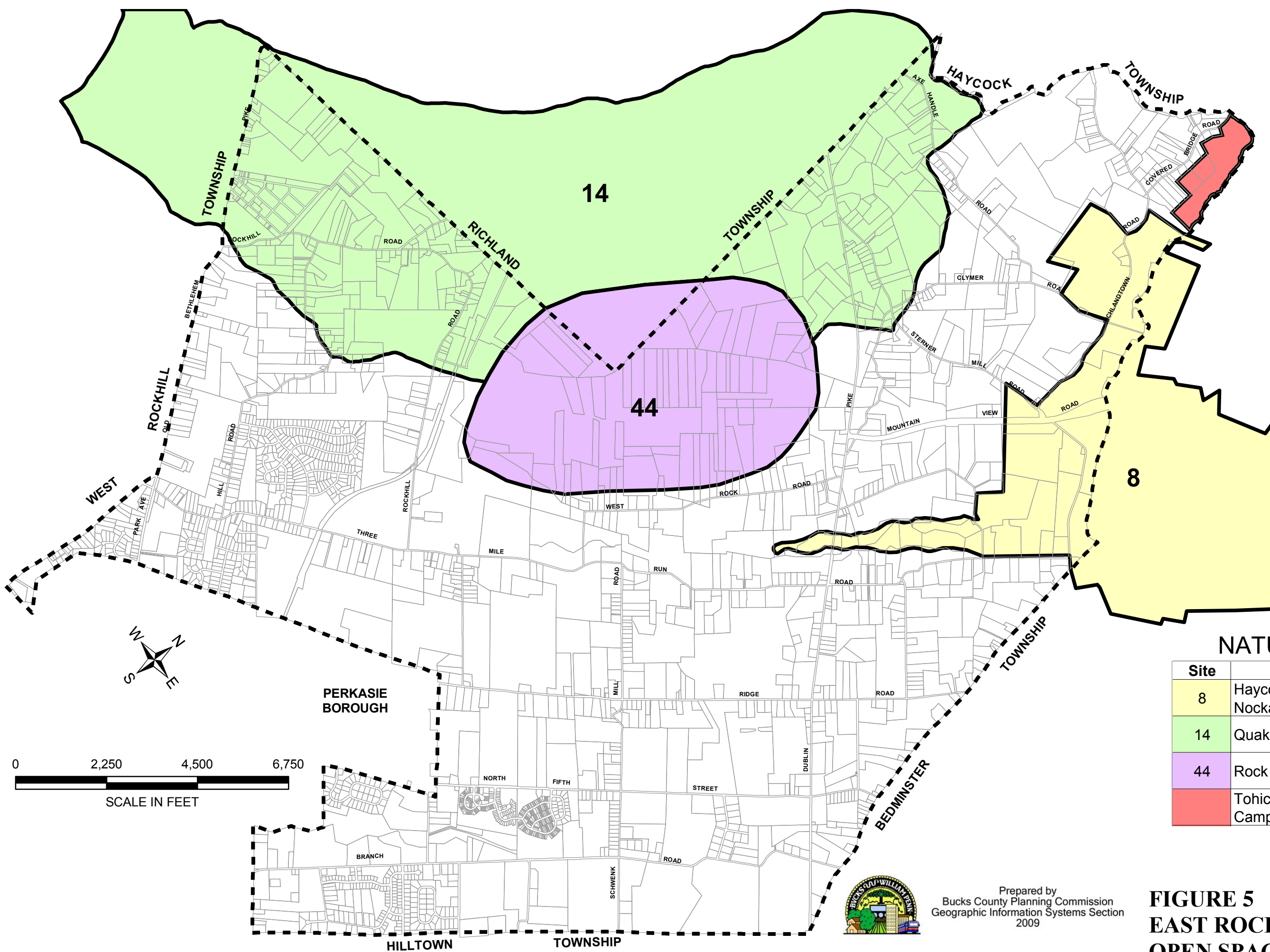
- Priority 1—areas that have statewide or countywide significance based on uniqueness or exceptionally high quality of natural features.
- Priority 2—areas that have countywide or statewide significance based on the overall quality and the diversity and importance of the resources.
- Priority 3—areas that have local or countywide significance that may contain small or degraded resources.
- Priority 4—areas that have biological or ecological resources that are important at the local level.

East Rockhill Township contains the following priority sites as identified in the Natural Areas Inventory. (See Figure 5.)

#### ***Quakertown Swamp – Priority 1 Site***

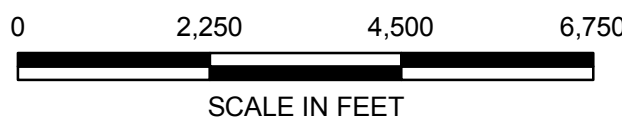
Quakertown Swamp is the largest freshwater inland wetland in southeastern Pennsylvania. The swamp encompasses nearly 518 acres bordering Bog Run, a tributary to Tohickon Creek and lies within East Rockhill, West Rockhill, and Richland townships. Located near the dormant Rockhill Quarry, it provides a critical wildlife habitat and is a natural plant community for numerous wetland species ranging from open water to shrub swamp, cattail marsh, tussock sage marsh, and swamp forests. More than 74 bird species nest in the swamp, which also provides habitat for a variety of reptiles and amphibians. The area is largely undisturbed, and at an elevation of 840 feet, its heavily forested areas and steep slopes make the area abundant with aesthetic views and scenery.

The Quakertown Swamp has been awarded several distinctions for its natural significance. In 1996, the Bucks County Audubon Society designated the Quakertown Swamp as an Important Bird Area. The Pennsylvania Game Commission recognized the area as a significant habitat for nesting and migrating waterfowl. The United States



**NATURAL AREAS**

Site	Site Name	Priority
8	Haycock Mountain & Nockamixon State Park	1
14	Quakertown Swamp	1
44	Rock Hill	2
	Tohickon Family Campground	



Prepared by  
Bucks County Planning Commission  
Geographic Information Systems Section  
2009

Source: Natural Area's Inventory - Bucks County, 1999

**FIGURE 5  
EAST ROCKHILL TOWNSHIP  
OPEN SPACE PLAN**

Fish and Game Commission have also acknowledged the swamp as an important wetland area within Pennsylvania.

Numerous studies have been conducted investigating the wetland's diverse natural communities. In 2000, the Heritage Conservancy published the Quakertown Swamp Resource Protection Plan, which explains the importance of the swamp, and attempts to encourage landowners and municipalities to preserve the land so that the swamp can be maintained as a complete site. Because many private landowners hold properties encompassing the wetland, Quakertown Swamp is extremely vulnerable to the impacts of land use and development.

The Heritage Conservancy recommends a combination of land protection techniques to preserve and maintain the Quakertown Swamp. Several options include: acquisition in fee simple, placement of deed restrictions, acquisition of easements or development rights, and voluntary preservation by individual landowners. Innovative zoning and regional land management strategies should also be investigated. Heritage Conservancy notes that interagency cooperation is essential in establishing protection guidelines to ensure the permanent protection of this resource.

The Quakertown Swamp Resource Protection Plan is a component of the Heritage Conservancy's Lasting Landscapes initiative. Lasting Landscapes first identifies and maps significant environments that contain a critical mass of both natural and historic resources and then works to develop and implement maintenance and protection strategies. To fulfill its mission the Heritage Conservancy also coordinates the Quakertown Swamp Partnership, consisting of federal, state, municipal and local agencies, landowners, and concerned citizens.

### ***Haycock Mountain and Nockamixon State Park – Priority 1 Site***

Nockamixon State Park and State Game Lands 157 make up the largest expanse of protected open space in Bucks County with over 7,000 acres. The southwestern portion of Nockamixon State Park is located in East Rockhill Township. Open year-round, the park's primary attraction is its 1,450-acre lake. The park also contains varied habitats including forests, old fields, rocky streams, and forested wetlands.

### ***Rock Hill – Priority 2 Site***

Rock Hill rises to a height of 850 feet above sea level, approximately 300 feet above the surrounding landscape. It includes extensive forested slopes and abundant evidence of past quarrying, including an abandoned quarry pit on its southern face. Rock Hill has been identified as an outstanding scenic geologic feature of Pennsylvania (Geyer and Bolles 1979). As an integral part of the continuous forested band that stretches across

Upper Bucks and Montgomery Counties, it should be protected from deforestation and fragmentation.

### ***Tohickon Family Campground***

East Rockhill Township has been pursuing acquisition of a conservation easement on approximately 32 acres of the 56-acre property known as the Tohickon Family Campground located on Covered Bridge Road. The property is located just south of Lake Towhee Park and Dimple Creek, both priority 2 county natural areas, and just north of Haycock Mountain and Nockamixon State Park, a priority 1 county natural area. According to the *Natural Areas Inventory of Bucks County*, “Opportunities to acquire inholdings and properties which jut into the area of protected lands should be sought or that would preserve a corridor between this area and Lake Towhee Park.” As shown on Figure 5, the Tohickon Campground is located along the corridor that connects Haycock Mountain and Nockamixon State Park to Lake Towhee Park. The preservation of the campground will help ensure a permanently protected corridor for wildlife between these two important County Natural Areas. According to Ann Rhoads of the Morris Arboretum of the University of Pennsylvania, the Tohickon Family Campground site has high value as a natural area for the following reasons:

- The presence of a PNDI-listed plant;
- A highly diverse and intact forest which borders the west side of the Tohickon Creek for approximately 2,000 feet;
- Its proximity to and habitat continuity with Priority 1 Haycock Mountain/Nockamixon State Park natural area inventory (NAI) site, from which it is separated by a single intervening property. The campground also constitutes a major piece of a corridor linking the NAI site to Lake Towhee County Park.

