

4.5.11 Upper Providence Township

2000 Population: 15,3

Land Area: 18.2 square miles

Miles of River Front: 6.17



River View near Mont Clare

The Schuylkill River meanders along Upper Providence Township from the Perkiomen Creek confluence to Royersford Borough. A series of long curves gives the Township an unusually long riverfront. Public park areas with good river access are located at Montgomery County's Upper Schuylkill Valley Park and the Schuylkill Canal Recreation area at Mont Clare. Upper Schuylkill Valley Park is part of a complex of more than 400 acres of county property that includes park facilities, the County Geriatric Center, and a number of undeveloped riverfront parcels between Royersford and the Mont Clare / Port Providence area. The Schuylkill Canal Recreation Area is state-owned land, leased by Upper Providence Township, and managed by Schuylkill Canal Association, a very active non-profit organization. Additional land along the river is owned by the Commonwealth and contains several old desilting basins that are currently the subject of coal reclamation activities.

Upper Providence Township has experienced significant growth over the past decade. In the Oaks area, located near the confluence of the Perkiomen Creek and the river, the former BF Goodrich site has recently been redeveloped as a commercial center and entertainment complex. A new office complex and hotel were also recently built in Oaks. At the intersection of Routes 422 and 29, three significant pharmaceutical facilities have been built, and it is anticipated that continued development will occur in the Township along the Route 422 corridor. New homes have sprung up throughout most of the remainder of the Township.

Oaks and Mont Clare / Port Providence, two village areas located at or near the riverfront, contain interesting architecture and a sense of traditional neighborhood layout. A three-mile section of the Schuylkill Canal begins at Lock 60 near the Black Rock Dam in Mont Clare and extends parallel to the river down through Port Providence. This is one of the few watered canal sections remaining from the 19-Century Schuylkill Navigation System and is an unusual opportunity for historic interpretation and heritage tourism.

Two regional roads, Routes 29 and 113, cross the river from Upper Providence, both leading to the Phoenixville area. The Borough of Phoenixville is promoting revitalization activities and a major redevelopment project that will bring visitors and new jobs to the greater Phoenixville area. This focus on Phoenixville's historic

downtown features will provide opportunities for greenway development on the Upper Providence side but will also require solutions for increased traffic congestion, development pressure, and demand for recreation options along the river.

The main line of the Norfolk Southern Railroad crosses the river above Upper Schuylkill Valley Park and parallels Upper Providence's riverfront into Royersford. Rail spurs cross from the Chester County side into Mont Clare and also into Oaks, and these secondary rail lines create areas that are visually and physically separated from the interior of the Township. Although unencumbered by rail lines, the area of Upper Providence above Mont Clare is characterized by high bluffs whose scenic vistas have attracted large new residential projects. Existing or in-progress developments now overlook the river through most of the area, interrupting an otherwise intact wooded river landscape and putting pressure on storm water management, soil conservation, and road systems.

The banks on both sides of the river are wooded throughout much of Upper Providence. Exelon's Black Rock Dam at Mont Clare creates a long upstream dam pool that is popular with power boaters and water skiers. These activities have unrestricted access from a PA Fish and Boat Commission site just across the river from Upper Schuylkill Valley Park. This dam pool is an area of intense activity where competing interests for recreation, environmental protection, and preservation of scenic beauty must be carefully balanced. On the Phoenixville side, the riverbank between Routes 29 and 113 is almost entirely under public ownership. Informal trails follow the riverbank on both sides of the river, although bridge crossings and an actively used railroad trestle create obstacles to a continuous trail loop.

The river's character varies along Upper Providence Township. Down river from the Black Rock Dam near Mont Clare, the river is shallow and free flowing, braiding near Oaks around Natural Lands Trust's 27-acre Andruss Island. Above the Black Rock Dam, a deeper pool of still water extends up river to the Royersford Borough line. Between Upper Schuylkill Valley Park and the canal, the riverbanks are characterized by steep bluffs and mature woodland, and the river here is one of the richest natural resource areas in the Schuylkill Corridor.

Opportunities

- Upper Providence Township's riverfront is an especially good example of the complex diversity of opportunities that characterize Montgomery County's greenway. Within the Township's boundaries, public parkland and preserved natural areas, historic resources, striking scenic views, and borough revitalization combine to create a potential greenway community that includes nearly all of the stakeholder interests identified as important through the greenway stewardship study process. In addition to a variety of private organizations and individuals, this area brings together two counties, township and borough governments, and various public agencies to cooperate on decisions affecting the river's future. Upper Providence Township's local knowledge and ability to promote wise land use are essential to the success of these partnerships.
- Schuylkillloop, a greenway community demonstration project, is currently underway, and will involve the creation of a continuous trail loop on both sides of the river between Routes 113 and 29. The trail loop will be the spine that connects a wide range of stakeholders to the river. Anchors of the Schuylkillloop area are Montgomery ••



Reflections of RR Viaduct

- County’s Upper Schuylkill Valley Park, the Schuylkill Canal Recreation Area at Mont Clare, the rapidly revitalizing Phoenixville Borough, and Chester County’s Black Rock Preserve.

The implementation of Upper Schuylkill Valley Park’s master plan has begun with a Growing Greener riparian restoration project that will stabilize the riverbanks and reforest the buffer area along the river and a tributary creek. A gateway project, partially funded with a Heritage Park grant, will provide a central arrival point for visitors of all ages and interests to enjoy and explore the river. The Schuylkillloop Trail and a network of auxiliary trails will provide access to various park features and to the extensive Geriatric Center lands across Black Rock Road. The uninhabited Bernard Farmstead, which overlooks the river near the Schuylkillloop Gateway location, provides an excellent site for a future visitors’ center that includes interpretive and educational facilities.



