

# Newtown Borough

## Comprehensive Plan Update



**DRAFT - December 2022**

Prepared by:





# NEWTOWN BOROUGH

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## INTRODUCTION

### WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

A comprehensive plan is an official public document that serves as a policy guide to decision making about physical development in a community. It is an explicit statement of a community's future goals and vision for use by the planning commission, council, private stakeholders, and regional, state, and federal entities.

The *Newtown Borough Comprehensive Plan Update (2022)* provides an overview of the current conditions, assets, and future challenges to the borough. Newtown Borough successfully laid the groundwork for an updated comprehensive plan with the development of previous comprehensive plans, including the *Newtown Borough Comprehensive Plan Update (2010)*. The 2010 comprehensive plan successfully focused efforts on issues facing the borough, incorporating sustainability into borough policies, and putting forward a vision of what is possible in Newtown Borough.

The purpose of the 2022 plan update is to understand the current state of Newtown Borough and to use that information to plan for the future. This plan is organized by a set of "plan principles" and sets forth actions in keeping with the values and ideas behind those principles.

The preparation of the comprehensive plan update has been initiated and directed by the borough's planning commission, which guided plan preparation, and by the borough council, which officially adopted the final plan. A resident survey and a business survey were prepared and distributed as a part of the comprehensive planning process. Analysis of survey opinions can be found in many chapters throughout the plan and were instrumental to the plan's development.

The Land Use chapter ties together recommended actions of the plan and sets forth land use policy for Newtown Borough in accordance with the plan's principles. An implementation chart summarizes the plan's recommended actions. This planning activity, in connection with the recommended actions, provides a road map to the next actions required by the borough in order to realize a vision of a better future.

### PLAN PRINCIPLES

At the core of a comprehensive plan are the values of the community and a vision of a better future. Comprehensive plans should articulate and express these ideas so that future policy choices are clear and consensus-driven. The *Newtown Borough Comprehensive Plan Update (2022)* puts forth a set of principles that will guide the plan's direction and recommendations. These principles function as both value statements and ideals that this plan strives to attain. The principles were developed based on responses from the community and business surveys sent out to residents and business owners as part of the comprehensive plan update, public discussions with the borough planning commission and council, and findings of the plan.

### RESIDENT SURVEY

The resident survey helped to provide a clear direction in the development of the plan principles. In November of 2020 an online resident survey was announced on the borough website, the public access channel, and links were provided via social media. The results of this survey can be found on the borough's



Together, with the remaining results of the survey and input from the Newtown Borough Planning Commission, six plan principles were developed to organize the *Newtown Borough Comprehensive Plan Update*. These are:

### **Community**

A group of people with diverse characteristics who share common perspectives and engage in joint action in a common setting.

### **History**

The pride and value we take in Newtown’s historic and natural resource legacy.

### **Sustainability**

Development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

### **Mobility**

The ability of pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles to move freely and access goods and services affordably and safely.

### **Resilience**

The ability of the community to anticipate economic, social, and natural resource risks, limit impact, and meet the challenges of an uncertain world.

### **Balance**

A diversity of people and buildings and mix of commercial and residential land use.

Each of the six principles guide the plan elements of this comprehensive plan and serve as a lens through which the future land use vision and plan recommendations should be viewed.

## CORE RECOMMENDATIONS

The 2010 comprehensive plan provided a priority list of recommendations, focusing future activities on open space acquisition, parking and traffic management, improvement of pedestrian circulation, retention of the borough’s historic nature and community character, and stormwater management. Newtown Borough successfully implemented many projects, including revising the zoning ordinance to regulate front-facing residential garages and permit mixed uses buildings in the Town Center (TC) District, restoring Newtown Common and adjacent Newtown Creek, acquiring a portion of the Bird in Hand property, updating sign regulations, and conducting a traffic and pedestrian circulation plan.

The Summary of Recommended Actions and Implementation table at the end of this plan contains a comprehensive list of recommended activities found throughout the chapters of the document. What follows is a list of priority activities from this list that are most critical to this plan’s success, organized by plan principle, and representing a starting point at which the community can gain momentum for putting the remainder of the plan into action. These core recommendations will provide the foundation of Newtown’s future success.

**PLAN PRINCIPLE: COMMUNITY**

**Core Recommendations:**

- Promote maintenance of existing housing in good physical condition. Enforce housing, zoning, health, safety, historic preservation, and property maintenance codes for rental and owner-occupied housing to maintain sound buildings, property values, historicity, attractive neighborhoods, affordability, and diversity of housing choices.
- Explore methods of encouraging energy efficiency improvements and stemming adverse environmental impacts of existing or potential new construction, while protecting the visual character of historic housing.
- Develop and adopt a Capital Improvement Program, which will facilitate the implementation of Comprehensive Plan update objectives.

**PLAN PRINCIPLE: HISTORY**

**Core Recommendations:**

- Support efforts of the HARB, the JHC, and other preservation and community organizations to preserve and enhance the architectural and historic resources within the borough. Continue cooperation with community groups to continue programs that emphasize the history and architecture of the borough.
- Continue to protect the integrity of the Newtown Borough Historic District and the district's National Register status.

**PLAN PRINCIPLE: SUSTAINABILITY**

**Core Recommendations:**

- Continue to investigate opportunities for making Newtown Creek more accessible and usable to the public.
- Develop strategies to incorporate green infrastructure throughout the borough for the purpose of lessening the burden on surface waters to effectively manage the borough's stormwater.
- Amend the zoning ordinance to incorporate provisions for prioritizing planting of native plant species and restricting invasive exotic plant species; prioritize native plants on borough-owned property.
- When complete, implement the updated Master Street Tree Plan. The borough should review the planting recommendations in the plan to ensure a diversity tree species. To guard against the possibility of large scale devastation by both native and introduced insect pests and diseases, no single species should account for more than 10 percent of the total tree population. The list of recommended trees should be updated to include only pest and disease resistant trees.
- Identify and acquire additional vulnerable natural resources for open space, passive recreation, and greenway corridors.
- Pursue opportunities to create and expand greenway corridors, and increase public access to them, particularly by means of acquisition of easements along Newtown Creek and in proximity to Newtown Common.
- Investigate opportunities for acquiring additional open space and recreation areas.
- Refer to the Bucks County Planning Commission "Model Alternative Energy Ordinance" to expand on the renewable energy types in borough ordinances and support the development of these renewable energy sources in the borough.

**PLAN PRINCIPLE: MOBILITY****Core Recommendations:**

- Promote walking to school by providing adequate pedestrian facilities and programs such as the walking school bus.
- Coordinate with the county and PennDOT to develop a list of street improvements that will address the issues of speed reduction, pedestrian safety, intersection design, and control vehicle use.
- Maintain and improve streets to ensure the safety of pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists, as well as the livability of neighborhoods, while maintaining the high level of connectivity of the borough's street pattern.
- Develop an active transportation plan to create a comprehensive vision that incorporates all aspects of the borough's multimodal transportation system.

**PLAN PRINCIPLE: RESILIENCE****Core Recommendations:**

- Review ordinances to ensure the borough is encouraging the use of state-of-the-art stormwater BMPs, including the use of green stormwater infrastructure enhancements, such as rain gardens, green roofs, rain barrels, planter gardens, street trees that absorb water, the use of porous paving materials, and vegetated detention basins.
- Consider a municipal contract for trash and recycling to provide curbside trash and recycling services to all residents.
- Provide yard waste pickups for residents.

**PLAN PRINCIPLE: BALANCE****Core Recommendations:**

- Preserve community character by holding community events along State Street and ensuring useable public and semipublic space. Provide more outdoor dining and seating opportunities for businesses on State Street. Consider special events specifically featuring street closures and expanded outdoor seating.
- Promote coordinated improvements at borough gateways, including landscaping, street amenities, pavers, storefronts, and signage. Establish guidelines for the type and placement of street furnishings, where appropriate, to maintain the character of the borough.
- Construct a pedestrian footbridge across Newtown Creek at Frost Lane to connect this neighborhood to Sycamore Street and adjacent Newtown Township.
- Construct a pedestrian footbridge across Newtown Creek to the Carl Sedia Park in adjacent Newtown Township.
- Develop a creek walk trail from West Centre Avenue south along Newtown Creek.
- Evaluate the future of the SEPTA lot and adjacent lands for potential open space and community uses.
- Consider options for the borough to preserve the Chancellor Center for community use in the event the school district leaves the site in upcoming years.
- Ensure the vision of the Steeple View TND is executed properly, including the provision of useable public space.



## CHAPTER 1. POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

**PRINCIPLES:** Community, Balance

**FINDINGS:** Though there have been periods of population growth, the population of the borough has experienced a steady decrease in population, with minor growth over the last decade. The population of the borough has been aging over the last 20 years, with an increase in median age from 45 years in 2010 to 52 years in 2020. Other factors, such as an increasing number of residents out of the labor force, may have contributed to an aging community, as well as a growing number of retired residents.

### REGIONAL CHARACTER

Newtown Borough is a 0.6-square-mile, small-town community surrounded by Newtown Township in Lower Bucks County. The borough's history dates back to the time of William Penn, and its present-day buildings and pattern of development still reflect its early American origins. The borough has a traditional street grid and a remarkable number of intact structures from the 18th and 19th centuries. Newtown's pedestrian scale, residential neighborhoods, and convenient access to goods and services make it a very desirable place to live and work.

While the borough is almost completely built-out and population has declined slightly in recent years, robust growth in the Newtown area has been spurred by its accessibility to transportation facilities and employment. The area is convenient to employment centers in Bucks and Montgomery Counties, Philadelphia, New Jersey, and even New York City, with access to Interstate 295 and U.S. Route 1, regional rail, and bus transit. Newtown sits at the terminus of the Newtown Rail Line, which years ago provided passenger rail service between Fox Chase, Philadelphia, and Newtown Borough.

POPULATION GROWTH

Since 1950 the borough’s population has decreased 8.3 percent. The borough saw a decrease in population between 1990 and 2010, with a slight increase in population between 2010 and 2020. Population change figures for the borough, the township, and Bucks County are in Table 1.

**Table 1. Population Change (1950—2020) Newtown Borough, Newtown Township, Bucks County**

Year	Newtown Borough			Newtown Township			Bucks County		
	Population	Change Number	Change Percent	Population	Change Number	Change Percent	Population	Change Number	Change Percent
1950	2,095	-	-	1,013	-	-	144,620	-	-
1960	2,323	228	10.9	1,468	455	44.9	308,567	163,947	113.4
1970	2,216	-107	-4.6	2,002	534	36.4	416,728	108,161	35.1
1980	2,519	303	13.7	4,527	2,525	126.1	479,211	62,483	15.0
1990	2,565	46	1.8	13,685	9,158	202.3	541,224	62,013	12.9
2000	2,312	-253	-9.9	18,206	4,521	33.0	597,635	56,411	10.4
2010	2,248	-64	-2.8	19,299	1,093	6.0	625,249	27,614	4.6
2020	2,268	20	0.9	19,895	596	3.1	646,538	21,289	3.4
<b>Change</b>	-	<b>173</b>	<b>8.3</b>	-	<b>18,882</b>	<b>1,864.0</b>	-	<b>501,918</b>	<b>347.1</b>

Sources: U.S. Census 1950—2020

While the borough has faced a population decrease, the surrounding area has seen an increase in population. Between 1950 and 2018, Newtown Township’s population has grown by 1,864 percent, and Bucks County’s population has grown by 347 percent.

According to the population projections devised by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC), the borough’s population is expected to increase to 2,296 people by 2040 and increase again to a population of 2,316 by 2050. DVRPC provides population forecasts to the year 2050. Those population projections are in Table 2.

**Table 2. Population Projections (2020—2050)**

Year	Population Projections
2020	2,268
2025	2,247
2030	2,267
2035	2,292
2040	2,296
2045	2,312
2050	2,316

Sources: U.S. Census 2020, Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission Municipal Population and Employment Forecast, 2015—2050

## POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

The average household in the borough was larger and younger in 2010 than in 2020. Population characteristics are in Table 3.

**Table 3. Population Characteristics (2010—2020)**

Characteristics	2010	2020
Population	2,248	2,268
Median Age (years)	45.4	52.5
Households <sup>1</sup>	965	917
Family Households <sup>2</sup>	599	511
Married-Couple Households	505	445
Nonfamily Households <sup>3</sup>	366	406
Households Living Alone	313	389
Average Household Size	2.33	2.13
Average Family Size	3.0	2.94

Source: U.S. Census 2010, American Community Survey 5-year estimates 2016—2020

The average household size dropped from 2.33 persons to 2.13 persons from 2010 to 2020, while the number of households of people living alone increased from 313 households to 389 households.

The predominant type of household in the borough remained a traditional married-couple family, with about 49 percent of households fitting this description in 2020. Though family households are more prevalent than nonfamily households, the number of family households decreased from 599 in 2010 to 511 in 2020. The increase of householders living alone from 313 in 2010 to 389 in 2020, in addition to the increase in median age from 45 years in 2010 to 52.5 years in 2020, shows an aging population with smaller families. Data suggest that either there is less turnover in residents, or new residents to the borough are older than they've been in years past, or both. Table 4 show changes in the age distribution from 2010 to 2020.

<sup>1</sup> A household is an occupied housing unit.

<sup>2</sup> A family household is a household with two or more individuals related by marriage, birth, or adoption.