A vegetated riparian buffer is proposed to be provided along the Tohickon Creek to reduce erosion and sedimentation, preserve habitat, and provide possible pedestrian paths along this greenway to connect to the Nockamixon State Park Trail system. East Rockhill Township is pursuing a conservation easement on this property to preserve natural and historic resources for enjoyment by the public.



## **HISTORIC RESOURCES**

Historic resources are essential in understanding an area's past settlement patterns and heritage. When protected and preserved, they can also make a significant contribution to the character of a community. East Rockhill possesses various historic resources as shown in Figure 6.

In 1992, the Bucks County Conservancy (now Heritage Conservancy) conducted a historic resource survey throughout the county. Two bridges within East Rockhill Township were highlighted in its findings. Mood's Covered Bridge, originally built in 1874, crosses the East Branch of the Perkiomen Creek. The Bridge is 120 feet long and 15 feet wide. The historic Mood's Covered Bridge was damaged by fire on June 22, 2004, but the devastation was limited to the covered part of the bridge—the fire did not structurally damage the bridge deck. Initially, PennDOT repaired the deck to reopen the Bridge to motor vehicles use. PennDOT subsequently agreed to rebuild the covered bridge, contingent upon Bucks County assuming ownership. The Mood's Covered Bridge was rebuilt and rededicated in the Spring of 2008.

Sheard's Mill Covered Bridge, built in 1873, spans the Tohickon Creek. Located along Covered Bridge Road through East Rockhill and Haycock townships, the bridge is 130 feet long and 15 feet wide. It was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1980.

Headman Pottery produced its well-known sgraffito ware in the early 1800s on Muskrat Road near the intersection with Rockhill Road near the village of Rich Hill. Peter Headman was one of the last potters to make the now scarce "tulip ware" of Pennsylvania German tradition.

A significant historic resource in the Township is the Sheard's–Clymer's Grist Mill. The mill used water power to grind the grain (e.g., corn, rye, or wheat) into meal for either local farmers or for general public sale. While it is not certain when the mill was built, the earliest deeds date back to 1798. In 1844, Levi Sheard purchased the mill and it was later sold to John and Rubin Clymer. The mill ceased operation in 1971; however, the Clymer family ran an apple cider business until 1985. In 2004, the Heritage Conservancy, with the support of East Rockhill, applied for listing on the national historic register for Sheard's–Clymer's Grist Mill. The mill was recognized as a nationally significant historic resource when it was added to the register in 2007.

Built in 1846, Hager House, on Old Bethlehem Road serves as a classic example of an early Bucks County farmhouse.

## Villages of East Rockhill

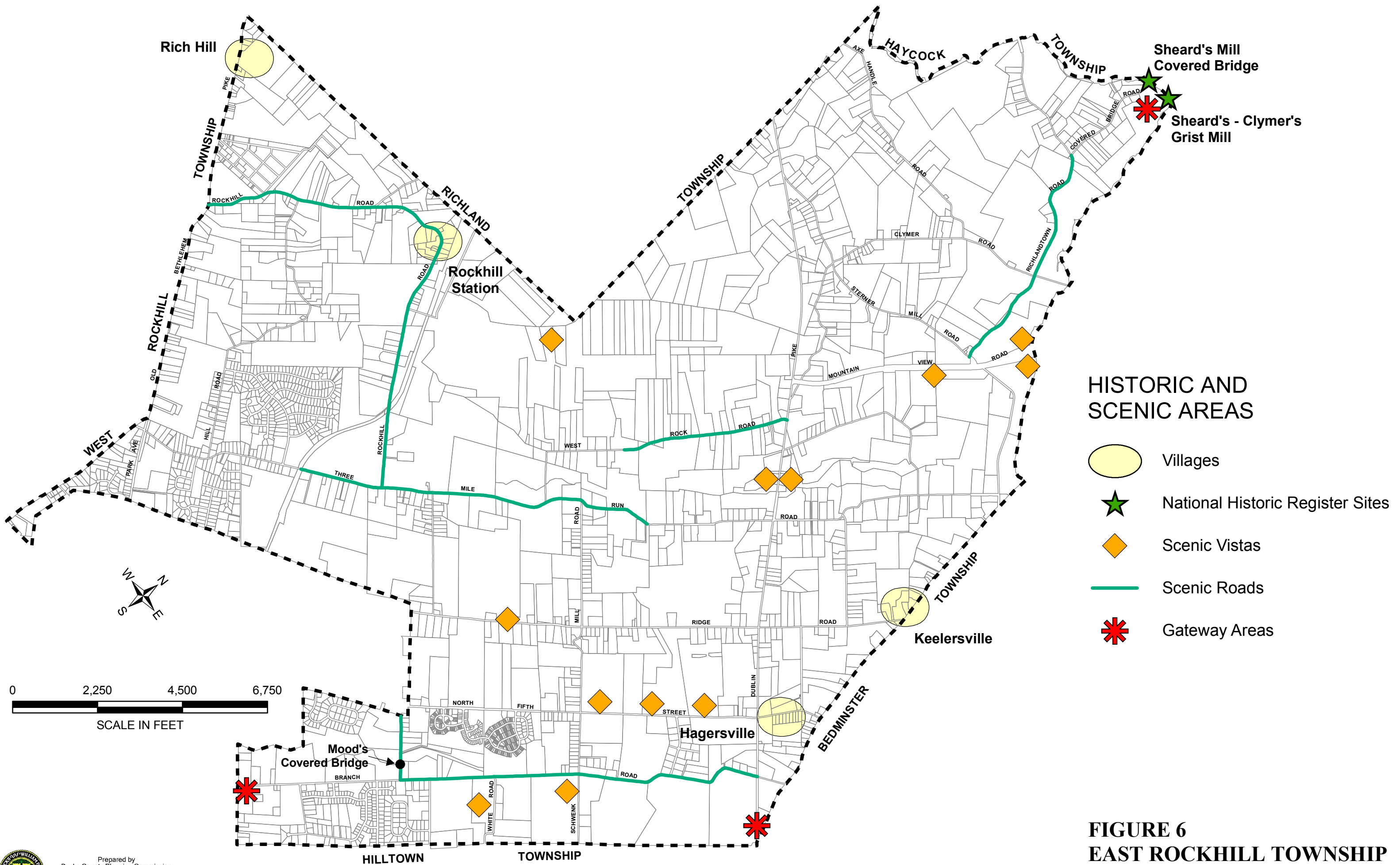
There are still over one hundred identifiable villages remaining in Bucks County, but many have been lost or overshadowed by growth and development. Historic villages are a unique resource, and once they are lost are irreplaceable. While municipalities cannot prevent growth, they can mitigate the effects that development can have on villages through appropriate land use policies and regulations. Additionally, residents can work together to maintain or improve the positive aspects of their village.

East Rockhill contains four villages: Hagersville, Keelersville, Rich Hill, and Rockhill Station. Township officials should determine if separate village planning studies or specific preservation techniques should be implemented in order to preserve and enhance the historic character of these cultural resources.

*Hagersville*—situated on the border of East Rockhill and Bedminster townships. Most properties in the village front Old Bethlehem Road and Fifth Street between Old Bethlehem Road and Dublin Pike (PA Route 313). The village was named in honor of a prominent local politician Colonel George Hager. The Hager family was actively involved with public affairs throughout central and upper Bucks County. In fact, Samuel Hager founded Perkasié Borough.

Hagersville appears to have been a lively settlement in the 1870s, with a store, hotel, blacksmith shop, wheelwright shop, and two coach factories. Today, Hagersville is quiet and quaint, with many trees and flowers adding to its charm. Several of the early homes are well preserved and maintained, with the majority found near the village center. More recently, newer homes have developed along the periphery of Hagersville. Two relatively large apartment buildings in the village center contrast with the architectural style of the older village houses.

*Keelersville*—a residential community with a riding stable and club as commercial uses. Named after the Keeler family, the village is located in both East Rockhill and Bedminster townships. The original section of Keelersville is along Old Bethlehem Road north of Ridge Road. During the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Keelersville consisted of a store, hotel, shops, a large tannery, and a leather factory. The Tohickon Union Church was originally built of log in 1745 on the East Rockhill Township side of Old Bethlehem Road. In 1837 the church was rebuilt in Bedminster Township where it remains the primary landmark of the village. Two historic one-room schoolhouses are also found in the village.



**FIGURE 6  
EAST ROCKHILL TOWNSHIP  
OPEN SPACE PLAN**

***Rockhill Station***—takes its name from the mountainous ridge that extends across the northwestern parts of East and West Rockhill townships. Rockhill Station is the only village in the Township not located at a road intersection, and it is the only one that is not partially located in another municipality. Rockhill Station boasts the only confirmed discovery of gold in Bucks County.

The original homes in Rockhill Station were wood-frame and masonry structures. Although none of the buildings are architecturally significant, together they offer consistency and scale that gives the village a uniform character. The woods, quarry, and railroad tracks surrounding these homes form distinct boundaries.

***Rich Hill***—located on the border of East Rockhill, West Rockhill and Richland townships. Rich Hill developed along Old Bethlehem Pike, and was bypassed when PA Route 309 was built. The village has remained a small, residential community consisting of a few houses at the crossroad of Rich Hill Road and Old Bethlehem Pike. The stone houses found at the intersection are quite large and have been well maintained over the years. Large shade trees enhance the setting of the picturesque village.

## **Methods of Preservation**

### ***Register of Historic Places***

The National Historic Register is the official list of the nation’s cultural resources, providing recognition that buildings or districts have historic, architectural, or archeological significance. The National Register does not place restrictions on the actions of private property owners, but has the effect of alerting landowners to its historic significance. Listing on the National Register does not in any way limit what a private property owner may do to a property.