Future fishing access

- The Schuylkill Canal Recreation Area includes a long intact section of the canal, a restored lock tender’s house, and the original Lock 60, currently undergoing a complete restoration as a working demonstration of canal history. Schuylkill Canal Association has been extremely successful in cooperating with the Township on maintaining the canal area and obtaining grants for its rehabilitation. The County has recently acquired riverfront property thought to be the original mule tender’s house. This property, located in Port Providence below Route 29, extends the historic interpretation and heritage tourism potential of the canal area. County, township, and canal association may need to partner with the State on the future permanent preservation of this entire area.



Schuylkillloop Gateway Area

- The planned adaptive reuse of industrial land along the French Creek in Phoenixville sets the stage for a large node of shops, residences, and offices that will complement and revitalize the existing historic downtown area of the borough. This project will provide trail components that will address the currently dangerous obstacle to pedestrian access across the French Creek. Adjoining the project site, the former Foundry building has already been restored for adaptive reuse by a local economic development organization. The availability of these more urban services and activities enhances the recreational and heritage tourism features of the Schuylkillloop, and the direct connection between the Upper Providence and Phoenixville sides of the river is an excellent catalyst for regional cooperation on implementing the greenway.



Adaptive reuse – Phoenixville

- Chester County’s natural area project in the former Black Rock silt basin is part of a comprehensive initiative called Audubon’s Schuylkill River. As an environmental education and nature study area, this facility is an good complement to the more traditional park facilities found at Montgomery County’s park. Cooperation

between the two counties on shared programs will enhance the effectiveness of each of these public open space areas.

- The boat access area maintained by the PA Fish and Boat Commission at the Route 113 Bridge gives unrestricted access to the river for motorized boating activities. While this facility extends the opportunity for general public river access, it also creates the potential for conflicts between intensive river recreation and the need to protect the river’s sensitive banks and riparian woodlands. A cooperative partnership between local governments, the Fish and Boat Commission, and the various recreational and environmental interest groups will be essential in ensuring that the river is respected and protected.

- Steep slopes and wooded bluffs shelter a number of scenic ravines and special bird and plant habitats in this section of the river. Montgomery County’s Natural Areas Inventory identifies the Mont Clare Bluffs as an area of special interest. If made available for appropriate public access, these natural features can form a network of opportunities for shared programming with school districts, colleges, and environmental organizations. Environmental interpretation initiatives already planned at Upper Schuylkill Valley Park and Black Rock Preserve can form the core of this river theme. Innovative storm water management features and a possible small nature center at the golf course community on the former Rivercrest property can also become an important educational focus.

- The extension of the Schuylkill River Trail from Oaks to Mont Clare will greatly increase the number of visitors to this section of the river. This trail is planned to cross the river at Route 29 and to continue generally along the French Creek through Phoenixville before continuing upriver through Chester County. Each of the Schuylkillloop anchor areas can benefit from the new interest that this trail will provide, and the trail’s popularity will be enhanced by the variety of interesting activities in this area. However, the riverbanks between Routes 29 and 113 are not intended for intensive trail development, and the narrow wooded river edges here are most appropriate for limited pedestrian use. To ensure that regional trail traffic is focused in the intended location, careful planning will be necessary to design trail features, effective signage, and consistent regulations.

- The success of Schuylkillloop as a greenway community will also depend upon the consistency and cooperation with which the various stakeholders develop facilities and implement regulations. Hours of operation, rules governing access and use, and improvement of as yet undeveloped areas of the riverfront will need to be carefully coordinated to maximize visitor enjoyment while minimizing their impact on sensitive Greenway features.



Historic Lock 60



Hiking at Black Rock Preserve



Future route of Schuylkill River Trail

- Corporations located within or near to the greenway corridor present special opportunities for partnerships that can provide funding, in-kind assistance, and volunteer support for the greenway. Many such organizations are concentrated in the Oaks area, and their assistance should be enlisted as appropriate by the Township, County, or local organizations depending upon the particular project or activity.

- Various parcels of land along or near the river are controlled by utilities, such as PECO or Norfolk Southern Railroad, or by state agencies such as the Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation. These properties, which include the Black Rock Dam, railroad and utility rights of way, and several former desilting basins, are important aspects of the greenway and may provide land preservation, recreation, or trail connection opportunities. In all cases, appropriate use or development of these properties is integral to building the Greenway Community. The status of each of these parcels should be confirmed, and the owner of each should be considered an essential greenway partner.

- Local businesses, including restaurants such as Fitzwater Station and Columbia Station located on both sides of the river, are important greenway components that can benefit from greenway development and can also bring visitors to the Greenway. The support and development of existing and new Greenway-related businesses should be a shared priority in the greenway. Upper Providence Township would play a central role in encouraging the establishment of restaurants, bed and breakfasts, and businesses related to river recreation.

- Upper Providence shares the Perkiomen Creek with Lower Providence, and the preservation of riparian buffers and the realization of local trail connections should be high priorities for both townships. This is an opportunity to cooperate with Lower Providence on implementing regional greenway objectives.



Active railroad at Phoenixville



Fitzwater Station on Canal



County Park and Geriatric Center

4.5.12 Royersford Borough

2000 Population: 4,246

Land Area: 0.86 square miles

Miles of River Front: 1.23



Abandoned railroad bridge is a future pedestrian connection.