<sup>3</sup> A nonfamily household is a household with a group of unrelated individuals or a person living alone.

**Table 4. Change in Age Distribution (2010—2020) Newtown Borough, Newtown Township, and Bucks County**

Age Cohorts	2010						2020					
	Newtown Borough		Newtown Township		Bucks County		Newtown Borough		Newtown Township		Bucks County	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Under 5	93	4.1	1,096	5.7	34,150	5.5	148	7.6	1,141	5.8	30,315	4.8
5 to 9	125	5.6	1,281	6.6	38,919	6.2	51	2.6	963	4.9	33,987	5.4
10 to 14	177	7.9	1,483	7.7	43,070	6.9	46	2.4	1,263	6.4	38,832	6.2
15 to 19	117	5.2	1,310	6.8	41,724	6.7	98	5.0	1,215	6.2	38,627	6.2
20 to 24	108	4.8	777	4.0	32,984	5.3	84	4.3	733	3.7	35,929	5.7
25 to 34	222	9.9	1,852	9.6	66,297	10.6	196	10.0	1,485	7.6	69,686	11.1
35 to 44	266	11.8	2,748	14.2	83,959	13.4	193	9.9	3,033	15.5	73,672	11.7
45 to 54	412	18.3	3,756	19.5	109,090	17.4	273	14.0	3,491	17.8	89,935	14.3
55 to 59	218	9.7	1,672	8.7	46,067	7.4	213	10.9	1,278	6.5	52,576	8.4
60 to 64	199	8.9	1,148	5.9	37,770	6.0	204	10.5	1,598	8.2	46,838	7.5
65 to 74	168	7.5	1,108	5.7	47,259	7.6	271	13.9	2,090	10.7	66,997	10.7
75 to 84	91	4.0	671	3.5	30,573	4.9	103	5.3	954	4.9	35,156	5.6
85 and up	52	2.3	397	2.1	13,387	2.1	71	3.6	362	1.8	15,118	2.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,248</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>19,299</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>625,249</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,951</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>19,606</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>627,668</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: U.S. Census 2010 and American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2016—2020

According to the American Community Survey’s 5-year estimates, about 260 new residents moved into Newtown Borough during the 2016-2020 period. Of those residents, about 35 percent came from elsewhere in Bucks County, with another 4.2 percent from elsewhere in Pennsylvania. More than half of the new residents (52.3 percent) that have entered the borough between 2016-2020 moved from another state. Table 5 shows the origins of new residents in Newtown Borough.

**Table 5. Origins of New Residents of Newtown Borough, 2016—2020**

Place of Origin	Number	Percent
Bucks County	91	35.0
Elsewhere in Pennsylvania	11	4.2
Other State	136	52.3
Outside United States	22	8.5
<b>Total New Residents</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates 2016—2020

Newtown Borough is a relatively homogenous area: as of the 2020 American Community Survey, 97 percent of residents are white and minority groups together account for less than 3 percent of the population. Additionally, borough residents aged 25 and older are likely to be well-educated, as about 99 percent of residents have a high school diploma. About 62 percent of residents have a bachelor’s degree and 30 percent have received a graduate or professional degree.

The median household income for borough residents is \$109,922, exceeding the countywide estimate of \$93,181 by more than 17 percent. The borough median household income is higher than or on par with other regional boroughs such as Langhorne Borough and Langhorne Manor Borough. The median household income for the borough was about 15 percent lower than that of Newtown Township in 2020. Median household income figures are shown in Table 6.

**Table 6. Median Household Income in Newtown Borough, Selected Municipalities, and Bucks County, 2020**

Place	Median Household Income
Newtown Borough	\$109,922
Newtown Township	\$130,609
Langhorne Borough	\$87,083
Langhorne Manor Borough	\$119,000
Bucks County	\$93,181

Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates 2016–2020

According to the most recent estimates, around 65.8 percent of the borough’s population, age 16 or older, participates in the labor force. This is just below the overall labor force participation rate for Bucks County as a whole. However, the data shows 34.2 percent of residents in Newtown Borough were not in the labor force, which is higher than the county average of 32.6 percent. The higher rate of residents out of the labor force may be indicative of an aging population and more retired residents.<sup>4</sup> Table 7 shows the employment status in both Newtown Borough and Bucks County.

**Table 7. Employment Status in Newtown Borough and Bucks County, 2020**

Employment Status	Newtown Borough		Bucks County	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Population 16 years and over	1,702	100.0	516,530	100.0
In Labor Force	1,120	65.8	347,974	67.4
Civilian Labor Force	1,120	65.8	347,540	67.3
Employed	1,082	63.6	333,063	64.5
Unemployed	38	2.2	14,477	2.8
Armed Forces	0	0.0	434	0.1
Not in Labor Force	582	34.2	168,556	32.6
Unemployment Rate	-	3.4	-	4.2

Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates 2016–2020

Of the estimated 1,082 laborers in the borough, 60.8 percent are working in management or other professional occupations (e.g., engineers, physicians, and executives). About 9.8 percent of the workforce is in service occupations (e.g., retail workers, home health aides, police, and EMS); 22.7 percent of the borough’s employed population work in sales and office occupations (e.g., auto sales and administration); 3 percent work in natural resources, construction, and maintenance jobs; and 3.7 percent work in production, transportation, and material moving occupations (e.g., machinists, drivers, and welders).

<sup>4</sup> The U.S. Census Bureau defines labor force as all people classified in the civilian labor force, plus members of the U.S. Armed Forces (people on active duty with the United States Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard). The civilian labor force consists of all non-institutionalized civilians who are either employed or unemployed. The term “employed” refers to all civilians 16 years old and over who are currently working or have employment but are on a leave of absence. All civilians 16 years old and over are classified as unemployed if they are actively looking for a job for at least four weeks and were available to accept a job during this time. Civilians considered not in the labor force consist mainly of students, stay-at-home parents, retired workers, seasonal workers, institutionalized people, and people doing only incidental unpaid family work.

**Table 8. Occupations of Residents in Newtown Borough and Bucks County, 2020**

Occupation	Newtown Borough		Bucks County	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Management, Business, Science, and Arts	658	60.8	154,028	46.3
Service	106	9.8	44,301	13.3
Sales and Office	246	22.7	74,070	22.2
Natural Resources, Construction, and Maintenance	32	3.0	25,701	7.7
Production, Transportation, and Material Moving	40	3.7	34,954	10.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,082</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>333,063</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates 2016–2020

## COMMUTING PATTERNS

Data on workplace location suggests that proximity to employment is a feature that draws people to live in Newtown Borough. As of 2020, about 22.4 percent of Newtown Borough residents work in the borough and 55.7 percent of residents work elsewhere in Bucks County. This is higher than the county averages where only 5.3 percent of residents work in their municipality of residence and 57.3 percent work elsewhere in Bucks County. Over 25 percent of borough residents are employed outside the state of Pennsylvania. Convenient access to Interstate 295 and U.S. Route 1 is a primary factor in out-of-state commuting from Newtown Borough. Table 9 shows resident’s place of work for 2020.

**Table 9. Place of Work for Residents of Newtown Borough and Bucks County, 2020**

Place of Work	Newtown Borough		Bucks County	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Worked in...	-	-	-	-
Municipality of Residence	241	22.4	17,194	5.3
County of Residence	600	55.7	187,477	57.3
State of Residence	803	74.6	285,043	87.1
Outside State of Residence	274	25.4	42,301	12.9
<b>Total Workers (age 16 and older)</b>	<b>1,077</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>327,344</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates 2016–2020

Proximity to workplace is also reflected in commuting time for borough residents. Borough residents typically spend less time traveling to work than other Bucks County residents. For example, 28 percent of borough residents have a commute time of less than 15 minutes. Conversely, 22.6 percent of Bucks County residents have a travel time of less than 15 minutes. Almost 12 percent of residents work from home in Newtown as compared to about 9 percent of Bucks County residents who work from home. Table 10 details borough and Bucks County residents’ travel time to work.

**Table 10. Travel Time to Work for Residents in Newtown Borough and Bucks County, 2020**

Travel Time	Newtown Borough		Bucks County	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Worked at home	126	11.7	29,193	8.9
Did not work at home	951	88.3	298,151	91.1
Less than 5 minutes	46	4.8	7,027	2.4
5 to 9 minutes	85	8.9	25,589	8.6
10 to 14 minutes	136	14.3	34,446	11.6
15 to 19 minutes	44	4.6	38,902	13.1
20 to 24 minutes	174	18.3	37,415	12.5
25 to 29 minutes	58	6.1	20,206	6.8
30 to 34 minutes	80	8.4	37,604	12.6
35 to 39 minutes	32	3.4	10,484	3.5
40 to 44 minutes	43	4.5	13,344	4.5
45 to 59 minutes	107	11.3	33,058	11.1
60 to 89 minutes	99	10.4	28,738	9.6
90 or more minutes	47	4.9	11,341	3.8
Total	1,077	100.0	327,344	100.0

Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates 2016–2020



## CHAPTER 2. HOUSING

The borough prides itself on the historic character and close-knit community the housing stock provides to its residents. This chapter of the comprehensive plan examines the type, age, and value of the housing stock in Newtown Borough.

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

**PRINCIPLES:** Community, Balance, History

**FINDINGS:** The borough’s current housing stock is primarily older, historic buildings which add to the historic character of the borough. Though multifamily units have increased in the last decade, more than half of the housing stock is made up of single-family homes. Home values in Newtown Borough are higher than both Newtown Township and Bucks County. There is a large difference in income and housing costs for homeowners compared to renters in the borough.

### COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

- 97 percent of respondents indicated that they own their home.
- A majority of respondents (73 percent) indicated they live in a single-family home.
  - 15 percent live in a twin/duplex.
  - 3 percent live in an apartment building or condo.
  - 7 percent live in a row home/townhouse.

### HOUSING COMPOSITION

The borough provides a variety of housing types for residents, including detached or attached single-family units, twins or duplexes, and multifamily buildings. Details regarding the types of housing units can be found in Table 11.

**Table 11. Housing Units by Type, Newtown Borough, 2010—2020**

Housing Units by Type	2010		2020	
	Units	Percent	Units	Percent
Single-family detached	623	65.0	476	50.7
Single-family attached	147	15.3	267	28.5
Twins or Duplexes	40	4.2	42	4.5
Multifamily	149	15.5	153	16.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>959</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>938</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2006-2010 and 2016-2020

In 2020, Newtown Borough had a total of 938 housing units,<sup>5</sup> losing 21 units since 2010. Over the last decade, the borough’s housing stock has diversified and seen a slight shift away from single-family detached units. Though single-family detached units are still the predominant housing type in the borough, making up about 50.7 percent of the housing stock, both single-family attached units and multifamily units have increased since 2010.

### AGE OF HOUSING

The borough’s valued historic character is shown through the housing stock. Over 54 percent of all the housing in the borough in 2020 was built before 1939. Table 12 details the age of housing.

**Table 12. Housing Units, Year Built, Newtown Borough, 2020**

Year Built	Housing Units	Percent
2014 or later	5	0.5
2010 to 2013	0	0.0
2000 to 2009	68	7.3
1990 to 1999	9	1.0
1980 to 1989	43	4.6
1970 to 1979	129	13.8
1960 to 1969	33	3.5
1950 to 1959	92	9.8
1940 to 1949	49	5.2
1939 or earlier	510	54.4
<b>Total housing units</b>	<b>938</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2016—2020*

Since the 1930s, the most active decade of construction was 1970-1979, when about 13.8 percent of the housing in the borough was built. From 2000-2009, there was another period of active construction where 7.3 percent of the housing stock was built. Since then, there has been very little construction of new housing with less than one percent being built since 2009.

The nature of the borough’s housing stock attracts residents seeking out historic housing. Though older housing often requires costly maintenance and modernization, the housing stock in the borough has been generally well-kept, allowing for home values to remain high.

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<sup>5</sup> The 2016-2020 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates provide a sampled approximation of the different types of housing units in Newtown Borough. These figures, while the most recent estimates, are not to be taken as exact counts. The margin of error and variability of ACS estimates, especially with figures in single or double digits, may be as much as 20 percent or higher. These figures should be taken as “ballpark figures” and not precise measurements.

There are assistance programs available for those residents who may be unable to afford the expensive upkeep of these older homes. One such program is the Bucks County Housing Rehabilitation Program. The county offers up to \$15,000 in the form of a no-interest loan to homeowners to allow them to repair their homes. If lead paint removal is involved, assistance may increase to \$30,000. Eligibility for participation in the program involves a minimum of one-year ownership/residency, meeting the family income criteria, and maximum assets of \$10,000 (\$20,000 for disabled or elderly). Eligible activities include weatherization, improvements to bring property to code, or accessibility improvements.



Homes along Congress Street

**OWNERSHIP AND MARKET VALUE**

In 2020, about 68.4 percent of housing units in the borough were owner occupied while the other 31.6 percent were occupied by renters. Table 13 shows the housing occupancy status for Newtown Borough compared to Newtown Township and Bucks County in 2020.