East Rockhill has two sites that are listed on the National Register—Sheard’s Mill Covered Bridge and Sheard’s–Clymer Grist Mill.

### ***Historic Districts***

A commonly used planning strategy for historic preservation is the adoption of ordinances that establish historic districts. This planning strategy is most appropriate in those municipalities that have concentrations of historic structures or sites such as villages. The Historic District Act provides authorization for Pennsylvania municipalities to designate historic districts and regulate the alteration of buildings

within them based on the historic context. Historic districts created under the authority of Act 167 are not zoning districts but requirements adopted for a historic district can establish a review process separate from zoning concerns. The National Register program is a credible way to identify a community's historic resources while the local district designation can further protect and enhance them.

### ***Landmark Designation***

Often, a municipality's historic structures are not located within an easily defined district. The preservation of individual structures or landmarks is often more difficult than establishing historic districts, but there are examples of successful preservation by various communities. The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code allows municipalities to pass ordinances for the "regulation, restriction, or prohibition of uses and structures at, along or near places having unique historical, architectural, or patriotic interest or value."

While the villages of East Rockhill Township do not currently have historical designation, there may be a need to explore village protection strategies and techniques. The preparation of a village planning study can establish a community vision and a set of standards for public improvements and guidelines for future action. In addition, a complete historic resource inventory and study of the municipality may help to strengthen the efforts of protecting and maintaining the rural character of East Rockhill Township.

## **SCENIC/GATEWAY RESOURCES**

Identifying the aesthetic value of scenic resources is a subjective process. Certain areas are distinguished because of special geologic formations, pristine landscapes, agricultural settings, natural resources, and historic structures. Scenic roads are segments of roadway adjacent to natural, historic, or cultural resources or areas of concentrated scenic vistas. Scenic vistas are points along a roadway that have sweeping views of the landscape. Scenic resources may be depleted or overshadowed by inappropriate development activities.

The *East Rockhill Township Open Space and Recreation Plan* identifies two scenic forest vistas centrally located in the Township (not shown in Figure 6). Immediately below the Richland Township border, the first vista is roughly bordered by Rockhill Road to the west, Route 313 to the north, and Three Mile Road to the east. The second vista occurs east of Ridge Road and is bordered by Route 313 and Blooming Glen Road.

The 2000 *Pennridge Area Greenway Plan* classifies scenic roads and scenic vistas. Within East Rockhill Township, there are six scenic roads identified as follows:

- **Three Mile Run Road**—Railroad tracks to Schwenk Mill Road; includes views of the Three Mile Run Stream Corridor
- **Branch Road**—PA Route 313 to Blooming Glen Road; includes views of the East Branch Perkiomen
- **Rockhill Road**—Three Mile Run to Old Bethlehem Pike
- **Hill Road**—Just north of Stone Edge Road to Rockhill Road
- **West Rock Road**—Just east of utility right-of-way to PA Route 313
- **Richlandtown Road**—Covered Bridge Road to Sterner Road

Two scenic vistas identified in the *Pennridge Area Greenway Plan* within East Rockhill Township are as follows:

- **Dublin Pike (Route 313)**—Looking northeast towards Lake Nockamixon and looking southeast along Three Mile Run corridor.
- **Mountain View Drive**—Looking northwest along Tohickon Creek corridor and looking southeast towards Lake Nockamixon.

Four other scenic areas have been identified in Figure 6. Heritage Conservancy's publication, *Route 113 Lasting Landscape* identifies a scenic vista along North Fifth Street between Schwenk Mill Road and Dublin Pike and another scenic vista along Ridge Road between Schoolhouse and Schwenk Mill roads.

As part updating this open space plan, three additional scenic vistas have been identified. A dominate geologic feature in the region, Rockhill rises about 300 feet above the surrounding landscape is highly visible from various points within the Township and beyond. The other two scenic vistas are located along White Road and Schwenk Mill Road looking southwest, between Branch Road and the municipal border with Hilltown Township.

To emphasize the importance of preserving a community's inherent scenic qualities, the Township may wish to establish scenic overlay provisions to encourage compatible land uses that complement the existing rural character and provide protection of scenic vistas from roadways, entrances to historic villages, and overall scenic character of the Township.

The overlay district concept does not affect the underlying use, density, or area and dimensional requirements. Moreover, it is not intended to reduce the development opportunity of the site; however, applicants must provide a scenic resource map, visual analysis, and satisfy performance standards when proposing development within a scenic overlay district.

Gateways are another significant resource area that deserves special consideration and attention. Gateways provide travelers (pedestrian, bicyclist, and motor vehicles) a sense of arrival into a community. The design and layout of open space and land uses in the vicinity of gateway areas are an important consideration to ensure that the entrances into the Township are not obscured or do not fade into obscurity. The provision of design elements such as welcome signage, landscaping, and/or lighting can also enhance gateway entrances into the Township.

Township officials have also identified three significant gateways into the Township as shown on Figure 6. There is a gateway located at the East Rockhill and Hilltown Township municipal border for motorist traveling northwest on Dublin Pike (Route 313). Another gateway is located at the East Rockhill Township and Perkasio Borough municipal border for motorist and pedestrians heading northeast along Branch Road. The other entrances into the Township along other roadways are not in need of special attention. The final gateway is located at the East Rockhill and Haycock Township municipal border along Covered Bridge Road.

### **Inventory of Vulnerable Resources Summary**

Collectively, East Rockhill's natural, historic, and scenic/gateway resources shape its unique character and identity. Many of these resource areas are sensitive and are susceptible to degradation from insensitive adjacent growth and development. While it is unrealistic for the Township to preserve and protect all of the vulnerable resources identified above, those that are the most important to the Township can be targeted. East Rockhill's priority acquisition areas are highlighted in the Analysis of Resources section.

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## GREENWAY AND TRAIL NETWORK

A greenway is a linear open space area established along either a natural corridor, such as a riverfront, stream valley, or ridgeline; or along an abandoned railroad right-of-way, a canal, scenic road, or other route. Greenways provide numerous benefits to their surrounding communities. In addition to preserving natural resources, greenways may also provide safe, non-motorized transportation routes to schools, commercial centers, residential developments, and recreational areas. Segments of a proposed greenway network can be designed to be a multimodal trail system that can accommodate different users such as bicyclists, hikers, and joggers. By linking individual parks together, linear trails can create a unified park system throughout a municipality and even beyond its borders.

The 2005 Resident Survey indicated that the top two recreational preferences were passive recreation in nature—walking trails and bicycle facilities. It is expected that future residents will share these values and desires for passive recreation. Along with future development, Township officials should continue to assemble the recommend greenway and trail network through the acquisition of easements along designated routes as shown in Figure 7.

As an active member in the Pennridge Area Coordinating Committee (PACC), East Rockhill Township is among the eight municipalities that developed the *Pennridge Area Greenway Plan*. The plan evaluates the feasibility of developing a linear park throughout the Pennridge Area. Recommended greenway routes within the plan incorporate streams, existing trails, floodplains, on-road bike routes, and off-road linkages. Among the proposed greenways for the entire Pennridge Area, six are located within or along East Rockhill Township municipal boundary and one spur route (Markey Park Connector Trail) was added to provide a key connection to Willard Markey Park and other points of interest in the area. The following recommended greenway routes are based upon the *Pennridge Area Greenway Plan* and then modified or expanded to satisfy East Rockhill's specific needs.

**The East Branch Perkiomen–Deep Run Greenway** extends from Bedminster Township, where Deep Run branches from the Tohickon Creek to along the East Branch of the Perkiomen Creek, to townships in Montgomery County. Points of interest along the greenway corridor include: the Pines at Pennridge, Moods Covered Bridge, Village



of Glenwood Shopping Center, Upper County Campus of Bucks County Community College, and Pennridge High School/North Middle School Campus. The Mervin C. Bryan Walking Path traverses a two-mile linear park within the 46-acre stream corridor preservation area that extends along the East Branch of the Perkiomen Creek between East Callowhill and Schwenkmill roads, with links to Creekview Subdivision, Country Hunt Subdivision, and Pines of Pennridge Subdivision. A link to Bridgeview Subdivision is being explored.