The Royersford Borough waterfront is an underutilized mile-long expanse of industrial parcels contained between the river and the Norfolk Southern rail line, which runs parallel to the river through the entire Borough. Main Street, a busy regional connector from the Route 422 corridor, crosses the Schuylkill River to Spring City midway along the riverfront. South of Main Street, Front Street runs very close to the river and cuts the industrial parcels into disconnected portions. An undeveloped Borough-owned parcel located just north of the Main Street Bridge provides the only public open space along the river. Undeveloped informal river access is located near First and Arch Streets across from a now-closed glass factory. Victory Park, the Borough's 40-acre community park, is located just several blocks from the riverfront and functions as a community gathering space as well as a recreational amenity.

The riverfront is characterized by vacant properties or older industrial buildings, some currently available for sale or lease, others occupied for light industrial storage uses. This area also includes a number of abandoned or dilapidated structures that give a historic character to the riverfront. The vacant Royersford train station harks back to the days when passenger rail service was a viable option, and the Royersford Spring Company property, which sits adjacent to the river at Main Street, the derelict S&D Warehouse property, and the lightly-used French Creek property are testament to Royersford's industrial heritage along the river. Anchor Glass, the largest industrial site along the river in Royersford, has been vacant and idle for a considerable time.

Main Street leads downhill through the Borough to a bridge connecting across the river to the Borough of Spring City, where a small informally developed park at the foot of the bridge gives canoe access to the river. Shortly upriver from this bridge, an unused railroad bridge crosses onto an island in the middle of the river

before continuing to the Chester County side. The main line of the Norfolk Southern brings considerable freight activity through the middle of the Borough.

On the other side of the rail corridor, the Borough's character changes to a traditional business district surrounded by neighborhoods containing an affordable stock of single family and row houses. Proximity to the Route 422 corridor makes Royersford an attractive residential location. Its relationship to Spring City in Chester County, just across the river, presents opportunities for future collaboration on main street revitalization projects and promotion of mixed-use river town developments.

The riverbank through the Borough is generally wooded and fairly steep except for the area near the end of Arch Street. The river here is part of a long straight run and flows freely around small islands and shallow gravel areas. From out on the water, the Main Street Bridge and the abandoned railroad bridge frame picturesque views both up and down the river.

Opportunities

- Royersford's waterfront contains all of the ingredients for an exemplary transformation using river town principles described in this greenway stewardship study. The generally underutilized character of existing buildings and abandoned properties provide the opportunity for a broad scope and dramatic approach to redevelopment of the entire riverfront. The location of the railroad line for proposed reintroduction of passenger rail service, the Borough's proximity to the Route 422 highway corridor, and the opportunity for sharing visions and resources with neighboring Spring City Borough create an extremely positive context for adaptive reuse and a mixed-use, transit-oriented redevelopment scenario.

- At the same time, the river's scenic beauty, opportunities for potential public access and river recreation, and future linkages to a regional trail and greenway network make the river a not-to-be ignored "front door" amenity for new development and existing neighborhoods alike. Both the Borough's Economic Revitalization Plan and the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan identify the creation of a continuous greenway of riverfront trails and park areas as an integral part of revitalizing the Borough.

- Multiple parcel ownership along the river means that development may need to begin at a node where opportunity is readily available, as at the derelict S and D Warehouse Property, where riverfront location and access to future rail transportation create a natural redevelopment location. A successful project mixing residential, office, restaurant, and commercial uses at this site would be a demonstration of river town principles and a catalyst for expanded redevelopment upstream and down from Main Street. Any new development or adaptive reuse along Royersford's riverfront should incorporate riparian protection, public access, and a consistent visual connection between the river and the interior of the Borough.



Industry at bridge



Open space and brownfields

- South of Main Street, where the current alignment of Front Street creates an extremely narrow strip of riverfront land, options for realignment of this street may open up opportunities for additional riverfront parkland or development parcels with a more scenic relationship to the river. Existing buildings immediately at the riverfront can be evaluated for suitability for adaptive reuse for river-related commercial or non-profit activities that would bring the public to enjoy the river. Waterfront restaurants, canoe and bicycle liveries, heritage / history centers, and offices for river advocacy organizations are among these interesting greenway amenities.

- Collaboration with Spring City Borough on river access and greenway-related projects is an excellent opportunity to promote heritage tourism and visitor interest in both boroughs. Pedestrian and bicycle connections across the Main Street Bridge and between future segments of the proposed regional trail network will be essential in implementing greenway opportunities on both sides of the river. Traffic congestion at this bridge currently backs up along Royersford’s business district and will be intensified with the redevelopment of the riverfront and the restoration of passenger rail service. Alternate traffic patterns and the possible expansion of the bridge should be evaluated as redevelopment proceeds.

- The future restoration of Schuylkill Valley Metro rail service will make Royersford a hub for visitor interest. Interim uses for the existing railroad station can ensure that the building remains intact for future station use. Revitalization of the Borough’s downtown retail corridor should capitalize on its function as a gateway to the river and greenway, and pedestrian and visual access to the greenway should be included in downtown streetscape improvements.

- An abandoned Norfolk Southern rail spur bisects the Borough’s riverfront open space parcel and continues on a trestle across the river to an undeveloped island and then to the Chester County side. This trestle represents a special pedestrian linkage opportunity, and the island has excellent potential as a cooperative natural area project of benefit to both Royersford and Spring City. A shared vision plan for this linkage, created and supported by both boroughs, perhaps in partnership with Norfolk Southern, Schuylkill River Greenway Association, and Montgomery County, would make the implementation of this project of likely interest to a variety of funding sources.

- Beyond the Borough boundary, several industrial properties in Upper Providence Township plus township and county-owned open space parcels may also be the subject of inter-municipal collaboration on linkages and appropriate greenway development.