**Table 13. Housing Occupancy and Tenure, Newtown Borough, Newtown Township, and Bucks County, 2020**

Housing Occupancy	Newtown Borough		Newtown Township		Bucks County	
	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent
Total housing units	938	100.0	8,099	100.0	251,373	100.0
Occupied housing units	917	97.8	7,881	97.3	240,763	95.8
Owner-occupied	627	68.4	6,792	86.2	187,963	78.1
Renter-occupied	290	31.6	1,089	13.8	52,800	21.9
Vacant housing units	21	2.2	218	2.7	10,610	4.2
Homeowner vacancy rate	0.0	-	0.9	-	0.7	-
Rental vacancy rate	0.0	-	1.2	-	3.7	-

Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2016-2020

With about 2 percent of housing units being vacant in 2020, the borough has a lower vacancy rate than both Newtown Township and Bucks County as a whole.

Home values, and therefore housing prices, in Newtown Borough are higher compared to Newtown Township and Bucks County. According to the 2016-2020 ACS estimates, the median value of a Newtown Borough home is \$566,400. The median value is reflective of most homes in the borough, as more than half of the homes are valued over \$500,000. The median value of housing is over \$100,000 more than that of Newtown Township’s median value of \$434,700 and over \$200,000 more than the Bucks County

median home value of \$340,500. Table 14 summarizes the value of owner-occupied housing in Newtown Borough and the surrounding areas of Newtown Township and Bucks County.

**Table 14. Value of Owner-Occupied Housing Units, Newtown Borough, Newtown Township, and Bucks County, 2020**

Value of Owner-Occupied Housing	Newtown Borough		Newtown Township		Bucks County	
	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent
Owner-occupied units	627	100.0	6,792	100.0	187,963	100.0
Less than \$50,000	0	0.0	32	0.5	4,513	2.4
\$50,000 to \$99,999	10	1.6	7	0.1	2,384	1.3
\$100,000 to \$149,999	22	3.5	7	0.1	4,581	2.4
\$150,000 to \$199,999	15	2.4	170	2.5	14,007	7.5
\$200,000 to \$299,999	15	2.4	1,207	17.8	49,354	26.3
\$300,000 to \$499,999	200	31.9	2,836	41.8	76,125	40.5
\$500,000 to \$999,999	337	53.7	2,361	34.8	33,221	17.7
\$1,000,000 or more	28	4.5	172	2.5	3,778	2.0
Median value	566,400	-	434,700	-	340,500	-

Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2016-2020

### HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

The higher home values are reflected in the monthly housing costs for the borough. Monthly housing costs are found in Table 15.

**Table 15. Monthly Housing Costs, Newtown Borough, Newtown Township, and Bucks County, 2020**

Monthly Housing Costs	Newtown Borough			Newtown Township			Bucks County		
	Total Occupied	Owner-Occupied	Renter-Occupied	Total Occupied	Owner-Occupied	Renter-Occupied	Total Occupied	Owner-Occupied	Renter-Occupied
	Percent			Percent			Percent		
Less than \$300	0.5	0.0	1.7	0.4	0.1	2.4	1.4	1.1	2.8
\$300 to \$499	1.4	2.1	0.0	1.3	1.1	2.9	3.6	3.7	3.3
\$500 to \$799	7	10.2	0.0	9.2	10.1	3.2	10.6	12.0	5.7
\$800 to \$999	13	10.7	17.9	4.4	5.0	1.0	9.4	8.8	11.6
\$1,000 to \$1,499	26.8	16.1	50.0	14.5	14.9	12.1	23.3	17.5	44.0
\$1,500 to \$1,999	11.1	8.8	16.2	20.6	16.5	46.4	17.6	17.3	18.6
\$2,000 to \$2,499	12.4	15.6	5.5	18.5	18.8	16.3	13.5	15.6	5.7
\$2,500 to \$2,999	11.5	15.6	2.4	10.9	11.8	5.1	8.4	10.0	2.4
\$3,000 or more	14.3	20.9	0.0	19.3	21.7	4.3	11.3	13.9	1.8
No cash rent	2.0	-	6.2	0.9	-	6.2	0.9	-	4.1
Median cost	\$1,557	\$2,069	\$1,238	\$1,979	\$2,063	\$1,772	\$1,531	\$1,699	\$1,252

Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2016-2020

According to ACS estimates, in 2020, owner-occupied units in the borough had the highest median housing costs, costing \$2,069 monthly. Over half of the owner-occupied units had monthly housing costs of \$2,000 or more. The median housing costs in 2020 for owner-occupied units in the borough were comparable to Newtown Township. Newtown Borough’s median housing costs for owner occupied units was \$2,069 and

Newtown Township’s was \$2,063. The median owner-occupied housing costs, in both the borough and township, were higher than surrounding Bucks County municipalities (\$1,699).

The borough’s zoning ordinance currently includes regulations controlling residential conversions in some of the larger, historic homes. Residential conversions, which allow for one additional self-contained dwelling unit within an existing home, may provide additional, more affordable housing options for residents.

Though the owner-occupied units have higher monthly costs, the borough’s median rent of \$1,238 for renter-occupied units is lower than Newtown Township (\$1,772) and closer in cost to Bucks County (\$1,252). Renting housing is more affordable than buying, so a plentiful stock of rental housing may attract young families and those living independently, retirees, and lower-income households.

As shown in Table 16, Newtown Borough’s median household income of \$146,985 for owner-occupied units was higher than both Newtown Township (\$140,618) and Bucks County (\$108,873).

**Table 16. Financial Characteristics of Households in the Past 12 Months, Newtown Borough, Newtown Township, and Bucks County, 2020**

Household Income in the Past 12 Months	Newtown Borough			Newtown Township			Bucks County		
	Total Occupied	Owner-Occupied	Renter-Occupied	Total Occupied	Owner-Occupied	Renter-Occupied	Total Occupied	Owner-Occupied	Renter-Occupied
	Percent			Percent			Percent		
Occupied housing units	917	627	290	7,881	6,792	1,089	240,763	187,963	52,800
Less than \$5,000	1.0	0.6	1.7	1.0	0.3	5.0	1.8	1.2	3.9
\$5,000 to \$9,999	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.2	0.8	1.3	0.5	3.8
\$10,000 to \$14,999	1.9	2.7	0.0	0.8	0.3	4.0	2.1	1.2	5.3
\$15,000 to \$19,999	1.1	0.0	3.4	2.6	2.2	4.8	2.6	1.7	5.7
\$20,000 to \$24,999	4.7	0.0	14.8	2.1	1.5	6.4	2.7	2.0	5.3
\$25,000 to \$34,999	6.1	2.1	14.8	3.3	2.4	8.6	5.9	4.2	11.8
\$35,000 to \$49,999	8.2	5.3	14.5	4.2	4.4	3.3	9.0	7.4	14.8
\$50,000 to \$74,999	14.8	9.7	25.9	12.3	11.3	18.9	15.2	13.8	20.2
\$75,000 to \$99,999	8.1	8.8	6.6	10.8	10.7	11.6	12.8	12.9	12.5
\$100,000 to \$149,999	20.1	22.3	15.2	19.3	20.4	12.8	20.1	23.0	9.8
\$150,000 or more	34.1	48.5	3.1	43.3	46.4	23.8	26.6	32.0	6.8
Median household income	\$109,922	\$146,985	\$50,217	\$130,609	\$140,618	\$60,987	\$93,181	\$108,873	\$49,193

Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2016—2020

The median household income for Newtown Borough is lower than Newtown Township, but overall is higher than much of the surrounding towns and boroughs in the county. As Table 16 illustrates, there is an income gap between the households in the borough that own their home and those who rent. The median household income for owner-occupied households is more than double the median income for renter households. The data shows that higher-income households are much more likely to own their home compared to lower-income households.

In addition to the higher median household income, Newtown Borough has had a lower percentage of residents below the poverty line in 2020 with less than 2 percent, compared to Bucks County, with over 5 percent. Table 17 shows the poverty status of residents in the borough and surrounding areas.

**Table 17. Household Income and Poverty Status, Newtown Borough, Surrounding Municipalities, and Bucks County, 2020**

Municipality	Median Household Income	Percent Below Poverty Line in Past 12 Months
Newtown Borough	\$109,922	1.4
Newtown Township	\$130,609	2.0
Langhorne Borough	\$87,083	10.9
Langhorne Manor Borough	\$119,000	8.3
Morrisville Borough	\$77,538	4.9
Yardley Borough	\$87,337	3.3
Bucks County	\$93,181	5.6

Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2016–2020

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Newtown Borough is nearly fully developed. It seeks to maintain quality, historic character, scale, sustainability, and affordability in its housing stock. The actions and policies below are recommended to further these objectives:

- Promote maintenance of existing housing in good physical condition. Enforce housing, zoning, health, safety, historic preservation, and property maintenance codes to maintain sound buildings, property values, historicity, and attractive neighborhoods; and improve affordability.
- Explore possibilities for providing smaller, more attainable housing options in the borough to help diversify the housing stock.
- Work with limited-income borough residents to identify programs such as the Housing Rehabilitation Program that are available to help them meet their housing expenses and maintain their homes.
- Explore methods of encouraging energy efficiency improvements and stemming adverse environmental impact of existing or potential new construction, while protecting the visual character of historic housing.
- Preserve neighborhood fabric by preventing “teardowns” that result in construction, reconstruction, or renovation of housing at an inappropriately large scale.
- Update the borough’s zoning ordinance and subdivision and land development ordinance (SALDO) to continue support of residential adaptive reuse. Periodically review housing conversion and residential accessory regulations to ensure their appropriateness to real estate market conditions and preservation of the borough’s stock of historic housing.

## CHAPTER 3. NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Natural resources serve to help maintain the character of a place and enhance the quality of life. Understanding their importance is also crucial to guiding land use planning and future development.

This chapter looks at natural resources as they are affected by regulatory or stewardship measures that can be undertaken or influenced by the borough. Four key natural resources within the borough that merit protection and regulation are its surface water, geology and topography, trees, and open space.

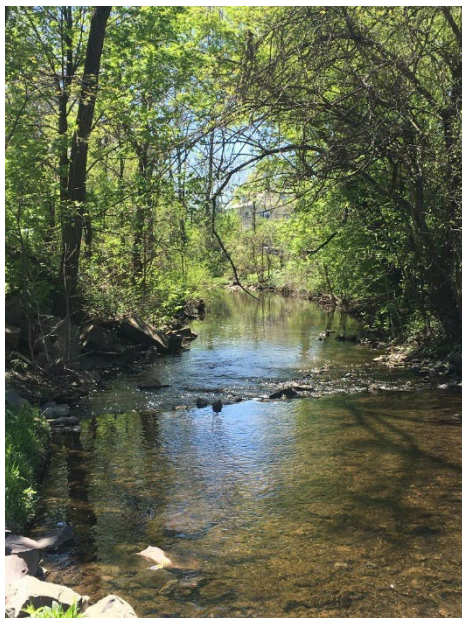
### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

**PRINCIPLES:** Sustainability, Resilience, Community

**FINDINGS:** Newtown Borough has a wealth of natural resources that enhance the quality of life for residents. The surface water resources, Newtown Creek and Old Skunky, provide the borough with benefits to accommodate stormwater runoff, recharge groundwater, and provide a habitat for wildlife. Trees in the borough help to provide buffers between buildings, reduce pollution, and aesthetically enhance the community. Being a nearly fully-developed community, it is important to properly manage these resources. Seeing the importance of natural resources, the borough continues to seek out new opportunities to protect and maintain their resources by prioritizing open space and natural resource management. The borough's zoning ordinance serves as an important tool in protecting these natural resources by requiring riparian buffers along Newtown Creek, protections for areas with steep slopes, and requirements for street trees and tree protection.

### COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

- 25 percent of respondents indicated natural resource protection as one of the top five issues that need to be better addressed by the borough.



*Photo of Newtown Creek  
taken by Chrissy Coy-Burt*

### SURFACE WATER RESOURCES

Newtown Borough has two separate surface water resources; Newtown Creek and Old Skunky, both of which are part of the Newtown Creek subwatershed and Neshaminy watershed, ultimately draining into the Delaware River. These resources provide natural resource benefits to the borough by accommodating stormwater runoff, recharging groundwater, providing wildlife habitat, and contributing to the array of scenery.

Newtown Creek flows along the western portion of the borough, forming the western borough boundary from Barclay Street to Washington Avenue, then meanders in and out of the borough north of Washington Avenue. Old Skunky is the drainage course that flows through the southern portion of the borough to Newtown Creek.

Newtown Creek does not serve as a recreational asset for the community, as there is limited access and the only public open space near it is the remaining portion of Newtown Common at the west end of Greene Street.

The borough's zoning ordinance requires a riparian buffer along Newtown Creek. The buffer must be at least 20 feet in width, measured from the top of the stream bank and extending on both sides of the stream. The ordinance further specifies that within the riparian buffer no grading, paving, or removal of vegetation shall be permitted to protect water quality, prevent erosion and sedimentation, and prevent flooding.

Conservation, restoration, and enhancement of the Newtown Creek riparian corridor are recommended in several planning documents. Those include the *Upper and Middle Neshaminy Creek River Conservation Plan* (RCP), prepared by the Delaware River Keeper Network (2003); the *Newtown Creek Stream Assessment Study*, prepared by the Delaware River Keeper Network (2005); the *Newtown Creek Coalition, Planning Recommendations & Report* (2010); and the *Newtown Creek Watershed Conservation Plan*, prepared by the Heritage Conservancy (2011).