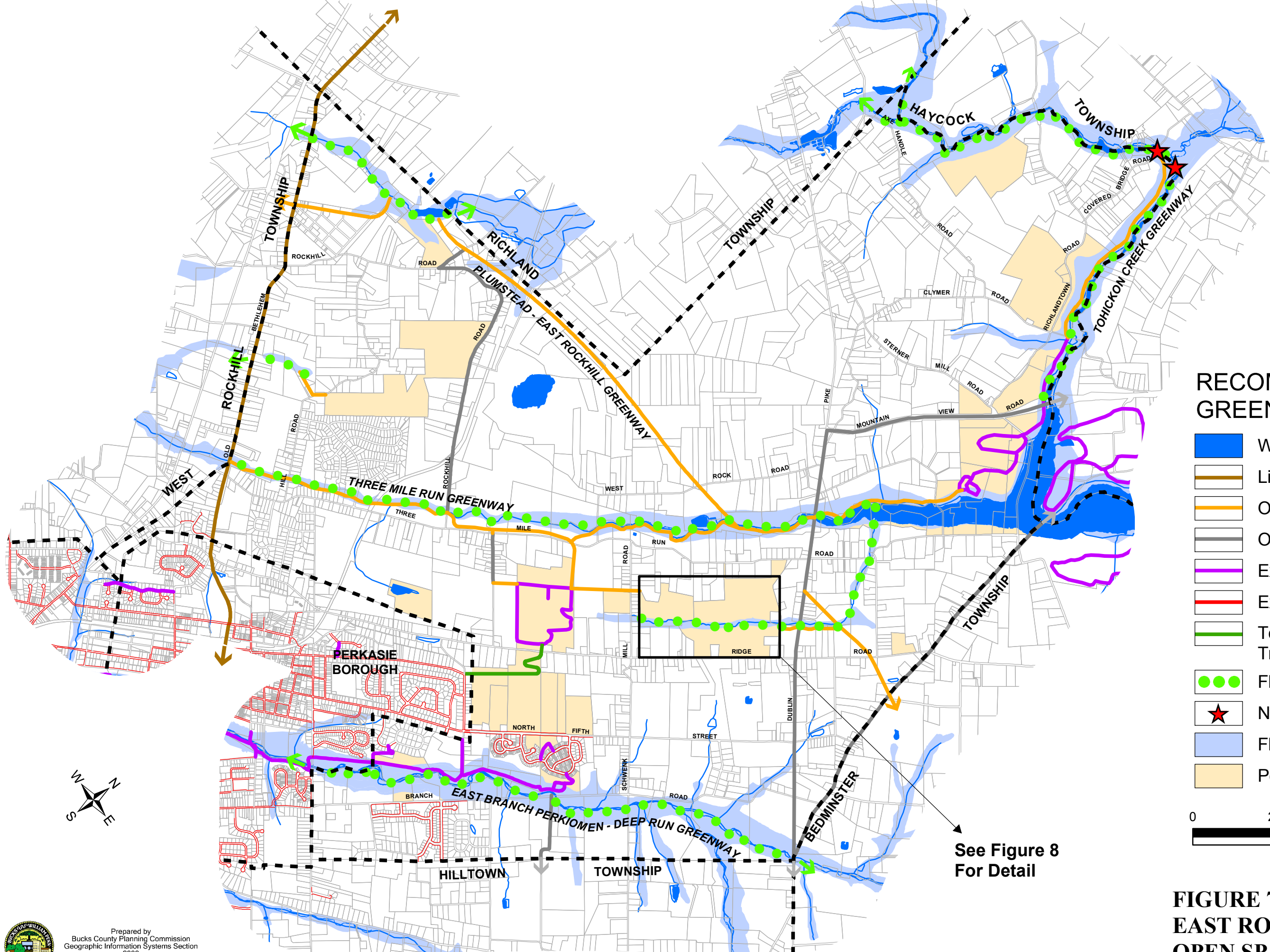
**The Tohickon Creek Greenway** follows the Tohickon Creek stream corridor and extends from Stover-Myers Mill to the Richland Township border. Nockamixon State Park and Quakertown Swamp are significant features along this link, which has the potential to become a high-use corridor.

**Plumstead–East Rockhill Greenway** is situated along the Texas-Eastern pipeline right-of-way located through Bedminster and East Rockhill townships, and would serve as an off-road link to the East and West Rockhill areas. The utility right-of-way is free of trees and is generally flat the entire length of the corridor. The Willard H. Markey Centennial Park and East Rockhill Township open space facilities would be accessible through a spur route along an unnamed tributary of Three Mile Run.

**Three Mile Run Greenway** utilizes the Three Mile Run stream corridor and connects residents of East and West Rockhill townships with Nockamixon State Park. The greenway follows the Three Mile Run corridor providing a potential trail connection between Nockamixon State Park, the Liberty Bell Trail, and West Rockhill Township.

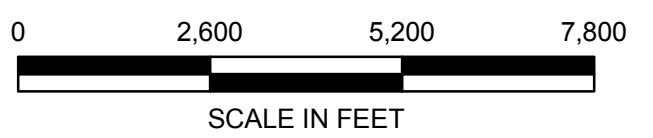
**Willard H. Markey Park Connector Trail** would provide an additional spur route and would travel through the Willard H. Markey Centennial Park, Pennridge Senior High School, and the Pines at Pennridge. This spur would connect the Three Mile Run Greenway with the East Branch Perkiomen–Deep Run Greenway. As shown in Figure 7, there is a Township-owned trail easement located on the northwestern portion of the Pennridge High School/North Middle School Campus. This trail easement, which is intended to facilitate this spur route, is designed to accommodate a switchback trail to traverse the steep hillside southeast of Ridge Road.

A lateral spur route would connect Markey Park and the Hildebrand/Gross site. Township officials are considering the implementation of walking trails, park benches, and other passive recreational facilities on the Hildebrand/Gross site as an extension of the existing trail system, utilizing selected segments of the proposed municipal golf course cart path system. (See Figure 8 for details of this trail network).



**RECOMMENDED GREENWAY ROUTES**

- Watercourses/Waterbodies
- Liberty Bell Trail
- Off-Road Linkages
- On-Road/Bike Routes
- Existing Trail
- Existing Sidewalks
- Township-Owned Trail Easement
- Floodplain Greenways
- National Historic Register Sites
- Floodplains/Alluvial Soils
- Points of Interest

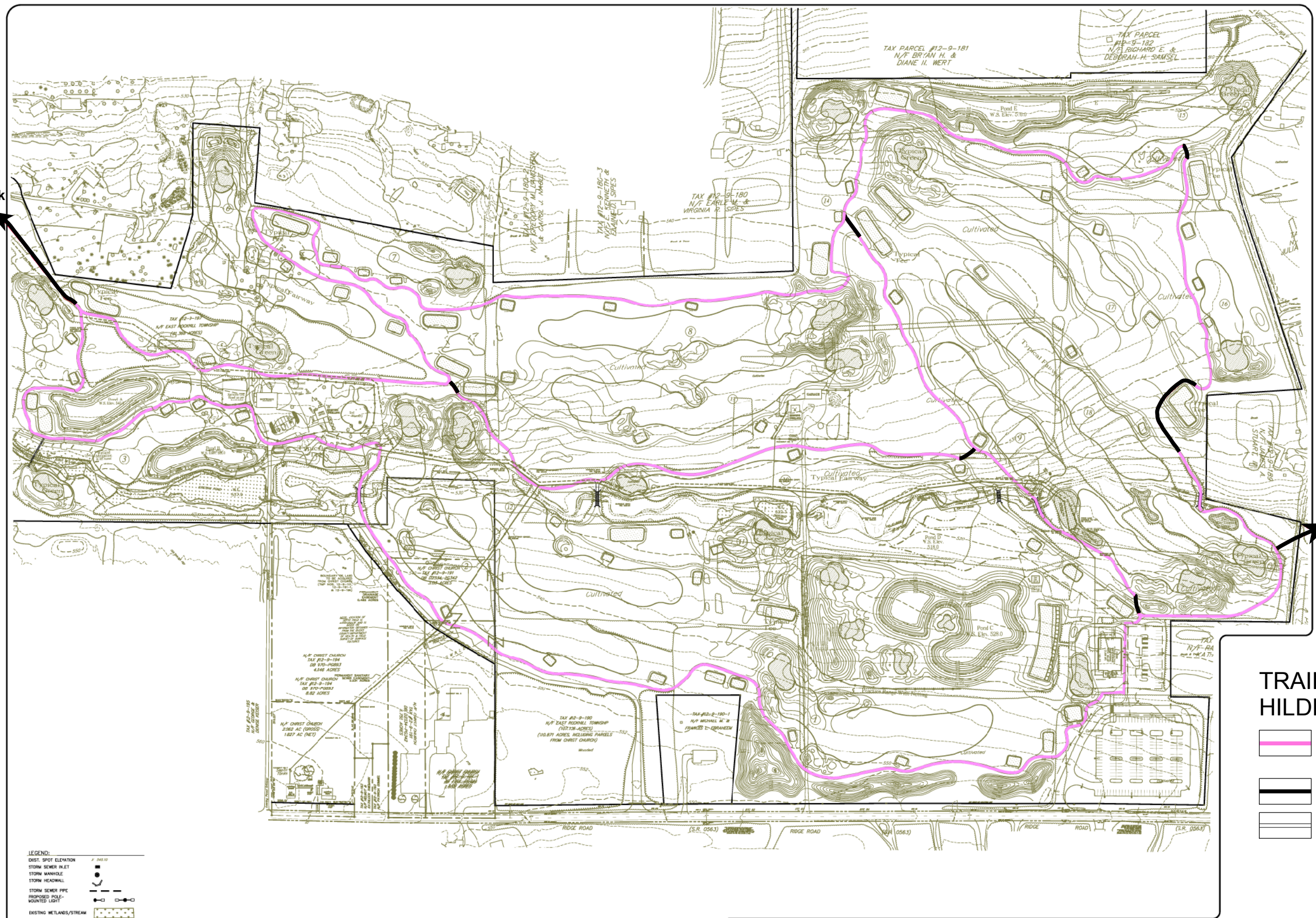


See Figure 8 For Detail

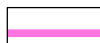

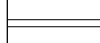
**FIGURE 7  
EAST ROCKHILL TOWNSHIP  
OPEN SPACE PLAN**

To Willard Markey Park

To Plumstead - East Rockhill Greenway



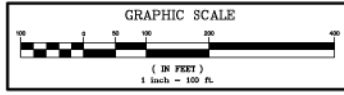
**TRAIL NETWORK FOR HILDEBRAND/GROSS SITE**

-  Proposed Trail/  
Potential Cart Path
-  Proposed Trail Connection
-  Potential Cart Path

- LEGEND:**
- EXIST. SPOT ELEVATION
  - STORM SEWER INLET
  - STORM MANHOLE
  - STORM HEADWALL
  - STORM SEWER PIPE
  - PROPOSED POLE-MOUNTED LIGHT
  - EXISTING WETLANDS/STREAM
  - PROPOSED WETLANDS
  - EXISTING SANITARY SEWER-GRAVITY FORCE MAIN
  - EXISTING SANITARY SEWER-GRAVITY FORCE MAIN
  - LIMIT OF CLEARING
  - PROPOSED FLOODPLAIN
  - EXISTING STREAMBANKS
  - SECTION BOUNDARY



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- Bucks County Planning Commission  
Geographic Information Systems Section



**East Rockhill Golf Course**  
East Rockhill Township, PA

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**FIGURE 8**  
**EAST ROCKHILL TOWNSHIP**  
**OPEN SPACE PLAN**

**Liberty Bell Trail** is an anticipated greenway opportunity for the Township. Previously, the Regional Improvement Consortium, a collection of nonprofit businesses in the North Penn/Lansdale Area secured federal funding to complete a study on the potential greenway that follows the historic Liberty Bell Trolley route, which ran from Bethlehem to Philadelphia. The project includes a recreational trail system along the trolley path, linking Bucks and Montgomery County communities to Norristown. The completed study recommends that each municipality within the study area implement their own segment of the designated greenway route.