Royersford’s Main Street



Future Schuylkill Valley Metro

4.5.13 Limerick Township

2000 Population: 13,534

Land Area: 22.39 square miles

Miles of River Front: 5.30



River view at Vincent Dam

Limerick Township, stretching between Lower Pottsgrove Township and Royersford Borough, has been one of the fastest growing municipalities within Montgomery County. Within the past decade, many large farms near the US Route 422 expressway have been developed as new residential communities. Much of this development, however, has been located away from the river, and a large portion of the riverfront remains undeveloped.

A large section of the riverfront in Limerick Township is owned by Exelon Power and is kept open as a buffer for the Limerick Nuclear Generating Station. The towers of this generating station dominate the landscape in all directions and form a visual landmark at the river's edge that can be seen from as far away as the North Penn area. This property straddles the border with Lower Pottsgrove Township where additional acreage is occupied by the generation facility.

Downriver from the generating station, the former Linfield Distillery property is a major brownfields site, currently unused and available for adaptive reuse and innovative redevelopment proposals. Continuing downstream, a large riverfront property owned by Pennsylvania Game Commission is a public area used for small game hunting. The property also provides access to the derelict Vincent Dam. Below this state-owned property, Limerick Township parkland fronts on the river near the small village of Linfield. Below Linfield, an old roadbed hugs the river at the base of ravines and bluffs that push development away from the river.

A major impediment to river access is the Norfolk Southern Railroad's active freight corridor, which separates the riverfront from the interior of the Township in many areas. Because of these physical and property ownership circumstances, the Limerick Township riverfront is surprisingly undeveloped, the more so because of the fast pace of development in other areas of the Township.

Limerick Township has a long river frontage, with the river curving sharply around a large thumb occupied by the old distillery property and the State Gamelands site. The Vincent Dam creates a slow-moving pool of water, although a large breach in this dam creates some faster moving water toward the Chester County side. The dam's owner, Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation, recommends eventual removal of the dam structure although this project is not yet funded or scheduled. Below the dam, the river is free flowing and curves inward toward the Township's Linfield Landing Park, where picnic facilities and non-motorized boat access are provided at an otherwise undeveloped open space area between the river and the railroad line.

The river corridor through Limerick Township has a scenic rural character with wooded banks on both sides. The only formal river access is from the township park. A farm lane leads through the State Gamelands property to the end of the dam, where visitors can have scenic views of the river and canoeists can portage around the dam. The only connection between Limerick Township and the other side of the river is the Linfield Road Bridge that leads to East Coventry Township in Chester County.

Opportunities

- Trinley Mill Road is a narrow roadbed that follows the river's edge from the end of Linfield Landing Park downriver at least as far as Major Hollow Road. A narrow strip of undeveloped land continues between the railroad and the river downstream to Royersford. The Township should confirm the location of this right-of-way and take formal ownership for riverfront trail purposes. This trail would preserve the riverfront and create an exceptional pedestrian connection between Linfield and Royersford.

- As an official Schuylkill Water Trail landing site, Linfield Landing Park is a primary access and resting point for canoeists and kayakers following the river. This park has been an excellent venue for lunch and presentations during several of the Schuylkill River Sojourns, and it has the potential to be the site of a variety of riverfront events and activities. The Township should formalize the connection between this park and the State Gamelands property just upriver and should keep alert for opportunities to acquire additional land in that area.

- The Vincent Dam, formerly also known as the Knickerbocker Dam, was one of a number of dams built in Montgomery County during the early 1800's to make the river navigable for canal boats hauling coal and food to Philadelphia. The Vincent Dam is a rock timber crib type dam typical of the original river dams. This dam is currently in very poor condition and presents a hazard to boaters who are inclined to go over the dam rather than portage around it. Limerick Township should participate in discussions with the State to determine a schedule for the dam's removal, opportunities for preserving the stone dam abutments as riverfront features, and the effect of dam removal on the river corridor above and below the dam.

- Pennsylvania Game Lands #234 contains 155 acres of land managed for small game hunting. Public access is permitted on this land, and non-hunters are asked to wear orange safety clothing during hunting season. Unpaved lanes through the farm fields can function as walking trails. This property is a riverfront amenity because it is maintained in a relatively natural state and is likely to be a good bird watching site during non-hunting periods of the year. The establishment of river access when the dam is removed and connecting trails to Linfield Landing Park and upstream through



Deteriorating wooden dam



State Game Lands

the adjoining distillery property are projects that can be accomplished through a cooperative partnership between the Township and the Game Commission.

- The former Continental Distillery located in Linfield contains approximately 180 acres and more than a million square feet of vacant warehouse space. The property has been subdivided but the buildings are currently unused, and the land toward the river is undeveloped. This property is an excellent opportunity for riparian preservation, riverfront trails, and nature study areas. The site may also provide areas for additional recreational use. An unoccupied historic structure on this site may be an important interpretive site for the early history of the river corridor.

- The previously developed portion of the distillery site provides an excellent venue for a mixed-use development that exemplifies greenway principles and river-town planning. The site appears to need extensive clean up of debris, and an environmental assessment would be needed to determine which areas might be appropriate for public open space use. Any development proposals for this site should include extensive public river access, trail connections, and preservation of a wide corridor of riparian land along the river.