The Newtown Creek Coalition is a broad-based group of residents, business owners, and public officials, from both the borough and Newtown Township, that was formed to improve and preserve the creek. The coalition remains active in preserving and enhancing the creek through regular beautification and cleanup activities, invasive plant management, infrastructure improvements, and stormwater management measures. Notably, the coalition received funding from the state in 2011 for a Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) grant to help formulate the *Newtown Creek Watershed Plan*. More recently, the coalition received the Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence for its work on the Newtown Common and Creek Restoration Project. The coalition has also been active in the discussion phase for a proposed pedestrian bridge over Newtown Creek connecting Sycamore Street in Newtown Township with Frost Lane in Newtown Borough. The coalition has played a role in helping to facilitate community meetings in advance of potential groundbreaking to the pedestrian bridge project.

The *Newtown Borough Storm Drainage System Plan* was prepared in 1997 by Pickering, Corts, and Summerson, Inc., the borough engineers at the time, and updated in 2015 and 2016. The plan locates the route of Old Skunky, existing inlets and storm sewers, and proposed inlets and storm sewers. In 2007, the borough was awarded a state grant to conduct a study to assess ways to mitigate stormwater management problems associated with Old Skunky. The study recommends a suite of potential stormwater infrastructure and stream channel improvements to help minimize bank erosion and localized flooding events.

A network of green stormwater infrastructure incorporated throughout the borough has the potential to significantly lessen the burden on the borough's surface waters to effectively manage stormwater. Green stormwater infrastructure is broadly defined as a "range of measures that use plant or soil systems, permeable pavement or other permeable surfaces or substrates, stormwater harvest and reuse, or landscaping to store, infiltrate, or evapotranspire stormwater and reduce flows to sewer systems or to surface waters."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.epa.gov/green-infrastructure/what-green-infrastructure>

## GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

Geology and topography are central to understanding the natural environment and appropriate land uses for all communities. The borough's geology is defined by its position within the Gettysburg-Newark Lowlands subsection of the Piedmont Physiographic Region, with the Stockton Formation being the predominant geologic formation. The Triassic Lowlands are characterized as a region of gentle rolling hills and ridges. The highest topological area in the borough is the northeast section, where elevation reaches 260 feet above sea level. From this area, land generally slopes downward toward the southeast until reaching the southern border where heights reach about 120 feet.

Steep slopes are natural features of the landscape that commonly create limitations to development. The Natural Resource Conservation Service Soil Survey for Bucks County has four classifications for slopes: 0 to 3 percent, 4 to 8 percent, 9 to 15 percent and 16 to 35 percent. Generally, as the slope increases, the depth to topsoil and the ability of the soil to support structures usually decreases. Increased runoff and sedimentation from disturbed slopes require increased public expenditure for flood control and stormwater management. In addition, different species of plants and the associated wildlife that depend on these plants may be present only on slopes, creating unique wildlife habitats. There are several areas within the borough with slopes exceeding 8 percent, including areas adjacent to the SEPTA right-of-way, along the banks of the Newtown Creek, and along North Elm Avenue. Small segments of the borough feature steep slopes ranging between 8 and 25 percent, particularly concentrated in riparian buffer areas along Newtown Creek.<sup>7</sup>

The borough's zoning ordinance (Section 550-22.C.) provides protections for areas with slopes of 15 percent or greater. Specifically, on lands with steep slopes that exceed an area of 100 square feet: no more than 30 percent of areas containing slopes between 15 and 25 percent may be developed, regraded, or stripped of vegetation; and no more than 15 percent of areas containing slopes of 25 percent or more may be developed, regraded, or stripped of vegetation.

## TREES

Along with historic homes and commercial buildings, the mature street trees in residential neighborhoods and downtown add to the borough's charm and character. In addition to the visual benefits that trees provide, they also play an important role in the ecological balance and well-being of the environment by providing wildlife habitat, creating buffers between buildings, reducing pollution by absorbing carbon dioxide, and aesthetically enhancing the community. Additionally, a healthy tree canopy can provide several public health benefits including shade during hot days, reduced heat island effects, improvement to air and water quality, and mental health benefits through enhanced livability.

The borough is enrolled in the Arbor Day Foundation's national Tree City USA program, which requires it to carry out a community forestry program. The Shade Tree Commission is the borough entity with prime responsibility for overseeing tree planting and maintenance.

The borough benefits greatly from the diversity of trees along its streets. To aid in the preservation and maintenance of these trees, the borough has a Master Street Tree Plan that was created in 1956, updated in 1990 and is currently in the process of being updated.

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<sup>7</sup> Newtown Borough Open Space Plan Update (2011).

In December of 2021, the Shade Tree Commission hired a third-party tree service company to create an inventory of all the trees within the borough to serve as the newest update to the plan. All trees in the borough will be tagged to show their location and identified by species, along with overall health. Borough staff will have access to the tree inventory online with a map of the locations and details of each tree and it is a goal of the Shade Tree Commission to have this information easily available online for residents as well.

The Master Street Tree Plan is a valuable tool that the Shade Tree Commission uses to promote diversity of trees in the borough.

In addition to the Master Street Tree Plan, the borough's zoning ordinance and SALDO provide regulations and requirements for street trees in the borough. The borough's zoning ordinance (Section 550-20.A.) requires that all uses shall provide shade trees, or street trees, in accordance with Shade Tree Commission requirements, SALDO, and the Master Street Tree Plan. For woodlands, the zoning ordinance also stipulates that no more than 50 percent of any woodland may be cleared or developed and that the remaining 50 percent shall be protected.

The borough's SALDO (Chapter 486) requires street trees to be provided in all new land developments and specifies the placement and size of the trees. The ordinance (Section 486-24) also seeks to protect existing trees by specifying that they should be retained wherever possible, requiring all trees with a diameter of 8 inches or greater to be preserved, and requiring tree protection during construction.

However, the ordinance does not include a tree list with the allowable species for tree plantings; this information is found in the Master Street Tree Plan. Ensuring an updated tree list is available, both in the Master Street Tree Plan and the SALDO, can ensure diversity of tree species in the borough. To guard against the possibility of large-scale devastation by both native and introduced insect pests and diseases, no single species should account for more than 10 percent of the total tree population. The list of recommended trees should be updated to include only pest-and disease- resistant trees.

The Shade Tree Commission takes a leadership role in formulating policies and plans to maintain the health and number of trees in the borough.

## OPEN SPACE AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Newtown Borough has a wealth of natural resources that enhance the quality of life for residents. Being a nearly fully-developed borough, it is important to properly manage these resources. Open space, including passive recreation areas, is a component of a balanced resource management program. Land in a natural state provides wildlife habitats and aids stormwater management by absorbing runoff and filtering impurities that could diminish the quality of surface or groundwater.

In January of 2011, the borough adopted its Open Space Plan Update, which supplements key elements of the initial 2001 plan and includes the requirements described in the *Bucks County Municipal Open Space Program: Municipal Open Space Plan Guidelines* (2008). The 2011 update provided an opportunity for the borough to reevaluate its current park and open space resources as well as provide guidance and plans to augment those resources. Chapter 8 provides more detailed information about the borough's open space planning efforts.

For dedicated open space within new developments and redevelopments, the borough highly encourages the use of native trees and other plant species and discourages the use of invasive exotic vegetation. Landscaping with plant species that are best adapted to the borough's environment can produce significant ecological and cost-saving benefits.

From an ecological perspective, native plants increase biodiversity and maintain a properly functioning ecosystem. Additionally, food and habitable areas for local wildlife are increased when native plant species are incorporated.

From a cost-savings perspective, native plants typically result in more resilient landscaping that can withstand environmental stressors (i.e., extreme temperatures, droughts, increased rainfall, etc.) and use water more efficiently. Further, since native species are adapted to local conditions, they often do not require expensive pesticides, fertilizers, extra watering, or additional upkeep. In addition to costs saved in upkeep, native species help reduce other costs by absorbing water that would otherwise be discharged into sewers, decreasing levels of erosion, and filtering harmful pollutants before they reach surface waters.

The Newtown Common is the last publicly owned lot of the original 43-acre common along both sides of Newtown Creek designed by William Penn in 1684. The rest of the common was sold to private owners in 1796 to help finance several projects of the time, including construction of the Centre Avenue Bridge, which crosses the creek several blocks to the south. The Newtown Common and Creek Restoration, a joint project between Newtown Borough and the Newtown Creek Coalition, was completed in 2018. The work included removal of the concrete debris at the end of Greene Street; stabilization and restoration of the creek banks; redesign of the park and its pedestrian entrance; landscaping with native plants in the park and along Greene Street; installation of solar lighting, seating, bicycle racks, and educational signage; sensitive stormwater management; and step-down access to the creek.

The project was partially funded by a \$150,000 grant from the Community Conservation Partnership Program administered by the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), Bureau of Recreation and Conservation. Additional funding was provided by the Bucks County Municipal Open Space Program and private donations.

In October 2017, the Newtown Creek Coalition also sponsored a community planting of native trees, shrubs, and grasses along the west bank. That project was funded by the TreeVitalize Watersheds Grant program and the Plant One Million campaign, managed by the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, with funding from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's Growing Greener program.

The borough continues to rank natural resource protection and management as a high priority. Projects such as the TreeVitalize program, Newtown Common and Creek Restoration project, and continued open space preservation efforts all serve as tools in effectively managing and preserving natural resources in the borough.

***Invasive Species*** are plants or animals that are not native to a particular area but have been introduced to that area typically through human actions, intentional or unintentional, and can cause significant damage to the local environment. When new species are brought into a habitat, they can disrupt the local ecosystem by eating the native species, or out compete native plants and animals for other natural resources.

Often an invasive species can spread very quickly, as it may not have any natural predators in the new environment to keep its growth in check. When this happens, the native species die off and it can have impacts on all levels of the food chain and ecological cycle. This not only damages the natural environment but can be a threat to the welfare of a community as well.

Invasive species can be noxious weeds, fungi, insects, fish, and other plants or animals. Some common examples of invasive species include kudzu, gypsy moth, Dutch elm disease, European water chestnut, Japanese knotweed, thistles, and Japanese beetles. Once an invasive species is present in a new environment, it can be very difficult to remove or control.

There are two recent invasive species that are having a significant impact on Bucks County, the emerald ash borer, and the spotted lanternfly. As the name implies, the emerald ash borer feeds on the leaves of the ash trees, and its larvae feed on its inner bark. This results in these beetles killing many of the ash trees on which they feed. Green ash and black ash trees are the preferred host of the beetles, but they also feed on plant larvae in white ash trees, all three of which are common species in Pennsylvania. The loss of these ash trees can cause significant damage to the ecosystem.

The borough's SALDO does not currently address the types of trees allowed to be planted as street trees and for buffer plantings. Property owners with ash trees would have the burden and expense of treating and/or removing and replacing these trees once they become infested, or these trees may not be replaced at all. Therefore, consideration should be given to including a tree list to determine the allowable tree species in the borough's SALDO. The PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) website contains a list of trees, shrubs, vines, grasses, herbs, and aquatic plants that DCNR has deemed to be invasive on state lands. Homeowners can find fact sheets to help identify, treat, and protect their property from these invasive species by visiting <https://www.dcnr.pa.gov/Conservation/WildPlants/InvasivePlants>.

Another species causing damage in Bucks County and nearby areas is the spotted lanternfly. The spotted lanternfly can potentially severely impact industries such as fruit growing and logging. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has awarded Pennsylvania with over \$5 million dollars in funds since 2014 to aid in the attempts to control and mitigate the spotted lanternfly. The state has contributed millions in additional funds as well. The funds are being used to provide public education and outreach about the issue, conduct research to learn about the species and its spread in the state, and to determine the most effective means of containing the spread and treating effected areas. These measures include spraying insecticides and removing certain trees along transportation corridors and truck stops, where the risk of insects or eggs spreading by "hitch-hiking" on vehicles is high. The Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), an invasive species itself, is a preferred habitat and serves as a sanctuary for the spotted lanternfly and should be included as a species to look for along these transportation corridors.

Bucks County, along with 44 other counties in Pennsylvania, are all currently under quarantine by the State Department of Agriculture to prevent the spread of this pest. Under the quarantine, wood products or vegetation that might contain spotted lanternflies are not permitted to be transported out of the quarantine zone. Items such as brush, packing material, firewood, tree parts, and plants are required to have been inspected and certified before they are transported. However, enforcement of this quarantine is limited, much of the inspections occurs at the level of larger quantities of commercial goods being shipped in bulk. Individual items or people travelling are generally not inspected.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### SURFACE WATER

Listed below are actions that should be taken to protect water resources in the borough. While most will require the support of the borough council and other public agencies, they create opportunity for involvement by community groups and other volunteers.

- Pursue conservation action items outlined in the *Upper and Middle Neshaminy Creek River Conservation Plan (RCP)* prepared by the Delaware River Keeper Network (2003).
- Pursue planning recommendations outlined in the *Newtown Creek Coalition, Planning Recommendations & Report* (2010).
- Pursue conservation action items outlined in the *Newtown Creek Watershed Conservation Plan*, prepared by the Heritage Conservancy (2011).
- Continue to investigate opportunities for making Newtown Creek more accessible and usable to the public.
- Continue to support efforts to improve conditions along Newtown Creek, including a visual assessment to identify areas of the creek in need of mitigation and repair.
- Continue to review subdivision and land development plans with respect to ensuring the protection of Newtown Creek and Old Skunky.
- Incorporate recommendations from the Old Skunky engineering study into plans and processes for cleanup and maintenance of Old Skunky.
- Develop strategies to incorporate green infrastructure throughout the borough for the purpose of lessening the burden on surface waters to effectively manage the borough's stormwater.