Many of the greenway locations in East Rockhill contain inherent natural resources (e.g., stream corridors, floodplains, steep slopes, and woodlands). Natural resources are protected under the current zoning ordinances; however, public access is not presently possible since these areas are located on private property. Therefore, Township officials may wish to purchase public access easements from respective property owners in order to implement a portion of the park and open space network.

Public education will play a critical role in the implementation of the link parks, since most property owners are leery of allowing public access for fear of vandalism, littering, or invasion of privacy. In most cases, these fears can be put to rest with appropriate planning or regulatory measures in place (e.g., provisions of evergreen trees or fencing as a privacy screen, policing to prevent malicious activity). However, often property owners realize that the provision of an adjacent greenway or trail is more of an asset than a liability.

**Bike Routes** are proposed along area roadways as shown on Figure 7. Low traffic volumes on Rockhill Road provide an excellent opportunity for an on-road connection to State Game Lands #139 and the Plumstead–East Rockhill Greenway. The Route 313 Bike Lane is a project on the Bucks County Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) list. This bike route will provide an important segment of the regional bike route that runs from the intersection of Mountain View Road southeast through Dublin Borough, possibly all the way to Doylestown Borough. From Mountain View Road, it is recommended that the bike route continue northeast into Nockamixon State Park and Haycock Township.

A comprehensive greenway system is often an assemblage of open space areas of various kinds to create a regional “green” infrastructure. Figure 7 contains features known as floodplain greenways that are intended to function as open space corridors that protect the inherent natural resources along streams and watercourses. These areas may or may not include trail development. There are various design elements that should be considered in the planning and implementation of trails and bike routes.

**Sidewalks** are used to provide safe and convenient pedestrian access within the more built up portions of the Township. Sidewalks are an integral part of the Township's trail network by enhancing access from individual residences to points of interest in the Township. The subdivision and land development ordinance requires the construction of sidewalks along all new residential streets where curbing is required. Sidewalks have been constructed within Pines II and Country Hunt developments as shown on Figure 7. Sidewalks into neighboring Perkasio Borough are also identified.

East Rockhill's recommended greenway routes and trail network not only enhances the Township's sensitive stream corridors but provides a network of pedestrian and bicycle access throughout the Township and the region. As shown on Figure 7, the Township's greenway and trail network provides connections into surrounding community's bicycle routes, trails and sidewalks (when feasible).

### **Summary of Greenway and Trail Network**

East Rockhill is committed to greenway and stream corridor protection and establishing a Township-wide park and open space network that will connect points of interest within the Township as well as the region. In order to implement this greenway and trail network, Township official will coordinate with developers to provide appropriate access and conservation easements. If property donation is not possible, Township officials will explore the available means to purchase public access easements from the respective property owners in order to implement a portion of the park and open space network. Township officials will also consider ordinance amendments for the provision of recreational trails and provide appropriate standards for trail facilities.

## ANALYSIS OF RESOURCES

### PRESERVATION FOCUS AREAS AND FORMULA

The Township has chosen to designate general areas (rather than specific parcels) that the Township intends to target for open space acquisition. The top three factors in East Rockhill for land preservation and acquisition are Natural Areas Inventory (NAI) sites, greenway/riparian buffer corridors, and agricultural land areas. The Land Acquisition Priority Focus Areas shown in Figure 9 highlights the approximate location of these top three factors.

The NAI sites correspond to the natural areas previously discussed in the identified in Figure 5. The greenway/riparian buffer corridor area corresponds to the Township's designated floodplains and alluvial soil areas found on Figure 4. As previously discussed, preservation of this corridor may serve a dual function by preserving the greenway and riparian buffer corridors while facilitating proposed access easements and/or trail implementation along the corridors that are inherently suitable for this purpose. (See Figures 7 and 8 for proposed trail locations.) Lastly, agricultural land areas are a significant resource Township officials have been actively promoting for preservation. The Agricultural Preservation area shown on Figure 9 encompasses the AP–Agricultural Preservation zoning district. In 2000, East Rockhill Township adopted the AP district, which corresponds to a portion of the Township with concentrations of agricultural soils and active farmland.<sup>8</sup>

To assist in prioritizing future acquisitions, an evaluation formula has been developed. This formula has been created to assist municipal officials to determine a parcel's relative importance or value based upon the Township's established goals and objectives identified in this plan. The individual goals and objectives have been weighted (or assigned point values) based upon their relative importance to the community.

If and when any parcel becomes available for acquisition, the parcel's relative value is determined by the ultimate score that is achieved. Based upon the eight categories shown, a parcel scores points when the individual criteria are satisfied. The following highlights the Township's Parcel Evaluation Formula as shown in Table 9.

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<sup>8</sup> Agricultural soils consist of soils classified by the Department of Agriculture, Natural Resource Conservation Service as either Prime Farmland and Additional Farmland of Statewide Importance.

Various evaluation factors concerning a parcel such as significant woodland coverage, proximity to protected land, parcel size and potential impact, location on or adjacent to scenic roads and vistas, and ability of its property owner to accept less than fair market value have been weighted slightly higher (or a greater potential score) than the remaining factors, but not as high as the top three factors: Natural Areas Inventory (NAI) sites, greenway/riparian buffer corridors, and agricultural land areas. Table 9 includes figure references (Figures 1 through 6 and 9) for resource factors to properly assess whether or not points should be awarded. For the top three factors, if **any portion** of a property lies within the focus areas (identified on Figure 9), the parcel scores the respective points for the resource. For the remaining factors, a general rule of thumb is that **at least one-third** of the subject parcel contains the identified factor (except woodlands in which the site must contain 50 percent or greater coverage to receive points.) In Table 9, Under Section VIII Other Factors, potential point values for those respective factors may not be possible for inclusion into a parcel's total score until additional information is obtained from the respective property owner. Parcels that score the highest are generally the Township's priority sites based upon the Township's goals and objectives.

While the parcel evaluation formula in Table 9 is not scientific, it does provide Township officials with a sound basis for making decisions on future preservation and acquisition. This parcel evaluation formula is designed to be dynamic and flexible—allowing for adjustments to the process should events or circumstances dictate.

## **IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS**

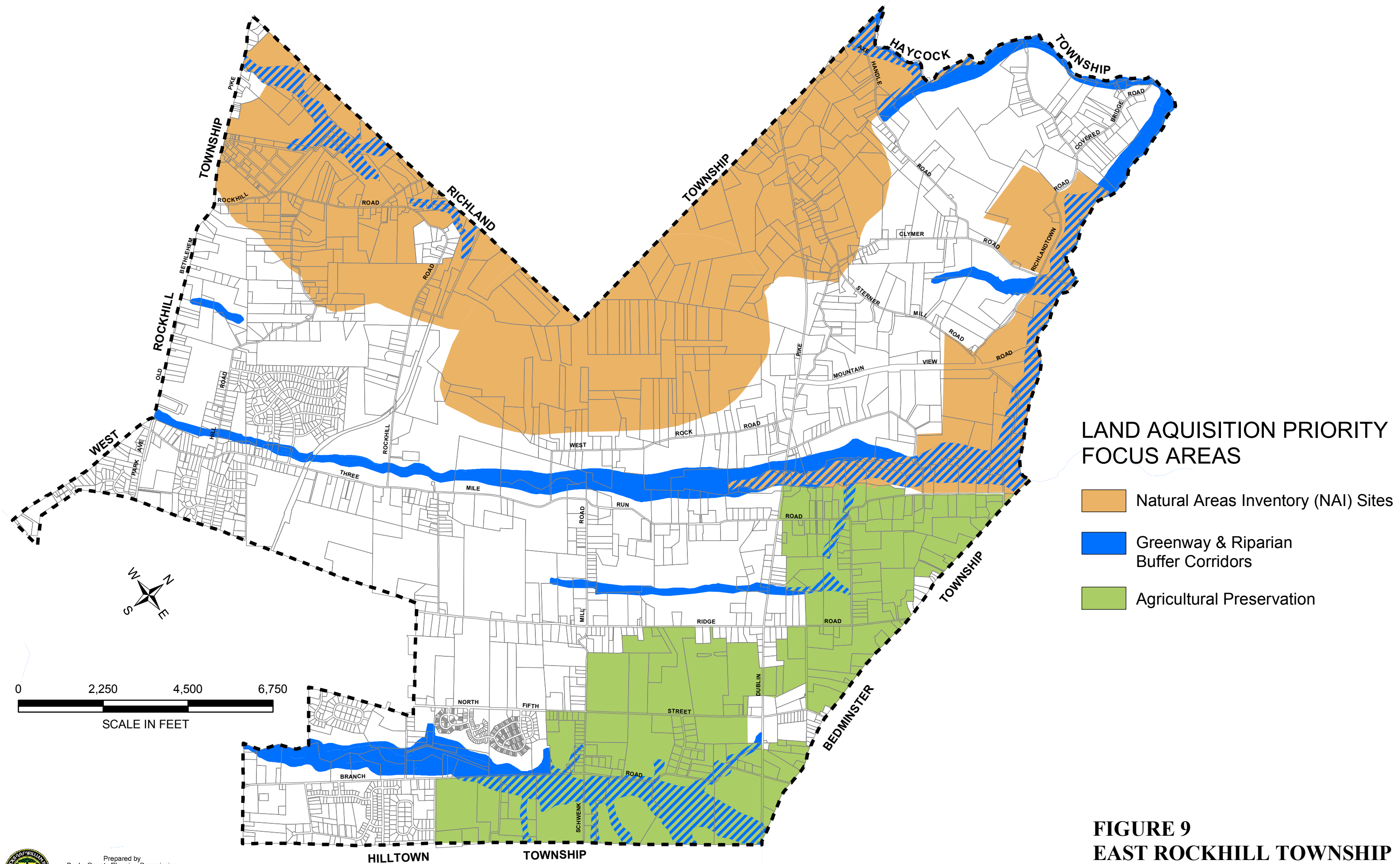
When crafting the guidelines for the County Municipal Open Space Program (MOSP), the 2007 Task Force recognized the need to broaden the scope of eligible projects. For those municipalities where available open space is limited, MOSP funds may be used for improvements. Funding requests for improvements will be evaluated by the County Open Space Review Board on a case-by-case basis. All improvement projects must enhance public access, utilization, and/or the identified conservation values of the land. Any proposed improvements that causes adverse impacts to the environment, scenic, or pre-existing park resources shall be deemed ineligible. All properties improved with MOSP funding must be owned by the municipal applicant and deed restricted to approved open space purposes. All improvement projects must comply with program requirements and implement the goals and recommendations of the municipality's local open space plan.