- Exelon's Limerick Generating Station is a very large property that is a well-known landmark along the river. While security issues related to the nuclear facility necessitate restricted public access, the utility use and ownership of this large property provides several important advantages to the greenway. This land is likely to remain open and free of additional development for the foreseeable future. PECO should be invited to partner in a land management strategy that maintains existing fields and woodlands as natural habitat and as buffering for the river. This should insure the preservation of a long stretch of riverbank in a natural state. An informal path currently follows the riverbank from Sanatoga in Lower Pottsgrove Township, through the PECO property, and into an additional open space parcel that may be acquired by Limerick Township. Future public access on this path might be formalized without compromising the security of the generating facility. These opportunities establish PECO as a major stakeholder in the greenway planning process and an essential partner in implementing the Greenway in Limerick Township.

- A recent proposal to site a new power generating facility adjoining PECO land in Limerick Township underlies the need for riverfront municipalities to plan ahead for balancing the pressures of an increasing market for power and other utilities with recreation and natural resource protection in the corridor.



Riverfront brownfields



Linfield Village



Gravel bar along river

- A vacant floodplain parcel along the river just below the Exelon property was the subject of a proposed township acquisition several years ago. Although the Township was unable to complete the acquisition, the undeveloped parcel is an important riverfront preservation opportunity. The Township should secure this property for permanent passive greenway open space and should also explore options for connecting this property downriver to Linfield Road. This additional short trail linkage would permit connection to future riverfront trails on the distillery property.

- Limerick Township has a long history, much of which relates to the river. Opportunities for historic interpretation include George Washington’s 1777 crossing of the river between Linfield and Parker’s Ford, the evolution of the village of Limerick Station, now called Linfield, and the varied industrial history of the distillery property. These and other similar places and events can be the subject of a greenway history interpretive theme. The Township can work in partnership with property owners, the Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission and various greenway stakeholders to preserve and showcase existing buildings and portions of sites that relate to the township’s history in the greenway corridor.



Old road at Trinley Mill



Looking upriver from Linfield Bridge

4.5.14 Lower Pottsgrove Township

2000 Population: 11,213

Land Area: 7.9 square miles

Miles of River Front: 3.39



Upriver near Srogels Run



Downriver from Sanatoga

Lower Pottsgrove Township continues to grow rapidly like its neighbor Limerick Township. Though the Township has developed dramatically over the past several decades, the riverfront area has seen little change. The major uses along the river are the Occidental Chemical Company factory site that adjoins Pottstown Borough at the western edge of the Township, a portion of PECO's Limerick Generation Station property that straddles the border with Limerick Township on the eastern edge, and an active quarry at the end of Sanatoga Road. The portion of riverfront in between these features is steep and very inaccessible due to the location of the rail line that parallels the river's edge through much of the Township.

Township parks along the two major tributary creeks form open space nodes that either provide direct river access, as at the Srogels Run confluence, or set the stage for future access, as at the Township's Sanatoga Park. The Sanatoga open space is separated from the river by an extensive quarrying operation and the active rail line, but an unused road passes under the railroad and terminates at the river's edge.

The Sanatoga Road Bridge, now closed and with only the piers remaining, once crossed over to Chester County. The riverbank here is quite steep, and access to the river necessitates a moderate climb down a wooded embankment to the edge of the Sanatoga Creek. This creek corridor is wooded and extremely scenic and flows through a series of preserved parcels on its way to the river. An old roadbed hugs the riverbank from this location and, sandwiched between the rail line and the river edge, continues downriver to the Limerick Generating Station Property and into Limerick Township. Security concerns have prompted Exelon Power to restrict access through the generating station property, although Exelon is cooperating on the preservation of the historic Frick's Lock Village across the river in Chester County.

The Srogels Run corridor, also wooded and extremely scenic, ends in a wide floodplain area with a large gravel bar extending out into the river. A railroad underpass provides access to the river for pedestrians and small emergency vehicles. Paralleling the Srogels Run is a roadbed that eventually dead-ends at the Oxychem Property. This road, which may be on private property, passes a large undeveloped parcel containing open fields and woodlands that is owned by Oxychem. Oxychem's river frontage is mostly wooded, with the manufacturing facilities set considerably back from the river. This undeveloped riverbank comprises a large area of floodplain and riparian forest that could become an important habitat and natural area. Upstream on the Srogels Run is Lower Pottsgrove's historic Sanatoga Village area, the subject of revitalization planning and streetscape improvements.

Lower Pottsgrove’s river frontage is undulating, forming a pronounced S-curve that creates short but scenic views. A large thumb occupied by the Oxychem Plant protrudes outward toward Chester County, and farther down the river a similar thumb extends toward Lower Pottsgrove from the Chester County shore. The Route 422 expressway crosses the river above the Oxychem Thumb. Future road improvements will bring the Schuylkill River Trail from its Chester County section to continue up the Montgomery County side at this location. An unused railroad bridge, just above the Sprogels Run, once extended a rail spur across the river.

Opportunities

- Lower Pottsgrove’s riverfront is a key part of the proposed greenway. The Township would be the downstream terminus of the proposed John Potts Park and will be the location where the main branch of the future Schuylkill River Trail crosses back into Montgomery County from Chester County via the Rt. 422 Bridge. The Township’s existing Sanatoga Park is included in the proposed Greenway Stewardship Zone and is only a short distance from the river. The active quarry property at the end of Sanatoga Road is a potential future recreation site after quarry operations at the site have been exhausted. Decisions affecting planning along Lower Pottsgrove’s riverfront should be evaluated in the context not only of the greenway but also the relationship to the regional John Potts Park concept.



Limerick towers

- The Township has been under intense development pressure that will only increase with the construction of the Schuylkill Valley Metro (SVM) passenger rail system. A SVM park-and-ride station is planned in the Township. The Township should move forward quickly to identify key parcels near the river for preservation as open space and to develop a plan for connecting existing and future open spaces through an inland trail system that would also bring commuters to the Metro station.