### TREES

The measures listed below should be implemented to provide greater protection of trees and woodlands and help establish greener infrastructure.

- Amend the zoning ordinance to incorporate provisions for planting native plant species and restricting invasive exotic plant species.
- When complete, implement the updated Master Street Tree Plan. The borough should review the planting recommendations in the plan to ensure a diversity tree species. To guard against the possibility of large-scale devastation by both native and introduced insect pests and diseases, no single species should account for more than 10 percent of the total tree population. The list of recommended trees should be updated to include only pest- and disease-resistant trees.

These additional recommendations for planting and caring for street trees should be incorporated into the Master Street Tree Plan:

- Establish a periodic schedule for conducting tree inventories, as tree conditions may change over time.
- Encourage the planting of street trees to replace those that die or must otherwise be removed.

## **OPEN SPACE AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

The recommended activities listed below are intended to support the borough's efforts to maximize its open space and resource management.

- Identify and acquire additional vulnerable natural resources for open space, passive recreation, and greenway corridors.
- Continue resource management efforts, including clean-ups, streambank stabilization of waterways, construction of green infrastructure, and planting of native species to enhance existing open space and natural resources.

## CHAPTER 4. NONRESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

This chapter analyzes commercial and economic activity in Newtown Borough. Understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the borough’s nonresidential land use base, which includes commercial retail, wholesale, and industrial activity, is important for making land use and infrastructure policy decisions. A market report and analysis, which details local retail and market conditions, supplements this chapter, and provides possible future avenues for economic development.

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

**PRINCIPLES:** Balance, Community

**FINDINGS:** Newtown Borough’s commercial core is focused primarily along State Street, paralleling Sycamore Street in Newtown Township. Businesses in this area include many small shops, restaurants, and offices. Survey results showed that business owners think the biggest challenges they face include competition with nearby communities, attracting new and different types of business, and marketing/attracting a new customer base. The borough plans to enhance the commercial core by preserving the community’s character, mixing uses, enhancing the streetscapes and gateways, incorporating design guidelines, providing adequate parking and street trees, and ensuring property maintenance throughout the nonresidential districts of the borough.

### COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

- 36 percent of respondents indicated “trees, streetscape, and landscape” as one of the top five issues they would like to see better addressed in the borough.
- A majority of respondents (87 percent) indicated they get goods and services in the borough.
  - 86 percent indicated they get goods and services in Newtown Township
  - 78 percent indicated they get goods and services online
  - 42 percent indicated they get goods and services at the Oxford Valley Mall

### BUSINESS SURVEY RESULTS

- When asked what the three biggest challenges Newtown Borough will face in the next three years (from a business perspective) the most recorded answers in the survey were:
  - Maintaining competitiveness with nearby communities
  - Attracting new and different types of business
  - Marketing and attracting a new customer base
- The top five most important things Newtown Borough could do to improve the ability to operate a successful business in the borough, as recorded by the respondents includes:
  - Providing customer parking
  - Beautify street-plantings, street cleaning, lighting
  - Marketing coordination
  - Better coordination with the borough government
  - Traffic calming
- 92 percent of businesses that responded rated the climate for doing business in the borough as fair or good.

## NONRESIDENTIAL COMPOSITION

Newtown Borough's commercial core is focused primarily along State Street, paralleling Sycamore Street, in Newtown Township. Businesses in this area include many small shops, restaurants, and offices. Further along South State Street are professional offices and The Stocking Works office complex. Chapter 14: Land Use, will include more discussion on the current layout of the borough.

Other commercial and industrial areas in the borough include Washington Avenue, South Lincoln Avenue, East Centre Avenue, and Penn Street, which has a small commercial business and the borough's sole industrial use.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The goal for economic development within the borough is to sustain and enhance economic vitality, while maintaining small-town character and uniqueness. Although the borough is tied to the regional economy through residents' employment and spending patterns, it is the borough's central business district along State Street that contributes most directly to the local economy.

### BUSINESS SURVEY

A business survey was sent to each business owner as part of this comprehensive plan update. Business owner respondents predominantly rated the climate for doing business in the borough as fair or good. However, the biggest challenges business owners think they face include maintaining competitiveness with nearby communities, attracting new and different types of business, and marketing/attracting a new customer base. These top priorities have changed since the 2010 update of the plan where businesses surveyed listed parking adequacy and traffic control as their greatest concerns.

When asked to list the five most important things Newtown Borough could do to improve their ability to operate a successful business, business owners chose customer parking, beautifying streets, marketing coordination, traffic calming, and better coordination with borough government. The full results from the surveys sent to Newtown residents and businesses for the comprehensive plan update can be found on the borough's website at: [www.boroughofnewtown.com/plans-studies](http://www.boroughofnewtown.com/plans-studies).

### MARKET ANALYSIS

Maintaining competitiveness, attracting new and different types of business, and marketing to a new customer base are key priorities identified by the business community. Maintaining a successful business district requires an approach that understands the local market and business environment, engages business owners and residents, and builds on a community's strengths. An analysis of market conditions can provide insights into consumer makeup, spending habits, and purchasing power.

Evaluating the local retail market is useful to identify potential business opportunities in the retail sector. The assessment of local market conditions for Newtown Borough begins by gathering relevant population, household, and other demographic data. By drawing on available census and analytic tools, the boundaries of the greater Newtown market area can be based on drive times and demographic trends summarized using the 2020 and 2025 time periods. Such tools are used to determine consumer expenditures within the market, understand which market segment these consumers occupy, and show areas of potential economic opportunity.

The following analysis takes a closer look at Newtown’s business environment, including market demographics, consumer spending potential, and marketplace profile. This data can be the basis of a coordinated marketing plan that can help Newtown’s business district reach target markets and inform potential customers of the goods, services, and amenities offered by the district.

### MARKET BOUNDARIES

Using the ESRI Business Analyst<sup>8</sup> tool, the boundaries of the Newtown Area Market are divided into 0-5, 0-10, and 0-15-minute drive times<sup>9</sup> from the center of the business district. Based on these boundaries, a demographic and market analysis can be developed to show Newtown’s potential market (See Figure 1).

### MARKET DEMOGRAPHICS

Market demographics were determined for Newtown Borough based on the three drive times. Demographics and market trends include:

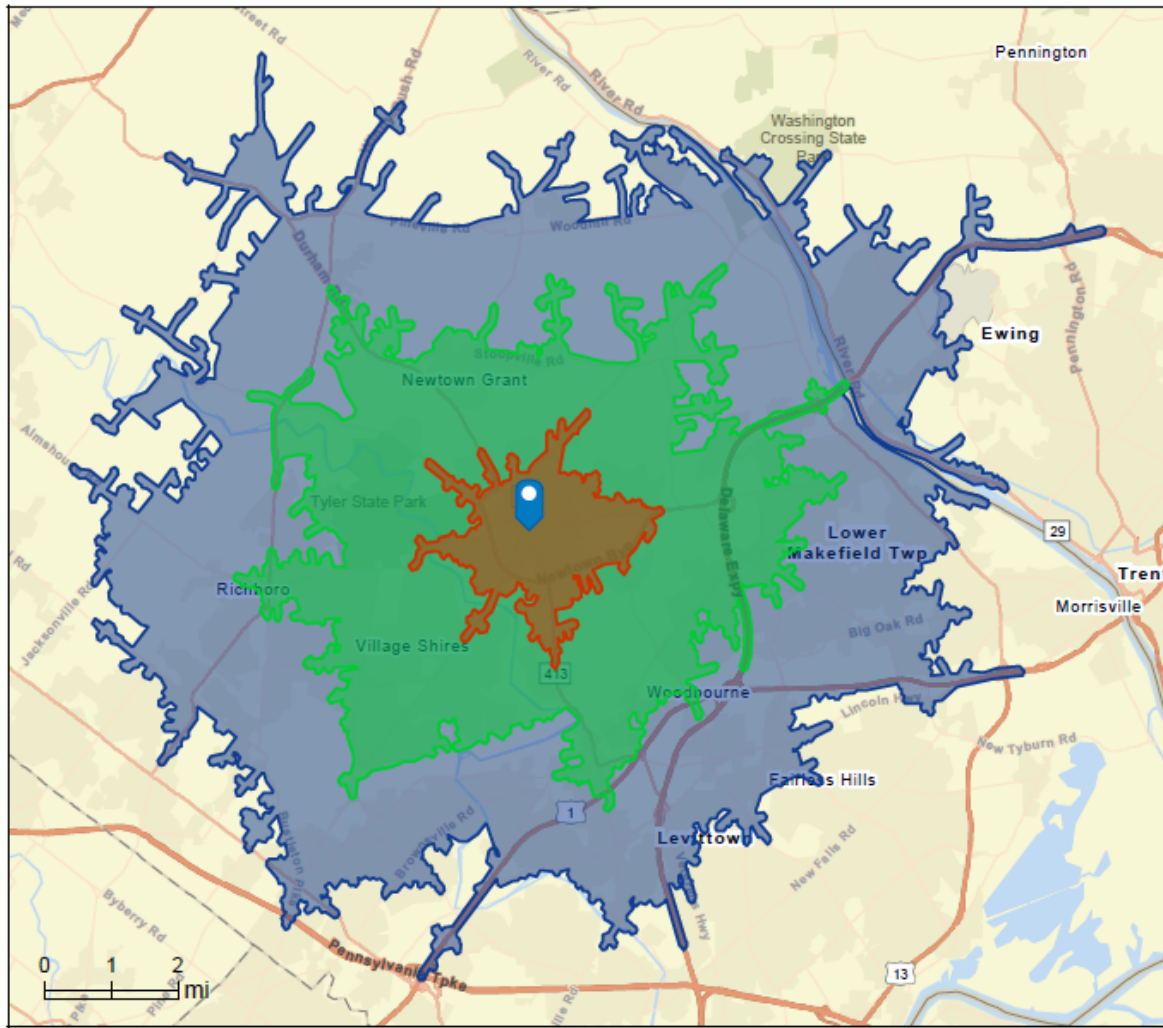
- 10,207 people live within 0-5-minute drive-time market, 63,075 within a 0-10-minute drive-time market, and 162,213 within a 0-15-minute drive-time market.
- Population in the three drive-time categories will increase slightly through to the year 2025.
- Average household size in the 0-5-minute category is very low at 2.19 persons per household. Average household sizes in the 0-10-minute and 0-15-minute category are 2.52 and 2.59 persons, respectively. Household sizes have decreased in recent years due to an aging population, a decline in the birth rate, and more singles living alone.
- Over 65 percent of households in the 0-5-minute drive-time market are family households, compared to 72.4 percent in the 0-10-minute drive-time market and 74.9 percent in the 0-15-minute drive-time market.
- Households within all three markets have a median household income of over \$110,000. About one-quarter of households earn over \$200,000 a year.
- The three market areas also have similar median ages: in 2020 the median age was 46.6, 45.8, and 45.5 years for the 0-5-minute, 0-10-minute, and 0-15-minute drive-times, respectively.
- Among residents over the age of 25 within a 5-minute drive-time, 66.8 percent have a bachelor’s or graduate/professional degree. Within a 10-minute drive-time, 62.5 percent of residents over the age of 25 have a bachelor’s or graduate/professional degree. Within a 15-minute drive-time 55.6 percent of residents have a bachelor’s or graduate/professional degree.
- The percentage of white-collar, services, and blue-collar occupations is similar for the three market areas. White-collar occupations make up 80 percent of the occupations 0-15-minute market and services and blue-collar occupations comprise 8.9 and 11.7 percent, respectively.
- Median home value of owner-occupied housing units reached \$418,967 in the 5-minute drive-time market, \$424,802 in the 10-minute drive-time market, and \$399,351 in the 15-minute drive-time market.

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<sup>8</sup> ESRI Business Analyst is a web-based mapping and analytic tool that allows for analysis of demographic, economic, education, and business data.

<sup>9</sup> Drive time intervals are areas defined by distance that can be driven away from a specific location within a specified time (in minutes) assuming posted speed limits for the road network. Barriers such as mountains, rivers, bridges, or highways under normal traffic conditions are taken into account when establishing the boundaries.

Figure 1. Newtown Borough Market Area – 5-, 10-, and 15-Minute Drive Times



Source: ESRI Business Analyst, 2021.

## RETAIL GOODS AND EXPENDITURES

A Spending Potential Index (SPI) was developed from the ESRI Business Analyst and represents the amount spent for a product or service relative to a national average of 100. Consumer spending data are derived from the 2017 and 2018 Consumer Expenditure Surveys from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The Spending Potential Index shows a significant amount spent on consumer spending categories compared to the national average. The spending index is similar in the three market areas in most retail and service expenditure categories. However, overall spending is greatest in the larger market area of the 0-15-minute drive time. Within the 15-minute drive-time market, potential spending on retail goods and services include:

- Apparel and Services – SPI 162, average consumer spending \$3,465
- Entertainment and Recreation – Fees and Admissions, SPI 165, average consumer spending \$5,362
- Food – Food at Home, SPI 158, average consumer spending \$8,430
- Food – Food Away from Home, SPI 160, average consumer spending \$6,021
- Household Furnishings and Equipment – Furniture, SPI 166, average consumer spending \$3,637
- Shelter – SPI 168, average consumer spending \$32,469

## REACHING POTENTIAL MARKETS

Newtown Borough's business district has a solid business environment with a sizable upscale population within 15-minute driving distance. The typical area resident is educated, middle-aged, gainfully employed in a white-collar profession, owns a home valued above the median price for the region, and spends more than the national average on a variety of consumer spending categories.