East Rockhill possesses a significant amount of protected open space. As discussed in the Inventory of Protected Lands section, approximately 14 percent (1,161 acres) of the

land area of the Township is permanently protected. If Township officials should decide that there are adequate open space lands or if the priority lands that score the highest aren't available for acquisition, Township officials may decide to pursue the use of their allocated funding for improvements purposes. Improvements for trails or existing park facilities maybe a better use of the MOSP funding than acquiring lower priority parcel(s) that did not score as high. The Greenway and Trail Network section provides well-founded support for the acquisition of access easements and/or trail development if funding for this purpose is an option. (See Figures 7 and 8 for proposed trial locations.) Trails will “enhance public access, utilization, and/or the identified conservation values of the land” by providing additional passive recreational opportunities for Township residents.







**LAND AQUISITION PRIORITY FOCUS AREAS**

- Natural Areas Inventory (NAI) Sites
- Greenway & Riparian Buffer Corridors
- Agricultural Preservation

**FIGURE 9  
EAST ROCKHILL TOWNSHIP  
OPEN SPACE PLAN**

**Table 9. East Rockhill Township Parcel Evaluation Formula**

**I. Natural Areas Inventory (NAI) Sites (Figures 5, 9)**

- Parcel within or adjacent to identified NAI site = 9 points
- Parcel outside identified NAI site = 0 points

**II. Greenway/Riparian Buffer Corridor (Figure 9)**

- Parcel within or adjacent to Recommended Greenway / Riparian Buffer Corridor = 7 points
- Parcel outside Recommended Greenway / Riparian Buffer Corridor = 0 points

**III. Agriculture and Agricultural Soils <sup>1</sup> (Figures 3, 9)**

- Parcel is located in AP district, contains an active farm, and contains agricultural soils = 9 points
- Parcel is located in the AP district, contains an active farm, but does not contain agricultural soils = 8 points
- Parcel is not located in the AP district, but is actively farmed, and is adjacent to an active farm = 7 points
- Parcel is not located in the AP district, but is actively farmed, and does not contain agricultural soils = 6 points
- Parcel is located in the AP district, but is not actively farmed, but contains agricultural soils = 5 points
- Parcel is located in the AP district, but is not actively farmed, and does not contain agricultural soils = 4 points
- Parcel is not located in the AP district and is not actively farmed, but is adjacent to an active farm = 2 points
- Parcel is not located in the AP district, is not actively farmed, and is not adjacent to an active farm = 0 points

**IV. Other Natural Resource Factors (Figures 2, 4)**

- A. Floodplain and Alluvial Soils**
- Present on parcel = 1 point
  - Not present on parcel = 0 points
- B. Wetlands or Hydric Soils**
- Present on parcel = 1 point
  - Not present on parcel = 0 points

**C. Geology and Groundwater Supply**

- Parcel within Diabase region = 1 point
- Parcel outside Diabase region = 0 points

**D. Woodlands (50 percent or greater lot coverage)**

- Parcel contains established woodlands = 5 points
- Parcel does not contain established woodlands = 0 points

**E. Steep Slopes**

- Parcel contains slopes greater than 25 percent = 2 points
- Parcel contains slopes Between 8-25 percent = 1 point
- Parcel contains slopes less than 8 percent = 0 points

**V. Historic Resource Factors (Figure 6)**

**A. Villages**

- Parcel within existing village or within village viewshed <sup>2</sup> = 4 points
- Parcel outside existing village and village viewshed = 0 points

**B. Other Historic Sites**

- Parcel on or adjacent to National Historic Register sites = 4 points
- Parcel outside National Historic Register sites = 0 points

**VI. Scenic Resource Factors (Figure 6)**

**A. Scenic Roads and Vistas Sites**

- Parcel within or directly adjacent to designated scenic roads and scenic vistas = 4 points
- Parcel outside designated scenic roads and scenic vistas = 0 points

**B. Gateway Areas**

- Parcel on or directly adjacent to designated gateway areas = 1 point
- Parcel not on or directly adjacent to designated gateway areas = 0 points

**VII. Parcel Size and Proximity Factors**

**A. Proximity to Protected Lands (Figure 1)**

- Parcel is adjacent to permanently protected lands = 6 points
- Parcel is not adjacent to permanently protected lands = 0 points

**B. Parcel Size & Potential Impact**

- Parcel is 50 acres or more = 5 points
- Parcel is greater than 25 acres but less than 50 acres = 4 points
- Parcel between 10 and 25 acres = 3 points
- Parcel less than 10 acres = 0 points

**VIII. Other Factors**

**A. Preservation Options**

- Means of preservation other than fee-simple acquisition = 1 point
- Fee-simple acquisition only = 0 points

**B. Fair Market Value (FMV) of Property**

- Owner will accept less than FMV for property = 3 points
- Owner will not accept less than FMV for property = 0 points

**C. State or County Funding for Preservation**

- State or County funding available = 1 point
- State or County funding not available = 0 points

**Total Score = \_\_\_\_\_**

<sup>1</sup> Agricultural Soils are Prime Farmland and Statewide Important Farmland soils as classified in the soil survey of Bucks County, Pennsylvania, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, September 2002 Report (or as amended.)

<sup>2</sup> The village viewshed is determined by identifying those areas which can be viewed from sites of significance in a village. The viewshed begins at the transition point where the built environment meets the surrounding landscape. If and when a village study is performed for a subject village, the viewshed will be determined at this time. Otherwise, if a village study has not been performed, only parcels which are directly adjacent to the existing village should be considered within village viewshed.

## TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

Municipalities have an array of tools and techniques at their disposal for preserving land for open space, natural resource, historic, and scenic protection as well as park and recreational purposes. This section details various ways of preserving open space and resource lands. Non-acquisition means include local ordinance provisions and deed restrictions. Acquisition means include: fee simple purchase, lease, leaseback or resale, donation, and easements.

### NON-ACQUISITION MEANS

#### **Local Ordinance Provisions**

The Township subdivision and land development ordinance and zoning ordinance contain means for providing park and recreation lands or preserving natural and open space resources. These provisions include the agricultural preservation district, natural resource protection standards, site capacity calculations, and mandatory dedication/fee in lieu contributions.

#### *Agricultural Preservation District*

In 2003, East Rockhill enacted the Agricultural Preservation (AP) District whose purpose is to recognize and protect those areas of the Township where farming predominates. Within this zoning district no more than 40 percent of prime farmland or farmland of statewide importance (as defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resource Conservation Service) may be developed for sites containing 10 acres or more. There are two agricultural preservation easements held by the Township due to the subdivision of two properties (Gulla Farm and Lake Wind Farm) located in the AP district as shown on Figure 1.

#### *Natural Resource Protection Standards*

East Rockhill's natural resource protection standards limit the permitted amount of disturbance to natural resources and environmentally sensitive areas. They are intended to protect the Township's floodplains; floodplain soils; steep slopes; woodlands; mature trees; streams, watercourses, lakes or ponds; wetlands; wetland margins; riparian buffer zones; and prime farmland soils (in the Agricultural Preservation district).

These standards apply to all uses and activities including subdivisions and land development proposals, except lot line adjustments and recreational development of

open space area pursuant to Section 27-1903(d)(3) of the zoning ordinance. Development of open space recreational areas may exceed the protection standards established for natural resource protection areas if approved by the Board of Supervisors. Township officials may wish to reevaluate the open space recreation area exception so that all required recreation land is usable for the intended recreational facilities and uses.