Open land near Porter Road

- As in Limerick Township, Exelon’s generating station property is critical for riparian preservation and public trail access. Because of security concerns, Exelon is not currently in a position to facilitate public access across this property. However, Lower Pottsgrove and Limerick Township should work cooperatively on a shared vision for this portion of the riverfront and on engaging Exelon as a long-term partner in the Greenway Community.

- Occidental Chemical Company occupies the former Firestone Tire plant located on 260 acres within the bend in the river. Currently Oxychem produces PVC resins on site and leases a portion of the property for warehousing of tires. A large portion of the site, adjacent to the river, lies in the flood plain and is currently vacant. This area is of minimal industrial use to the Oxychem operation, but is desirable for riparian protection and appropriate passive recreation. Lower

Pottsgrove can act as a facilitator in developing a cooperative preservation strategy that explores areas appropriate for public access, identifies and addresses Oxychem's security and other site concerns, and protects the sensitive riparian characteristics of this site.

- Lower Pottsgrove's riverfront holds several excellent opportunities for regional connections that may ultimately create greenway loops between Montgomery and Chester Counties. Two of these connections involve the restoration of old bridges that land in Chester County within East Coventry Township, in an area where preserved silt basin lands and the historic Frick's Lock Village would provide interesting greenway landscapes and destination points. Both bridge locations are associated with public park areas on the Lower Pottsgrove side, and these bridges could be the anchors of a continuous Sanatoga / Frick's Lock Loop.

- An old railroad bridge, now owned by Norfolk Southern, is located at the end of a rail spur on Occidental Chemical Company property. The bridge is unused and in derelict condition but could be stabilized and restored for pedestrian bridge use. A second pedestrian bridge opportunity is the old Sanatoga Bridge, whose superstructure has been removed, leaving only the bridge piers in place.

- Implementation of these bridge restoration projects and creation of a greenway loop would involve the coordination and partnership of Lower Pottsgrove and East Coventry Townships, Montgomery and Chester Counties, Norfolk Southern, and Schuylkill River Greenway Association, with other agencies involved on an as-needed basis. Ultimate ownership of the bridges might appropriately go to a regional organization such as Schuylkill River Greenway Association. Lower Pottsgrove Township is in a position to facilitate a task force to explore this project.

- An equally important and distinctly regional connection is the extension of the Schuylkill River Trail. The trail will run upriver through Chester County from Phoenixville and cross back into Montgomery County beside Route 422, landing in Lower Pottsgrove Township near the Pottstown border. Lower Pottsgrove will be an essential partner in identifying ownership of riverfront properties with trail significance, facilitating greenway and trail awareness information, and planning and implementing local connections to this regional trail.

- Lower Pottsgrove has a number of historic features that cluster around Sanatoga Village along Ridge Pike. The Township considers this area a prime revitalization opportunity, with interesting architecture, a village-like streetscape, and points of interest that include the historic Sunnybrook Ballroom. This revitalization area should be included within the Greenway Stewardship Zone, with the goal of creating pedestrian, and perhaps interpretive, connections between this area and the river. The Sanatoga Creek, which flows by Sunnybrook Ballroom may provide such a connection. Similarly, the Sprögels Run presents an opportunity to work with Upper Pottsgrove Township to create a tributary greenway that implements a locally beneficial but regional connection to the river.



Sanatoga Village



Railroad crosses Sanatoga Creek

4.5.15 Pottstown Borough

2000 Population: 21,859

Land Area: 5.03 square miles

Miles of River Front: 2.73



Pottstown river view

The traditional development pattern of the Pottstown riverfront is based on heavy industry and extensive rail and utility infrastructure. The predominant rail feature, dividing the riverfront zone from the rest of the Borough, is the main Norfolk Southern rail line, which runs parallel to High St. throughout the Borough. This rail corridor, now used for freight, once carried passengers under SEPTA's regional rail service and is currently proposed for shared use by the future Schuylkill Valley Metro.

A smaller and much less heavily used rail line, referred to as the Oxychem Spur, provides service to Occidental Chemical in Lower Pottsgrove Township. In some locations, this rail spur is directly adjacent to the riverfront, while in other areas, it is two to three blocks away from the river. This rail spur merges with the main rail line west of the Manatawny Creek just west of downtown Pottstown.

Industrial Highway also closely parallels the river, passing properties near the river that include the Pottstown waste water treatment plant facility, the former Bethlehem Steel plant now rented to various industries, and the Mrs. Smith's Pies property which closed several years ago. Pottstown's Riverfront Park occupies the waterfront between Route 100 and Hanover Street, and the riverfront land between Route 100 and the West Pottsgrove border is under Borough ownership. A two-story building within Riverfront Park, formerly used for storage by PECO Energy, has been renovated by the Borough and is currently used as the headquarters of Schuylkill River Greenway Association.

The west campus of Montgomery County Community College is located on College Drive across from the park. Beyond Route 100, the State has designated a number of parcels of land for tax abatement under the state Keystone Opportunity Zone (KOZ) program. This KOZ area extends to the West Pottsgrove border.

Pottstown's downtown area has recently been the subject of a number of revitalization projects, with a new borough hall with adjoining plaza and park completed on a site adjoining the former station on the Norfolk Southern line. Designs are underway for a promenade that will connect this central downtown area to the

river and to the nearby Community College. Next to the plaza, an historic bank building is undergoing renovations for adaptive reuse, and beyond Hanover Street, a developer interested in creating an innovative mixed-use project has purchased the former Mrs. Smith’s complex. This downtown area strongly benefits from its close proximity to the river and can be considered an integral part of the greenway corridor. A variety of programs and activities sponsored by Pottstown make the Borough a destination area for visitors to the greenway.