The central business district's walkable, tree-lined streets and historic setting present a unique and authentic experience for today's discriminating shoppers. The mix of businesses in the downtown area reflect an upscale shopping experience: sit-down restaurants, spa and personal services, coffee shops, and boutique retail shops. The Newtown Theatre serves as an arts and cultural destination that draws visitors from the region.

Many of the stores and businesses serving day-to-day needs of borough residents have relocated within the shopping centers in the area. Responses from the survey showed that while residents are continuing to shop in the borough, they are also shopping outside of the borough in Newtown Township and the surrounding areas, both in Bucks County and various shopping centers in New Jersey.

However, for the purposes of increasing economic activity in the borough, it is most important that the borough not limit its focus to the local market. Anecdotally, some of the more unique and upscale businesses in the district do attract a clientele from outside the borough's market boundaries. Successful shopping districts draw upon large regional markets, and Newtown Borough should think no differently. The process of reaching markets outside of the borough's current boundaries generally centers upon several coordinated activities:

**Promotion and marketing** is the process of informing target markets of the goods, services, and amenities that a business district offers. Without a coordinated marketing plan and subsequent campaign, lucrative target markets with significant purchasing power outside of Newtown's current market area will remain untapped.

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

Marketing can be carried out by means of retail promotions, image-building promotions, and special events. Retail promotions typically involve sales or some other customer-oriented event. Retail promotions are designed to produce immediate sales and are often store-based rather than district-wide.

**Image-building promotions** are public relations campaigns aimed at enhancing a commercial district's overall image. Image-building promotions help establish a marketing identity and are a means for promoting economic development successes. Publicity campaigns should include press releases and outreach designed to encourage write-ups in local newspapers and news-oriented websites.

**Special events**, such as festivals, are designed to produce eventual sales and establish a long-term relationship with the community and customer base. For example, a common marketing tactic employed by many business districts are festivals promoting a local cultural event. Such events include food festivals, arts and crafts festivals, and car shows. Many communities run weekly farmers markets and summer concerts that also serve to support long-term sales. In Newtown Borough, the Newtown Business Association runs a yearly car show. "Midnight Madness," is a promotional retail event during the holiday shopping season. The Newtown Historic Association sponsors Market Day, which is an annual outdoor event that celebrates colonial traditions and features crafters; colonial-era demonstrations, reenactments, and activities; farm stands; and food from local restaurants.

A marketing plan must understand the demographics and preferences of the target market, how the message will be delivered, and the stores and amenities that will bring the target market to the business district. Further detailed analysis of the regional market will be required to determine both the market targeted and the message delivered. Marketing plans must also be coordinated with business owners and retail management companies to ensure amenities and image is consistent with the marketing efforts of the borough as a whole.

The borough utilizes the work of the Newtown Business Association to assist in the marketing efforts of borough businesses. The Newtown Business Association helps member businesses in both the borough and Newtown Township by promoting them primarily through its community guide and business directory, which is distributed throughout the greater Newtown area.

## COMPLEMENTARY STRATEGIES

In addition to developing a marketing plan, borough officials and other stakeholders in the business district can take other, complementary actions to promote its continued economic vitality.

### Organization

Organizational activities are critical to the success of any downtown. While many groups and individuals are currently involved in the marketing of the district and maintaining its character, including business owners, the Newtown Business Association, the Newtown Historic Association, and borough officials, no one group has sole responsibility for the improvement of the business district.

Since the Newtown Borough business district and Newtown Township's business district share both physical proximity and a common market area, consideration should also be given to linking marketing and organization efforts. Customers are not likely to distinguish the two areas and a coordinated effort will enhance future economic development outcomes.

A single group with sole responsibility for the district’s improvements, such as a non-profit organization or main street manager can:

- act as a champion for the district and its vision
- identify projects and opportunities
- solicit memberships and fundraise
- engage property and business owners to understand their needs (e.g., helping to lower business costs) and develop public-private partnerships
- promote an identity of the business district and attract stores that fit in
- develop and coordinate marketing strategies and efforts, including social media campaigns
- secure funding for operating costs and projects

The organizing entity can maintain interest and momentum to ensure that Newtown Borough is kept in the minds of potential shoppers and visitors. Funding, project-timing, periodic events that raise the profile of the district, and consistent marketing are critical to a district’s success.

### **National Main Street Center**

The National Main Street Center was established as a program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 1980 to address the myriad issues facing older and historic downtowns during that time. Working with a nationwide network of coordinating programs and local communities, Main Street has helped over 2,000 communities across the country bring economic vitality back downtown, while celebrating their historic character, and bringing communities together.

The Pennsylvania Downtown Center (PDC) serves as the official State Coordinating Program for Main Street, while the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) provides funding and management of Main Street in Pennsylvania. Main Street designation by the DCED (and access to funding under the program) requires the hiring of a full-time main street manager for a period of five years. The Pennsylvania Downtown Center provides outreach, technical assistance, and educational services to assist communities in revitalizing their central business districts and surrounding residential neighborhoods.

### **Business Recruitment**

Business recruitment is the process of attracting new and appropriate businesses to Newtown’s business district. Such efforts should not focus on national chains, as Newtown Borough’s downtown has positioned itself as a diverse and unique commercial district. A future organizing entity will have the opportunity to work with, and develop, local businesses to form a marketable stable of stores that offer a different way of engaging the customer. This can include offering evening hours, developing attractive and engaging store design, providing outdoor seating, providing unique or hard-to-find products, and offering more personal customer service. A unique base of retail stores that caters to a more discerning customer base, for instance, can help establish some of the necessary “buzz” that will get people from outside Newtown’s current market area interested in visiting.

## Placemaking

Placemaking is the process of creating quality places in which people want to live, work, play, and learn. Ensuring Newtown's sense of place and vibrancy is a key part of economic development. Placemaking efforts can involve:

- preserving community character
- permitting and preserving mixed-use development in high activity areas
- improving borough streetscapes and gateways
- preservation of local architecture, history, and culture
- ensuring the maintenance and health of the boroughs' street tree canopy
- consistent property maintenance and code enforcement
- providing appropriate zoning standards for nonresidential uses throughout the borough

## Preserving Community Character

Survey results showed that walkability, location, small-town living, historic character, and a sense of community are among the top reasons residents choose to live in the borough. By incorporating placemaking techniques and using State Street as a community center rather than just a commercial hub, the borough can enhance the sense of community.

Changes such as providing more outdoor seating and dining opportunities, creating usable public space, or holding more community events on State Street can enhance the sense of community for residents, while also highlighting local businesses in the borough. Many towns closed their main streets during the pandemic to allow expanded outdoor dining, allowing a relaxed, community atmosphere that supports restaurants. The borough hopes to take some of these practices and create long lasting, positive changes to enhance the walkability and community feel along State Street.

## Mixing Uses

Mixed uses in the commercial core contribute to economic vitality and are in keeping with borough history and architecture. A residential component within the district should be preserved, as it contributes to the market for downtown businesses and diversifies the housing stock. In addition to stores, the business district should continue to encompass service firms, professional offices, and housing in spaces above street level.

## Streetscapes and Gateways

The visual appeal of the borough is an important aspect of both economic and community development, and is a strong tool in creating a community space for the residents of the borough. This lies not only in the historic buildings, but the greenery, street furniture, and other elements that showcase superbly preserved homes and shops. These are the components of streetscapes, the



*State Street Sidewalk*

sweeping visual impression made by the built and natural features that line borough street fronts. Improving streetscapes includes enhancing the appearance of buildings, streetlights, window displays, parking areas, signs, sidewalks, benches, landscaping, trash receptacles, utility poles and lines, graphics, and the entrances to the business district. Design in the area should recognize existing desirable physical elements, be compatible with the area's historic character, and be unified.

Gateways are the major entrance points to the borough. The gateways to the borough are at both ends of State Street, both ends of Washington Avenue, Centre Avenue, and Jefferson Street. The entrances of primary concern are at South State Street, Washington Avenue, and Centre Avenue, as they are the most heavily traveled and mark the core of the historic district and central business district.

The borough should continue its work with property owners to enhance the entrances and commercial areas along State Street through coordinated landscaping, signage, lighting, street amenities, paving materials, design of site improvements, building facades, and window displays. The installation of distinctive, appropriate signage marking each gateway would be a particularly desirable addition.

Since the 2010 plan, the borough has updated the signage regulations in the zoning ordinance. Standards for the area, height, and location of signs are included in the ordinance in addition to the requirement for a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) to be obtained before placing signs within the historic district. These regulations have been put in place with the goal of maintaining and improving the streetscape of the borough, and can help standardize signage in the gateways as people enter the borough.

A streetscape improvement project for the block of State Street between Centre and Washington Avenues was completed in 2007. The project, funded largely by a grant from the state Department of Community and Economic Development, involved installation of street amenities, streetlights, sidewalks and curbing, as well as tree replacement. The borough would like to extend the project to neighboring north and south blocks of State Street, as funding permits.

### Design Guidelines

The borough has a set of design guidelines that apply to all signs, new construction, alteration of existing buildings, and demolition of any structure in the historic district visible from any public way. The guidelines are an integral part of the building permit and subdivision review process, which includes obtaining a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Historic Architectural Review Board for activities within the historic district. Chapter 5: Historic Preservation, details overarching considerations, strategies, and recommendations for historic preservation.

To supplement its architectural design guidelines, the borough should work to establish guidelines for the type and placement of street furnishings, where appropriate to maintain the character of the borough. Street furnishings include amenities such as benches, trash receptacles, lampposts, kiosks, pavers, and planters.

### Parking

Business owners cited parking for both employees and customers as among the biggest challenges for businesses in the borough and cited it as among the most important improvements the borough could make to improve business. Indeed, Chapter 9: Transportation and Circulation, notes that future land development in areas having a shortage of parking may exacerbate parking deficiencies. Arrangements such as shared parking, valet parking, and connections to existing parking areas should be evaluated as new land development is proposed.

The Transportation and Circulation chapter recommends that the borough conduct an updated parking study to assess the inventory and usage of parking spaces for businesses in the downtown commercial area. A parking study for the borough was last completed in 1990. An updated study should assess the current inventory of parking spaces and their use, and reconsider previous recommendations, such as instituting or reducing time limits and providing short-term parking in high turnover business areas.

### Street Trees

The Shade Tree Commission maintains a master tree inventory, which is being updated. The components of the plan update will include: inventory and categorization of existing trees within the borough; consideration of the roles trees should play in traffic calming, shading sidewalks and streets, and enhancing streetscapes; identification of areas for planting, care, and removal of trees; guidelines for characteristics and placement of new trees; consideration of tree hardiness; and avoidance of invasive species.

The borough should continue to require developers to plant street trees in accordance with the requirements of its SALDO. The borough should also continue its tree-planting efforts, to retain its status as a “Tree City USA.” Protection and regulation of street trees are discussed in Chapter 3: Natural Resources Management.

### Property Maintenance

The borough should encourage property owners to maintain and improve their properties. Where the rear of commercial properties face, or abut, residential properties, attention should be paid to the appearance of the commercial property and its impact on residences. The borough should also ensure code enforcement efforts remain effective at addressing substandard conditions that would create a negative perception of the commercial core.

### Zoning

Zoning is a key aspect of placemaking, as it largely determines where nonresidential uses will be located and at what level of intensity they may be developed. The borough’s zoning ordinance permits a wide range of commercial, industrial, and institutional uses. While redevelopment taking place in the borough over the past few years has seen the conversion of industrial lands into commercial and residential uses, the borough will continue to zone for industrial use in appropriate locations. Planning for possible transition in use or ownership of specific nonresidential parcels is further considered in Chapter 14: Land Use.

Given the borough’s mix of uses and intensities, the zoning ordinance contains several different zoning districts permitting nonresidential uses:

**Borough Residential District-4 (BR-4)** – The purpose of the BR-4 district is to recognize existing multifamily and mixed-use development and to set standards for new development that reflect the existing character of the borough’s multifamily development, with appropriate provisions for office uses.

**Borough Professional Service District (BPS)** – The purpose of the Borough Professional Service District is to regulate the limited office uses along Washington Avenue adjacent to the BR-1 district.

**Town Center (TC)** – The purpose of the TC District is to allow for growth and flexibility in the use and reuse of the commercial core along State Street. Primary uses are residences, dwellings in combination with businesses, and a variety of retail, service, office, restaurants, and recreational uses.

**Village Conservation (V-1)** – The purpose of the Village Conservation District (V-1) is to preserve, maintain, and encourage the existence, feel, and intensity of the existing limited nonresidential and professional uses, while preserving the residential uses in the area along State Street between Greene Street and Jefferson Street.

**Village Gateway (V-2)** – The purpose of the Village Gateway District (V-2) is to preserve, maintain, and encourage the existence, feel, and intensity of the existing limited nonresidential and professional uses while preserving the residential uses in the area along State Street between Penn Street and Chancellor Street.