Section 27-1900.j in the zoning ordinance provides Riparian Buffer Zone requirements, which aids in preserving floodplain greenways. The intent is to preserve a 75-foot-wide buffer from the top of the identified stream/watercourse where no living trees, shall be removed and the site shall not be altered, regraded, filled, piped, diverted, or built upon except for road and utility crossings where design approval is obtained from the Township. Presently, this requirement would prohibit trails within the 75-foot riparian buffer zone, which would be excessive.

The Natural Resource section of the Township's comprehensive plan update contains the following recommendation "Evaluate and possibly amend the riparian buffer regulations in the zoning ordinance to provide performance standards for the protection of the Township's waterways." In order to enhance and provide more protection of riparian buffers in East Rockhill, Township officials should consider adopting a Riparian Corridor Conservation District as recommended in the comprehensive plan update.

### ***Site Capacity Calculations***

In addition to natural resource protection calculations, certain types of residential development proposals (i.e., Detached Dwelling Cluster Subdivision, Performance Standard Development or Mobile Home Park uses) are required to perform site capacity calculations. Site capacity calculations are required to determine which areas of the site are most suited for development and at what density. Site capacity calculations serve the additional purpose determining the required open space for a site.<sup>9</sup>

### ***Mandatory Dedication/Fee in Lieu Contributions***

Section 22-525 of the subdivision and land development ordinance contains general requirements for the provision and suitability of land for recreation facilities. For all residential subdivisions of 25 or more dwelling units, recreational facilities must be provided unless waived by the Board of Supervisors. Recreational facilities are required to be constructed within the required open space for cluster subdivisions and

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<sup>9</sup> The required open space for a site is determined by calculating the standard open space (based upon the required open space required as part of the Use Regulations) and the total resource protection land from the site capacity calculations, whichever is greater.

performance standard subdivisions. For all residential subdivisions and land developments, the applicant shall provide 1,500 square feet of recreational land per dwelling unit. For all nonresidential subdivisions and land developments, the applicant shall provide 1,500 square feet of recreational land per 4,000 square feet of building area (defined as the area occupied by buildings to the extremities of all rooflines.) Where, upon agreement of the applicant, it is determined that the dedication of all or any portion of the land area required for park and recreational purposes is not feasible because of the size, shape, location, access, topography or other features of the land, the applicant shall pay to the Township a fee in lieu of dedication of such land. The fee shall not apply to any existing dwelling units or nonresidential building involved in the subdivision and/or land development. The amount of the fee shall be specified in the schedule of fees adopted by resolution of the Board of Supervisors. This section also provides minimum recreation facility requirements for playfields, tot lots, basketball and tennis courts, and swimming pools.

### **Deed Restrictions**

As part of the subdivision and land development process, the Township and applicant can negotiate deed restrictions on all or portions of a property. The deed restricted area prohibits further development or subdivision.

## **ACQUISITION MEANS**

Mechanisms used to acquire property rights are fee simple purchase, lease, leaseback, donation, and easements. The following is a brief overview of these options.

### **Fee Simple Purchase**

Purchase of land in fee simple is the most direct technique of acquiring land for open space and recreation areas. The land is owned outright with all development rights included. The method is expensive but enables a community to use the land as it sees fit.

Local governments can use many different revenue sources to purchase land, including general revenue funds, user fees, bond issues, and special fundraisers. Other county and state funding sources are also available for open space and recreational purposes, including the Bucks County Open Space Program and Community Conservation Partnerships Program (available through the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources).

### **Lease**

A lease is a conveyance and temporary possession/use of land for a prescribed period, in return for rent or some other compensation. Lease agreements may or may not be renewable and will be less than the landlord's term of ownership. The terms and conditions of a lease are contained in the lease agreement. The lease may provide for exclusive possession, responsibility for maintenance and insurance, and responsibility for liability. A lease may be appropriate in situations where the Township would like to take advantage of existing private recreational facilities and make them available for public use. The Township would not have to own the land, and payments would be lower than the cost of ownership.

### **Leaseback or Resale**

Leaseback involves purchasing land in fee simple, placing use restrictions on it (such as residential development), and then leasing the property to an interested party. Leaseback allows a municipality to buy land for future use, before the price becomes prohibitive. Renting the land enables the municipality to recoup some or the entire purchase price of the land. Resale involves buying the land and selling it with deed restrictions placed upon it. Consequently, the municipality would maintain open space on the property while eliminating the expense of tax assessment and maintenance obligations.

### **Donation**

Donation of land can be a gift of a parcel in fee simple or the gift of development rights or access. Land may be donated to local or county governments or to nonprofit organizations. Land donation makes the donor eligible for income tax deductions, which serve as an incentive for this type of acquisition. Due to the sporadic nature of donations from property owners, however, Township officials should take advantage of other methods and options in order to satisfy municipal park and recreation needs.

### **Easements**

Easements are specific property rights that are sold or donated by a property owner for the benefit of another party. Easement types include agricultural, conservation, access, façade, or scenic easements. For example, the Township may buy an easement from a landowner to permit access along one of its designated greenway routes and allow certain prescribed recreational activities such as hiking and biking. A conservation easement involves purchasing rights to preserve natural features and prevent activity that would harm these features. Easements permit the Township to meet open space and park and recreation objectives without actually owning the land.

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## GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION AND FINANCING

The East Rockhill Township Park and Recreation Board serves in an advisory capacity and assists the Township supervisors in planning, regulating, and maintaining parks, recreation facilities and programs. The Park Board may recommend to the Board of Supervisors such plans and provisions it deems necessary to acquire, preserve, continue and expand park and recreation facilities, including the cost of such recommendations. For instance, the Park Board will review and make recommendations on proposed tot-lot equipment for pending subdivision plans.

The Park and Recreation Board is composed of seven members appointed by the Board of Supervisors. Each member serves a 5-year term or until their successors are appointed. All persons appointed serve their full term unless they voluntarily resign, become unable to serve, or are removed by the Supervisors for dereliction or neglect of duty. Vacancies on the Board occurring other than by expiration of term are for the unexpired term and shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointments.

The members of the Park and Recreation Board elect their own chairman and secretary and select all other necessary officers to serve for a period one year from March 1<sup>st</sup> of each year. The Board meets as necessary to perform its duties and has the power to adopt rules and regulations for the conduct of business which comes before them. An annual meeting is scheduled in March of each year for the purpose of organization.

Township employees handle the day to day operations of the park system. This involves field scheduling, maintenance, and other duties. Staffing levels are determined by the Board of Supervisors and the Township administrative staff. Seasonally, the Township employs golf range attendants and other personnel as needed.

With the acquisition and development of new facilities, expenditures for staffing and facility maintenance will increase, and the Township should budget accordingly. New programs at Township parks may require additional staffing and expenditures. Township administration should analyze the costs related to the staffing and maintenance of any planned or proposed park and recreation facility that may be reasonably acquired or developed within the budget year.

With the exception of a Township-owned and -operated golf driving range, all organized recreational programs to date are run by nonprofits including football,



soccer, lacrosse, softball, volleyball, and golf lessons provided by outside agencies (e.g., school district, sports organizations). The local scout troops and a home school group also use park facilities.

To promote the cooperative use of its park facilities, the Township makes available to local user groups (e.g., residents and family groups, local nonprofit agencies, adjoining municipalities, and the Pennridge School District) recreational fields and equipment, subject to a permitting process and fees. The use and scheduling is on a first come, first served basis.

Funding for open space preservation is supported by a voter-approved 0.25 percent earned income tax (EIT) levy. A 0.125 percent levy was approved in November, 1996 and increased to 0.25 percent in November, 2006. To date funds have been secured by long-term debt, sustained by the EIT levy. The Township currently has loans for the acquisition of the Hildebrand Tract and the Gross Tract, having recently paid off the loan from Bucks County for the purchase of Markey Park.

## ACTION PLAN

The Township open space committee established priorities for open space preservation based upon the Township's goals and objectives. East Rockhill's top three priority focus areas for land preservation and acquisition are Natural Areas Inventory (NAI) sites, greenway/riparian buffer corridors, and agricultural land areas as discussed in the Analysis of Resources section. The Land Acquisition Priority Focus Areas (shown in Figure 9) identifies the approximate location of these top priorities. If and when any parcel becomes available for acquisition, the parcel's relative value is determined by the ultimate score that is achieved. A parcel receives points based upon whether or not they satisfy the criteria for each of the eight categories shown in Table 9. Parcels with the highest point total or score are deemed a priority.

The most effective means of protecting open space is through obtaining the development rights of a property by means of donation, fee-simple purchase, or purchase of easements. This plan recommends donation when possible; otherwise, fee-simple purchase and/or purchasing development rights to land or purchasing easements using funding from the Bucks County Municipal Open Space Program (MOSP) and/or funds from the Township. Fee-simple acquisition is the most costly to a municipality. Consequently, Township officials should consider other open space preservation means deemed appropriate as discussed in the Tools and Techniques section.

To implement the plan's goals and objectives, recommendations are provided below based upon the following factors: Natural Resources, Historic and Scenic Resources, Greenway and Trail Network, Land Acquisition, and Government Administration and Cooperation. The entity or entities responsible for completing the task and an approximate timeframe for action is also provided. Timeframes are broken into short term (0–1 year), mid term (2–4 years), long term (5–8 years), and ongoing.

### NATURAL RESOURCES

1. Enforce natural resource protection standards to ensure that the sustainability of the site proposed for development is not exceeded.

**Entity responsible:** Board of Supervisors; Planning Commission; Staff

**Time frame:** Ongoing

2. Examine the existing natural resource protection standards in the zoning ordinance to determine if they should be amended to incorporate additional protection measures and/or allowances for limited disturbance areas where appropriate.