The river along Pottstown Borough makes a generally straight run, flowing freely past a number of wooded islands. Much of the riverbank is lined with mature trees. Bridges at Hanover Street and Keim Street give local access to the Borough. Route 100 crosses the river on an elevated bridge that allows use of the riverfront land near the bridge abutments. The confluence of the Manatawny Creek is located in Riverfront Park, and the creek extends up through the Borough’s Memorial Park and eventually into West Pottsgrove Township. The Colebrookdale rail spur originates in this area and follows the creek into Berks County beyond the County line.

Opportunities

- Pottstown’s recently completed community revitalization strategic plan describes a number of projects that can have direct links to the Greenway Stewardship Study and are within the proposed Stewardship Zone of the Greenway. All projects that involve either river access and recreation or revitalization of the downtown area should be coordinated to ensure linkages, public access, and enhancement of the greenway or revitalization project through proximity to the river and the downtown area.
- Connections can be emphasized between Pottstown’s revitalized main street, open space amenities along the river, and regionally significant points of interest such as Pottsgrove Manor, the Schuylkill River Trail, Schuylkill River Greenway Association headquarters, and the Community College campus.
- Opportunities identified in the John Potts Park Plan can likewise be incorporated into greenway initiatives. This plan describes the regional benefits of connecting existing and potential open space areas in the center of Pottstown with similar areas of West and Lower Pottsgrove Townships. The plan also notes the economic development and revitalization advantages inherent in integrating Pottstown’s business district into a parklike setting.
- Opportunities for river-town development should be maximized on such sites as the Mrs. Smith’s complex and other suitable properties. Mixed-use projects incorporating residential, commercial, and entertainment uses would be enhanced by the availability of convenient rail service and trails, scenic views, and other public amenities along the river. Office space, hotels, and new restaurants are other complementary uses. Adaptive reuse should be promoted wherever possible, and any redevelopment or new development projects should incorporate greenway principles and objectives.



Future trail corridor



Industrial area near river

- The eastern part of the Borough immediately west of the Borough Waterworks and centering on the Keim Street area also holds opportunities for redevelopment under the river town scenario. This area includes marginally used buildings and vacant yards currently used for recycling. The relocation of Industrial Highway in this area would create a location of 15 to 20 acres for new uses such as luxury housing. Given the proximity of the river, the Schuylkill River Trail, and convenient transportation, this area could become a significant waterfront residential amenity.

- Relocation of the Oxychem Spur, which currently closely parallels the river, could be accomplished without interrupting service to its single rail customer. This railroad track occupies space along both College Drive and Industrial Highway that could be better used for the Schuylkill River Trail and expanded riparian buffering along the riverbanks. The relocation of this railroad track would also facilitate access off College Drive into Pottstown’s Riverfront Park and Schuylkill River Greenway Association’s new headquarters.

- The Manatawny Creek, which drains approximately 85 square miles in both Montgomery and Berks County, is a regional asset that can provide environmental, scenic, and recreational benefits. The Berks County Conservancy is currently developing a rivers conservation plan for the Manatawny Creek watershed, and completion of this plan will present additional funding opportunities for projects that may connect the Manatawny Corridor to the Schuylkill Greenway. Pottstown and West Pottsgrove should work



Riverfront Park



Revitalization in Pottstown

with the Conservancy to ensure that these opportunities are included within the watershed's implementation plan. Special attention should be given to the Colebrookdale Spur as a regional trail connection.

- Brownfields redevelopment opportunities in the KOZ Area can stimulate economic development in a declining section of the Borough while incorporating trail and other recreational amenities. The former Flagg Brass Property, straddling the Pottstown / West Pottsgrove line, will create a major recreational opportunity for Pottstown, once the pond area is cleaned up and conveyed to the Borough. This pond and the surrounding land will be easily accessible from the Schuylkill River Trail and might be developed for fishing, bird watching, and walking, as well as for more active recreation.

- The west campus of Montgomery County Community College is an excellent potential partner in developing environmental, river monitoring, and volunteer programs related to the river. The river and the Manatawny Creek can provide living laboratories for students at the college. Events sponsored by the college can increase the appeal of the riverfront as a visitor destination.

- Schuylkill River Greenway Association, with recently relocated headquarters on borough-owned riverfront land, is an unparalleled asset to Pottstown's riverfront and to the Greenway in general. Partnership with this organization means that the Greenway can be implemented and promoted in the context of the state's Schuylkill Heritage Corridor and the federal Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area. In addition to expanded funding opportunities, this heritage approach will enhance the Greenway by fostering heritage tourism, coordinating information about the Greenway, and increasing awareness and understanding of the Greenway's significance.



Redevelopment opportunities



Adaptive reuse near river



The river in winter

4.5.16 West Pottsgrove Township

2000 Population: 3,815

Land Area: 2.57 square miles

Miles of River Front: 1.52



West Pottsgrove river view

Although West Pottsgrove is a township, its pattern of development is similar to the river towns in Montgomery County. Its core residential area, Stowe, is close to the river and shares many of the same characteristics as its neighbor, Pottstown Borough. The High Street commercial corridor continues from Pottstown through the Stowe area on its way to Berks County and the city of Reading. West Pottsgrove is the western-most municipality in Montgomery County's section of the Schuylkill River, with its western border forming the line between Berks and Montgomery Counties.