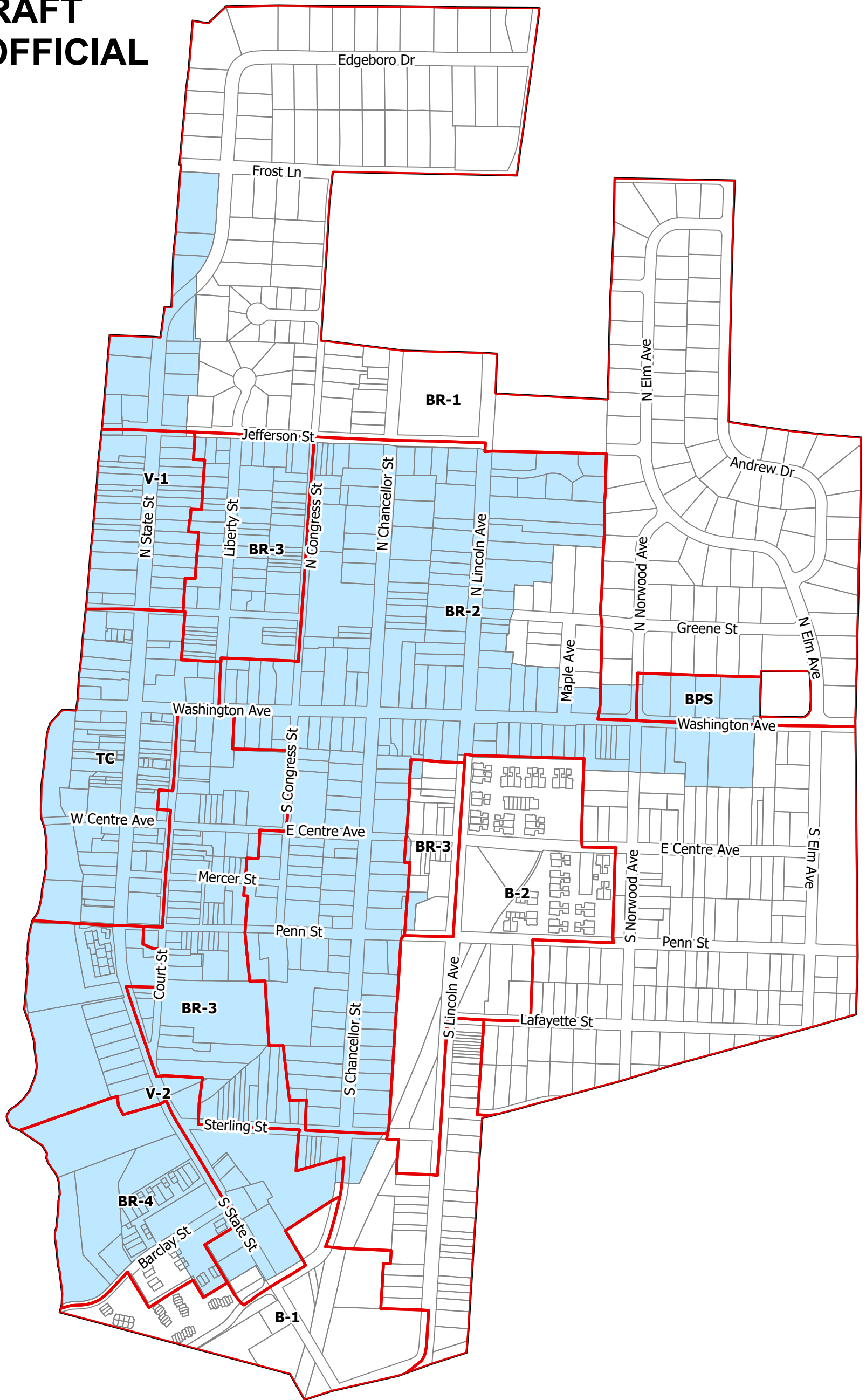
**Business Gateway (B-1)** – The purpose of the Business Gateway District is to allow for industrial, commercial, and residential uses to support the existing pattern of development. Uses should maintain the same scale and intensity of current development and allow for compatible co-existence of residential and nonresidential uses.



**Borough Mixed-Use (B-2)** – To allow for the continuation of existing industrial uses and for the transition to mixed-use development, allowing for limited types of residential and nonresidential uses.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop a coordinated and unified marketing plan that understands the demographics and preferences of the target market, how the message will be delivered, and the stores and amenities that will bring the target market to the business district.
- Help create, or repurpose, an organizing entity that can be solely responsible for the improvement of the district and link marketing and organization efforts with Newtown Township's business district.
- Continue to hold and promote special events on State Street to bring more attention to the area.
- Ensure a mix of retail stores in keeping with the identity and marketing efforts of the business district.
- Sponsor promotional activities that create a consistent, positive image for the downtown, consistent with community characteristics and history.
- Provide more outdoor dining and seating opportunities for businesses on State Street and ensure useable public and semi-public space. Consider special events specifically featuring street closures and expanded outdoor dining.
- Ensure a mix of uses in the district, including residences and professional offices in spaces above street level.
- Promote coordinated improvements at borough gateways, including landscaping, street amenities, pavers, storefronts, and signage. Establish guidelines for the type and placement of street furnishings, where appropriate, to maintain the character of the borough.
- Conduct a parking study to update the parking space inventory and associated usage; prepare and implement a parking plan utilizing best practices to address local parking issues.
- Promote the maintenance and planting of street trees in accordance with SALDO standards and the borough's street tree plan.
- Encourage property owners to maintain and improve their properties and ensure code enforcement efforts remain effective at addressing substandard conditions that would create a negative perception of the commercial core.
- Ensure the borough zoning ordinance provides for nonresidential uses at the appropriate location and intensity.
- Support multi-modal mobility and access throughout business district.

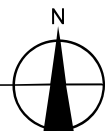
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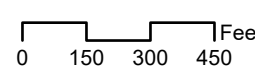


 Zoning	 Newtown Borough Historic District
BR-1	Borough Residential
BR-2	Borough Residential
BR-3	Borough Residential
BR-4	Borough Residential
B-1	Business Gateway
B-2	Business/Mixed Uses
BPS	Borough Professional Services
TC	Town Center
V-1	Village Conservation
V-2	Village Gateway

## Map 1. Zoning

Newtown Borough  
Comprehensive Plan Update  
2022







## CHAPTER 5. HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Historic preservation is the process of maintaining and enhancing historically significant parts of a community, from individual buildings to entire neighborhoods. It involves identifying and celebrating a community's history to provide a better understanding of its past and a context for future decision-making. It is an inherently sustainable activity that maximizes the use of existing materials and infrastructure, reduces waste, and preserves the historic character of older places. By preserving historic structures, we can share the very spaces and environments in which the generations before us have lived. Cultural and historic resources provide a tangible connection to the past and are crucial in creating a sense of time and place by understanding settlement patterns and the heritage of a community.

In addition to solidifying a community's past, preservation can strengthen a community's future by boosting the economy and quality of life. Historic resources create vibrant, cultural destinations that can act as centerpieces of community life. Preservation of Newtown Borough's historic core is a key factor in the quality of community life and the desirability of residential and commercial real estate. The borough's historic landscape gives the borough a unique and valuable heritage and a sense of place that should continue to be preserved. This chapter describes the borough's historic resources that add value to the community, outlines steps that have been taken to preserve it, and recommends continuing actions in support of historic preservation.

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

**PRINCIPLES:** History, Community

**FINDINGS:** Newtown Borough has numerous historic resources, including a historic district that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The historic district is regulated by an ordinance and with counsel from the Historical Architectural Review Board (HARB). The borough also has an active and involved historical association which promotes historic resources through walking tours and a historic marker program.

### COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

- 60 percent of respondents listed Historic Character as a reason for choosing to live in Newtown Borough.
- 50 percent of respondents listed Historic Preservation as one of the top five issues they would like to be better addressed in the borough.
- Approximately 30 percent of respondents believe the borough's historic district should be expanded to include additional areas with older homes, while 36 percent of respondents believe the historic district should not be expanded, and 34 percent of respondents were unsure.

### NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the nation's cultural resources, providing recognition that buildings, structures, or districts have historic, architectural, or archeological significance. The register was established by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and is maintained by the National Park Service. The National Register is a nationwide program to coordinate and support public

and private efforts to identify and recognize resources of significance in American history, architecture, engineering, and culture. A resource that is worthy of preserving can be defined as a historic building, structure, district, landscape, site, or object. To be considered eligible for the National Register the resource needs to be at least 50 years old or older and have significance to historic events or persons, architecture, engineering, or archaeology, at the national, state, or local level. The historic resource must also reflect the significance of the property through retention of historic integrity. The resource must look like when it was constructed. A historic resource should retain historic integrity in location, design, setting, material, feeling, workmanship, and association.

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act requires federal agencies to consider the effect of their undertakings on historic resources that are listed or eligible for listing on the National Register. Federal undertakings include projects with direct or indirect funding, or that require a federal license or a federal permit. Sale of a historic property from federal ownership is also, by definition, a federal undertaking. Similarly, the State History Code requires state agencies to consider the impact of their projects on historic properties.

The National Register does not limit the rights of private property owners to alter or convey their property. That being the case, regulations to protect historic properties need to be adopted by local government.

The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) is the official history agency of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The PHMC is responsible for the collection, conservation, and interpretation of Pennsylvania's historic heritage. Heritage resources, as defined by the PHMC, are resources that are eligible for listing, or listed, in the National Register of Historic Places, as well as those identified as historic by the community based on age and local importance. The specific department within the PHMC that administers the federal historic preservation programs, as well as all official state historic preservation programs and activities is the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). These programs are the National Register nomination program, federal and state tax credit program, historic preservation grants, and other services. Every five years, the SHPO develops a statewide historic preservation plan that helps local governments to develop and implement their own historic preservation planning initiatives.

## HISTORIC RESOURCES IN NEWTOWN BOROUGH

### National Register of Historic Places

The borough contains four historic resources that have been identified and listed on the National Register of Historic Places due to their national significance.

**Newtown Friends Meetinghouse and Cemetery** – This historic Quaker meetinghouse and cemetery was built in 1817. It was added to the National Register on July 21, 1977.

**Half-Moon Inn** – The Half-Moon Inn, previously known as the Court Inn, is located at the intersection of Court Street and Centre Avenue. Built in 1733, it was a popular gathering place when the borough acted as the county seat. The building is now headquarters of the Newtown Historic Association and is open as a local history museum. The building was added to the National Register on December 6, 1977.

**Newtown Borough Historic District** – The borough's Historic District encompasses approximately 400 buildings, covering roughly two-thirds of the borough. The heart of the district is roughly bounded by State, Jefferson, and Barclay Streets and Lincoln Avenue, with some extensions into outlying blocks. The

Newtown Borough Historic District was created in March 1969, extended in 1976 and 1985, and placed on the National Register of Historic Places in October 1986. The borough subsequently enacted a Historic District ordinance to define the Historic District boundaries and set administrative and regulatory procedures for enforcing the ordinance, as authorized under Act 167 of 1961, the State’s Historic District Act. On December 17, 1979, part of Sycamore Street, in Newtown Township, was added to Newtown Borough’s historic district.

**Newtown Creek Bridge** – A historic stone arch bridge that crosses Newtown Creek. The bridge was constructed in 1796 and modified in 1875. It was added to the National Register on June 22, 1988.

**Historic Inns and Taverns**

Inns have been important structures in the past, and still are today. Restaurants and taprooms within the borough continue a tradition of public houses and gathering places that predate the Revolutionary War. Newtown Borough contains six resources that were once historical inns and taverns that fostered community life in the borough.

**Brick Hotel** – In 1764, a one-story residence was enlarged into the brick building that is now known as the Brick Hotel; it is located at the intersection of State Street and Washington Avenue. It was converted to a tavern in 1779. It was converted to a hotel in 1828 by Joseph Archambault, who added the two-story brick addition and employed Edward Hicks to paint a tavern sign for the inn. Archambault lived in the borough and his private residence was used during the Civil War as a station in the underground railroad. The Brick Hotel has been a landmark in Newtown as a tavern, hotel, and restaurant over the years and continues today.

**Temperance House** – The original portion of the current Temperance House along State Street just south of Washington Avenue was built in 1772 and was used as a tavern and another section as a schoolhouse. The tavern/restaurant remains a popular spot today.



*Temperance House*

**White Hall Hotel** – Along State Street just north of Penn Street, became a tavern in 1852. In 1979 the inn was gutted by a fire but was restored back to its 1890’s facade. White Hall was converted into commercial and office space and has since been converted into commercial and residential space.

**The Bird in Hand** – Along South State Street, just north of Mercer Street, The Bird in Hand, formerly known as the “Red Lyon Inn” and “Old Frame House,” began as a tavern around 1727 and was the center of activity in the borough for over 125 years, housing Newtown’s first post office and the Library Company. During World War II, the historic house was headquarters for the Local Selective Service Boards, Ration Board, and other civilian defense agencies. The site is now two independent office spaces.

**Half-Moon Inn** – Described under “National Register of Historic Places.”

**Justice’s House** – Located on South State Street, Justice’s House was built in 1768 as a tavern. It was used as a hotel until approximately 1800, when it became a private residence. During the Revolutionary War, Lord Sterling had his headquarters at Justice’s House after the Battle of Trenton.