**Entity responsible:** Board of Supervisors; Planning Commission; Staff

**Time frame:** Short Term

3. Emphasize enforcement of existing reforestation/afforestation standards.

**Entity responsible:** Board of Supervisors; Planning Commission

**Time frame:** Short Term

4. Evaluate and possibly amend the riparian buffer regulations in the zoning ordinance to provide performance standards for the protection of the Township's waterways. (See Appendix E. Riparian Corridor Conservation District and Management Plan in 2006 *East Rockhill Township Park and Recreation Plan*).

**Entity responsible:** Board of Supervisors; Planning Commission

**Time frame:** Short Term

5. Encourage landowners in significant resource areas (e.g., priority sites identified in the Bucks County's Natural Areas Inventory Program and Heritage Conservancy's Lasting Landscapes Program) to donate their land or provide a conservation easement.

**Entity responsible:** Board of Supervisors

**Time frame:** Ongoing

6. Cooperate with the Heritage Conservancy to implement the recommendations from the *Quakertown Swamp Resource Protection Plan* (2000) that attempts to encourage landowners and municipalities to preserve and maintain the Swamp in its entirety.

**Entity responsible:** Board of Supervisors

**Time frame:** Ongoing

7. Promote the use of conservation easements that would allow private property owners to place conservation easements on their properties restricting all or a portion of the property from development and/or deed-restricting new parcels as appropriate.

**Entity responsible:** Board of Supervisors, Planning Commission

**Time frame:** Ongoing

8. Examine methods of land preservation in addition to land acquisition, such as zoning strategies, development incentives, and deed-restrictions.

**Entity responsible:** Board of Supervisors; Planning Commission

**Time frame:** Short Term

9. Promote the ongoing education of resource protection programs and activities sponsored by various public and private organizations/agencies.

**Entity responsible:** Board of Supervisors, Staff

**Time frame:** Ongoing

## HISTORIC AND SCENIC RESOURCES

1. Pursue funding sources to conduct a comprehensive historic resource inventory of the Township.

**Entity responsible:** Heritage Conservancy or other comparable entity; Staff

**Time frame:** Mid Term

2. Explore protection strategies and techniques (e.g., register of historic places designation, historic district) for significant historic resources in the Township.

**Entity responsible:** Board of Supervisors, Planning Commission

**Time frame:** Mid Term

3. Conduct a village study for Hagersville (or any other village identified for future expansion) as a precursor to village expansion that will identify potential opportunities and constraints for expansion while respecting the surrounding inherent historic character of the village.

**Entity responsible:** Heritage Conservancy or other comparable entity

**Time frame:** Mid Term

4. Adopt additional landscape buffer standards for developments located adjacent to significant historic resources.

**Entity responsible:** Board of Supervisors; Planning Commission

**Time frame:** Mid Term

5. Consider establishing a process for the demolition of historic buildings, including a permit requiring a review of alternatives and historic documentation, prior to demolition.

**Entity responsible:** Board of Supervisors; Planning Commission

**Time frame:** Mid Term

6. Examine the feasibility of establishing scenic overlay provisions designed to preserve existing vegetation, minimize grading impacts, and provide additional plantings to scenic views and vistas along designated scenic road segments (as identified in Figure 6).

**Entity responsible:** Board of Supervisors, Planning Commission; Staff

**Time frame:** Mid Term

## GREENWAY AND TRAIL NETWORK

1. Develop road linkages to park and recreation facilities along designated scenic roadways to accentuate hiking, biking, and tourism opportunities.

**Entity responsible:** Park and Recreation Board, Board of Supervisors

**Time frame:** Mid Term

2. Place a priority on establishing linkages between the Township's many historical, cultural, scenic, and natural resources. Such links can be established on existing roadways, through acquired easements along stream corridors, through significant open space and park acquisitions, or by way of dedicated land through subdivision and land development.

**Entity responsible:** Park and Recreation Board, Board of Supervisors

**Time frame:** Ongoing

3. Continue the planning and implementation of the Recommended Greenway Routes (see Figure 7) including on-road and off-road linkages while ensuring these facilities are designed to provide adequate safety measures for its users.

**Entity responsible:** Board of Supervisors, PennDOT

**Time frame:** Ongoing

4. Acquire the Recommended Greenway Routes (see Figure 7) creating a greenway and trail network that will connect points of interest throughout the Township and region.

**Entity responsible:** Board of Supervisors; Planning Commission

**Time frame:** Ongoing

5. Coordinate with PennDOT to address traffic speeds and pedestrian safety along Branch Road, Ridge Road, Fifth Street, and Three Mile Run Road. Evaluate possible speed limit restrictions and/or traffic calming measures deemed appropriate for each location.

**Entity responsible:** Board of Supervisors, PennDOT

**Time frame:** Ongoing

6. Assist in the coordination and implementation of the 2003 regional Transportation Improvements Plan for East Rockhill (i.e., Hill Road County-owned bridge repair/replacement and Route 313 bike lane).

**Entity responsible:** Board of Supervisors, PennDOT, Bucks County Planning Commission

**Time frame:** Ongoing

7. Adopt bike lane requirements (and fees in lieu of bike lanes) for subdivisions or land developments located along the Township's designated bike routes.

**Entity responsible:** Board of Supervisors; Planning Commission

**Time frame:** Short Term

8. Revise the subdivision and land development ordinance to add "Trail Development" requirements to the recreation facilities listed (as recommended in the 2006 *Park and Recreation Plan*.)

**Entity responsible:** Board of Supervisors; Planning Commission

**Time frame:** Short Term

## LAND ACQUISITION

1. Identify unprotected and potentially vulnerable resources and earmark specific areas for acquisition.

**Entity responsible:** Board of Supervisors, Planning Commission

**Time frame:** Ongoing

2. When a property becomes available for acquisition, determine the parcels priority for acquisition by applying the Parcel Evaluation Formula highlighted in the Analysis of Resources section. Pursue acquisition of appropriate parcel(s).

**Entity responsible:** Park and Recreation Board, Board of Supervisors

**Time frame:** Ongoing

3. Acquire land using various strategies other than fee simple acquisition, including donation and easements.

**Entity responsible:** Park and Recreation Board, Board of Supervisors

**Time frame:** Ongoing

4. Continue to obtain access easements along the Township's recommended greenway/trail network (when possible) through the subdivision and land development process.

**Entity responsible:** Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors

**Time frame:** Ongoing

## **GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION AND COOPERATION**

1. Annually review dedication and/or fees in lieu of recreational land dedication.

**Entity responsible:** Staff

**Time frame:** Ongoing

2. Analyze the costs related to the staffing and maintenance of any planned or proposed park and recreation facility that may be reasonably acquired or developed within the budget year.

**Entity responsible:** Staff

**Time frame:** Ongoing

3. Promote the ongoing education of resource protection programs and activities sponsored by various public and private organizations/agencies.

**Entity responsible:** Board of Supervisors; Staff

**Time frame:** Ongoing

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## APPENDICES



Appendix A

**Property Status Report**

Property Name: Hildebrandt Farm Municipality: East Rockhill Township

Property Owner Name: East Rockhill Township

Tax Map Parcel#(s): 12-9-90 Date of Visit March 11, 2009

**Are there any changes in the property?** (e.g. construction, dredging or filling, trails, timber harvest, evidence of trespass, trash, flooding, fire, etc.) Attach current photos with sites marked on a map.

There have been no changes to the property.

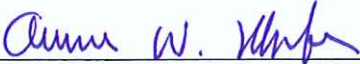
**Are these changes consistent with the terms and conditions of the easement?**

**Any changes/improvements planned for property by municipality?**

The draft Open Space Plan suggests constructing a public trail system consistent with the proposed cart path network of a proposed future municipal golf course.

**RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:**

Monitor name and affiliation Anne W. Klepfer, East Rockhill Township

Signature of monitor 







Appendix B

East Rockhill Township

Resolution No. 2009-\_\_\_\_\_

A Resolution for Municipal Open Space Plan Update Adoption

WHEREAS, the Board of Supervisors of East Rockhill Township, Bucks County, Pennsylvania recognizes that the Township contains open space and natural areas that contribute to the quality of life and economic health of our community which are worthy of preservation; and

WHEREAS, the Bucks County Commissioners have renewed funding of the Bucks County Open Space Program through a referendum overwhelmingly passed by voters on November 6, 2007, the purpose of which is to protect in perpetuity those natural resource areas and farmlands deemed essential to preserve the unique character of Bucks County including East Rockhill Township; and

WHEREASE, the Bucks County Open Space Program provides an allocation of funding for protection of open space resources by municipalities provided that the municipality first prepares an approved municipal open space plan;

NOW, THEREFORE, The Board of Supervisors of East Rockhill Township, Bucks County, Pennsylvania hereby resolves that the Township Open Space Plan dated April 21, 2009, prepared in compliance with the Municipal Open Space Plan Guidelines distributed by the Bucks County Open Space Program, has been discussed at a public meeting and is hereby adopted in its entirety in the form attached hereto, as the official Open Space Plan of East Rockhill Township; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a certified copy of this Resolution to be attached to, and made part of said Open Space Plan, and furthermore, that East Rockhill Township intends to take actions as appropriate to implement the goals of the Open Space Plan.

This Resolution has been duly prepared and adopted by the Governing Body of East Rockhill Township in a public meeting held this 21, day of April, 2009.

EAST ROCKHILL TOWNSHIP  
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

\_\_\_\_\_  
David R. Nyman, Chairman

\_\_\_\_\_  
John R. Cressman, Vice-Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Gary W. Volovnik, Member

Attest:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Anne W. Klepfer