The northern part of West Pottsgrove Township is almost entirely occupied by the Pottstown Landfill, a feature that dominates the skyline and pushes residential growth toward the older neighborhoods around Stowe. The Manatawny Creek, a major tributary to the Schuylkill, enters West Pottsgrove just below this landfill and forms a scenic stream corridor across the Township before entering Pottstown above the airport. A little-used rail line, the Colebrookdale Spur, follows the course of the Manatawny through both West Pottsgrove and Pottstown.

For years West Pottsgrove was identified with large industrial facilities that were located near the river. This industrial corridor, including several rail lines, separated the residential areas from the river. Today, many of these industries have closed or changed focus, and the riverfront rail corridor is now owned by PECO and includes a Montgomery County trail easement. The active main line of the Norfolk Southern railroad still borders this old industrial area and, along with High Street, forms a distinct line of separation for the area near the river. The former Flagg Brass site forms a major portion of this industrial area. Once environmental cleanup has been completed, riverfront land and a portion of the interior property will be conveyed to West Pottsgrove Township for open space use.

Over the last several decades, the construction of the Route 422 limited access highway has further shut off the river from the interior of the Township. West Pottsgrove's waterfront is now almost entirely separated from view by this elevated road corridor that crosses the river into West Pottsgrove near its eastern border and parallels the river through the Township. The river in West Pottsgrove can be seen only from the highway, and physical access to the riparian land along the water's edge is extremely limited. Several large culverts provide the only connection under the highway. It is possible to park on the highway shoulder at one location where the road is at even grade with the land along the river.

The land at the water's edge is wooded floodplain and surprisingly scenic. For most of its length, the riverfront is set well below the elevation of the highway, resulting in minimal traffic noise and a relatively natural area teeming with birds. The riverbank on the Chester County side is also wooded, and the river in this section forms a green and peaceful gateway to Montgomery County. The river makes a broad bend through this area, unconstrained by dam pools and flowing freely past intermittent islands.

Opportunities

- The Flagg property in West Pottsgrove offers potential both for destination recreation development and local playing fields and walking trails. The Pottstown Police Athletic League (PAL) has expressed interest in a recreation facility at this location, and with the completion of the proposed Keystone Boulevard, this area would be easily accessible. Any recreational development at this site should include connections to local trails and greenways as well as to the extended Schuylkill River Trail and natural areas along the riverbanks. West Pottsgrove has the opportunity to work cooperatively with Pottstown Borough, Montgomery County, and greenway organizations to develop a vision plan for the Flagg site and its surrounding greenway context.

- The Schuylkill River Trail will be extended up from Pottstown along the former rail line, currently owned by PECO, on which the County has a permanent trail easement. The alignment of this public trail through West Pottsgrove will pass through or near potentially revitalized industrial areas, cross Old Reading Pike, and join the almost completed Thun Trail in Berks County. Implementation of this trail will offer Pottsgrove a variety of options for expanded riverfront access and regional river corridor connections.

- A corridor of old, industrial properties stretching from Route 100 in Pottstown through the former Stanley Flagg Property and other industrial properties in West Pottsgrove Township has great potential for brownfields redevelopment. This process is beginning in Pottstown, where industrial properties in the Keystone Opportunity Zone are currently under redevelopment strategies. A section of the Keystone Boulevard beginning at Route 100 is under construction, and this access road will eventually extend through West Pottsgrove as far as Old Reading Pike. With the Schuylkill River Trail integrated into this road corridor, West Pottsgrove will have the opportunity to create multiple pedestrian linkages in an area of revitalization and redevelopment.

- The actual riverfront of West Pottsgrove is a wooded corridor of varying depth extending from the Route 422 bridge crossing near the Pottstown border along the river to a narrow area around the Stowe interchange and then continuing upriver to the Berks County border. Informal paths meandering through this area suggest that



Highway cuts off riverfront



Future Schuylkill River Trail

it is accessed for fishing and perhaps for bird watching. This swath of land has great potential for a natural area whose relative inaccessibility may be an advantage in keeping it as an intact riparian forest. The land appears to be under the ownership of various industrial parcels across the highway, and it is important to define this ownership and secure this land for permanent preservation. PENNDOT is also an important partner in discussing points of access to this area and strategies for highway maintenance practices that are protective of the river corridor's sensitive natural characteristics.

- PENNDOT is currently considering options for the improvement and possible realignment of Route 422 in West Pottsgrove. These road improvements may open up opportunities for land preservation and access to the river. Although construction of any improvements may be a number of years in the future, the current planning process is an excellent opportunity to integrate connections under the highway and appropriate management strategies for riverfront land into the project design.

- West Pottsgrove's Open Space Plan proposes a preserved riverfront corridor with a connecting trail and greenway along the Flagg Run. The Flagg Run corridor includes areas of important wetlands, and should not only be preserved but should also be restored where necessary, especially as it nears the river, where the banks are deeply and severely eroded. West Pottsgrove should make sure that its identified passive recreation and conservation preserve areas are incorporated in any transportation or redevelopment planning and implementation projects that take place within the area between the existing Norfolk Southern rail corridor and the river.

- The Township's Open Space Plan also proposed the preservation the Manatawny Creek corridor for passive recreation and conservation preservation. The creation of a Manatawny Greenway, with rail trail along the Colebrookdale Spur, is a regional project that should involve the cooperative efforts of West Pottsgrove, Pottstown, Montgomery County, and Berks County. Preservation of this sensitive stream corridor is important to water quality in the Schuylkill, and a Manatawny Greenway is a major opportunity for trail and habitat connections.



Significant riparian habitat



Meadow along Flagg Run