These designated historic resources, along with other historic resources not yet recognized for their historic significance in Newtown, have value for many reasons. Historic resources give the borough a unique physical and cultural character. Older buildings frequently are built better, with a high degree of craftsmanship and quality materials that are rarely duplicated today. Each historic site represents a past investment for future generations. Maintenance and rehabilitation of historic buildings and neighborhoods also represent a savings in terms of energy and materials. Well-kept historic buildings contribute to the vitality of a community and tend to strengthen property values. Neglect or loss of historic buildings and structures would pose a significant threat to the identity of the borough. Historic preservation proves to foster civic pride and appreciation for historic value. Appropriate preservation and restoration projects can enhance and improve the surrounding non-historic property values.

### NEWTOWN BOROUGH HISTORIC DISTRICT ORDINANCE

The Newtown Borough Historic District was created by ordinance in 1969 and extended in 1976 and 1985. The historic district ordinance defines the boundaries of the historic district, establishes a historical architectural review board (HARB), and sets administrative and regulatory procedures for enforcement. The ordinance requires the review of building demolition permits for properties in the historic district by the Joint Historic Commission (JHC). The JHC then makes a recommendation to HARB. The HARB reviews these applications and provides feedback to the borough council to approve or deny a certificate of appropriateness for the work.

After the creation of the historic district by ordinance, the Newtown Borough Historic District was placed on the National Register in October 1986.

The Newtown Borough Historic District is a mix of residential, commercial, religious, and public buildings, ranging in architectural style from Colonial Revival, Gothic Revival, Victorian and Federal. The setbacks, arrangement, and design of houses, along with the overall setting, including shade trees and street trees, contribute to the village-like character of the district. The purpose of the Newtown Borough Historic District ordinance is to protect the unique architectural design of individual buildings and overall quality of the historic landscape.

## OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORIC DISTRICT

The Newtown Borough Historic District encompasses much of the borough. It is important to maintain the National Register status and integrity of the historic district. The initial historic district encompassed four general areas, based on architectural and historic features. As described in the application for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, those four areas include:

1. **Court Street Area** – As the original town core, this is the oldest section and contains the highest concentration of historic buildings. This area was essentially the Newtown of the 18th century. Many of the buildings in this area are townhouses that are built up to the sidewalks.
2. **State Street Section** – This area was originally part of the Newtown Common. The first buildings were built around 1800 and spaced at regular intervals along the street. The mid-to-late 19th century small-scale commercial buildings filled in space between the earlier structures, creating the commercial and professional section of Newtown.
3. **Washington Avenue Section** – This area made up the major residential area during the 19th and 20th centuries. This area consists of spacious Victorian houses, with many set back from the street with front yards, shaded by large trees.
4. **Penn-Congress-Chancellor Area** – This section boasts more of a varied architectural style. Buildings range from the early 19th century through the early 20th century. Houses and lots are generally smaller than in the Washington Avenue area.

The potential threats to historic buildings in the historic district include demolition, intrusions of new building into the historic district, incompatibility of infill construction and inappropriate renovations and rehabilitation work.

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN

Although historic resources are valuable, they are often taken for granted until they are endangered; preservation planning can lessen that threat. However, sound preservation planning must occur before historic elements are imperiled, as last-minute preservation responses are rarely effective in the long term. If historic resources are to be retained, it is essential to develop an effective local historic preservation program. Local historic resources, most of which are privately owned and maintained, are at risk unless residents are properly educated about the historic importance of their properties and are encouraged to cooperate with the borough's preservation goals.

A historic preservation plan is a document for conserving historic resources for future generations. The plan may recommend a historic resources survey be completed, contain an assessment of constraints and threats to preservation of resources, and have goals, objectives, and implementation strategies. The plan is typically a separate stand-alone document. The plan is best developed by a consultant with experience in historic preservation planning. Grants may be available from the Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office to assist with funding preparation of a historic preservation plan. Historic preservation plans are typically adopted by the governing body by means of a resolution and then implemented through programs, policies, and regulations.

This chapter does not serve as an historic preservation plan but describes the components of such a plan. The first step in preparing a plan is to determine what resources exist through updating the historic resources survey.

### **HISTORIC RESOURCES SURVEY**

Last completed by the borough in 1999, the foundation of any historic preservation plan is the historic resources survey. A historic resources survey is more than a listing of historic buildings and places. It is a process of identifying and gathering data on historic resources. There are two types of historic resources surveys; evaluation surveys and reconnaissance level surveys.

An evaluation survey is conducted on a historic resource that has potential for listing on the National Register. The property is subject to intense historic research and architectural analysis. A form is prepared that is provided by the SHPO. The SHPO reviews the form and determines if the historic resource is eligible for listing on the National Register.

A reconnaissance level historic resources survey involves first examining photographs, archives, and documents to generate data about the general age, construction, architectural style, and significance of historic buildings and structures in the area to be surveyed. Secondly, to ensure survival of historic resources and make effective use of them, it is necessary to inventory historic resources on a property-by-property basis. It is possible that hundreds of properties could be included in the survey. While volunteer historians or local historic societies may be able to document resources and otherwise assist in preparing a reconnaissance level historic resources survey, it is highly desirable to have such surveys done by a qualified professional. A reconnaissance level historic resources survey will also consist of a thorough description of the exterior of a historic resource including its architectural style, size, use, materials, shape, estimate of year built, alterations and accessory buildings, etc. Current, good quality, exterior photographs of the historic resource are also included in the survey. Typically, a lengthy history of the building is not included, except a brief history may be included if the resource is already well documented.

The preservation community and the borough should consider whether there is reason to update the existing reconnaissance level historic resources survey, which for Newtown Borough was last completed in 1999. An update to the survey may reveal that the historic district boundaries may need to be changed. The survey may locate individual resources with potential to be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places that are outside of the historic district boundary. Individual eligible resources that are found can then be the subject of a more intense and detailed evaluation survey to determine the National Register eligibility of the resource. If a reconnaissance level historic resources survey is conducted in Newtown Borough, it should be periodically updated. As time passes, more sites become eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. Also, the survey will serve as a benchmark of the existing conditions of historic buildings at the time the survey was conducted, which is useful for identifying changes that have occurred over time and for enforcement of the ordinance.

### **ASSESSMENT OF THREATS AND CONSTRAINTS**

The assessment of threats and constraints involves an evaluation of the negative influences that impact historic resources. These factors include air pollution and vibration from traffic; zoning that permits incompatible uses in historic structures; or requires setbacks, height, or parking minimums that may detract from a building's historic integrity; or suppress the economic viability of a historic building. The inability of property owners to fund maintenance and improvements to historic buildings is also a threat. In general, grants, funding, and financial incentives for property owners in regulated historic districts are hard to come by. Due to the limited availability of funding, the borough should publicize funding that

currently exists for historic resources and help identify potential new sources of funding to assist property owners.

### GOALS AND POLICIES

Goals and policies are necessary to guide and provide a focus for a preservation program. These goals and policies should reflect the wishes of the community. It is also wise to consult with the owners of historic properties because their participation in the preservation program is important. The borough comprehensive plan should incorporate a preservation policy as well.

### THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The comprehensive plan is also an important element in the program for historic preservation. The comprehensive plan should bring preservation concerns to the forefront because it establishes policy for all the activities of a community. Section 301(a)(1) of the Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) requires the comprehensive plan to include a statement of objectives concerning the future development of the municipality. Identifying historic preservation planning as an objective of a municipal comprehensive plan reflects the desire to preserve buildings and structures with historic value. A historic preservation chapter and objective also provides a historical context for future planning and land use policies in the zoning ordinance.

## PRESERVATION TOOLS AND IMPLEMENTATION

These preservation and implementation tools must be developed in order to make the preservation plan work. These tools take the form of historic district ordinances, zoning provisions, design guidelines, and other regulations. In most cases, the primary responsibility for protecting historic resources falls on the property owner, however, communities can enact regulations and laws to preserve these historic resources.

### ADAPTIVE REUSE

Through its ordinances, Newtown Borough seeks to encourage adaptive reuse as a means of preserving historic structures. Adaptive reuse is the conversion of a historic property for a purpose other than the one for which it was originally built. This ordinarily involves interior renovations that leave the building's exterior appearance intact. The borough has incorporated provisions intended to encourage adaptive reuse of historic properties into its zoning ordinance. Examples of adaptive reuse as a preservation tool that have been successful in the borough are listed below:

**Stocking Works** – Along present-day South State Street and Sterling Street, construction for a brick knitting mill began in 1889. The building was used as a stocking manufacturer, stained glass company, bobbin manufacturer, and used by the Lavelle Aircraft Corporation during WWII. After the war, the production shifted to steel for jet engines, missiles, and satellites. The first weather satellite, TIROS 1, was manufactured in 1960. The building has been renovated into an office building and named Stocking Works after its original use.



*Stocking Works*

**Chancellor Street School** – In 1872, a school was built at the site of the present-day Chancellor Center on North Chancellor Street. In 1916, a large portion of the school was destroyed by a fire, but the building was rebuilt and reopened in 1918. For many years, the school was used as both an elementary and a high school. After the Council Rock Junior-Senior High School was constructed in 1954, the building was used solely for elementary students. Today, the building is used as administrative offices for the Council Rock School District.

**White Hall Hotel** – Described under “Historic Inns and Taverns.”

### DESIGN GUIDELINES

Design guidelines are recommended standards for form, materials, and style of building exteriors. Newtown Borough currently has prepared guidelines, for the purpose of preserving the character, architectural styles, materials, and defining features of buildings and structures within the Historic District. Specifically, the borough has design guidelines for roofing, windows, signs and awnings and the Secretary of the Interiors Standards for Rehabilitation, which owners in the historic district can find on the borough website. For development within the Newtown Borough Historic District, design guidelines should be followed. New development should be integrated into existing streetscapes, and should be compatible with, and build upon the borough’s unique design characteristics and assets.

### CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

The creation of conservation districts can work with design guidelines. The borough has an extensive historic district, yet there are areas of the borough that abut the historic district that are not subject to design review. This development could negatively impact the historic district. Conservation districts, which could be established to adjoin the historic district, combine components of historic preservation and zoning techniques that regulate structure and appearance, and could minimize threats to the historic districts. Such districts seek to preserve an area’s main defining features, such as scale, setbacks, mass, and architecture. New construction, alterations and demolitions are subject to review, but changes are not regulated as stringently. Neighborhood character is maintained despite allowing some alterations that would not normally be allowed in the designated historic district. Conservation districts can be established as an overlay zoning district in the municipal zoning ordinance.

### DEMOLITION REGULATIONS

The regulation of demolition is an important part of a community’s effort to preserve historic resources. Demolition by neglect is the destruction of a building through abandonment or lack of maintenance. Property owners may use this type of long-term neglect to avoid historic preservation demolition regulations. A municipality can use property maintenance codes to help prevent demolition by neglect.

Enforcing laws that require buildings to be secure from vandalism and prevent blight can put pressure on owners to maintain their properties. A demolition delay ordinance requires a waiting period after the submission of a request for a demolition permit. Many ordinances require a delay for structures of more than 500 square feet and older than 50 years. A delay provides time for research about the architectural or historical significance of the property and time to develop alternatives for preservation, or to document the property if demolition cannot be averted.

Demolitions are currently regulated in Newtown Borough under its historic district ordinance that was set up using the Pennsylvania Historic District Act. An applicant must apply for a determination of significance

to demolish a building. The demolition is reviewed by the Joint Historic Commission and HARB, and they may recommend to borough council that the demolition be denied.

Demolition can also be regulated using zoning. This can be done by means of an overlay zone that requires a special exception or conditional use for demolition of a historic building. The zoning hearing board or borough council can put conditions on the demolition such as demolition delay, requiring the building be documented, requiring a structural engineer's report, or deny granting the special exception or conditional use.

### FINANCIAL INCENTIVES AND GRANT PROGRAMS

Local preservation ordinances and guidelines can be effective; however, they do not address the financial pressures that face owners of historic properties. To be more effective, preservation efforts should also address pressures that may conflict with historic preservation planning. Financial incentives and grant programs are ways local government and local financial institutions can encourage historic preservation. The provision of financial incentives encourages private property owners to become involved in preservation efforts and invest in historic properties. These incentives are intended to eliminate many of the financial advantages of new construction compared with restoration or preservation projects.

Financial incentives may include low-interest loan programs and tax incentives from governmental bodies. A revolving loan fund provided by a local bank and administered by a nonprofit or the borough may also assist with the cost of preservation. Banks get involved by making low interest funds available to the local government or nonprofit. The local government or nonprofit administers the program by performing application intake, evaluation of projects, project oversight and technical assistance. The property owner pays back the loan with additional interest and the funds are then re-loaned for another project. These revolving loan funds have a positive impact on the historic area and provides the bank opportunity for compliance with the community reinvestment act. Local governments may offer tax incentives such as property tax abatement freezes or credits. The availability of particular incentives depends on state enabling legislation.

The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission offers Keystone Historic Preservation grants that may fund cultural resource surveys, national register nominations, and planning and development assistance projects. The State Historic Preservation Officer at the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission ([phmc.pa.gov/](http://phmc.pa.gov/)), the regional office of the National Park Service ([nps.gov](http://nps.gov/)), and the National Trust for Historic Preservation ([savingplaces.org/](http://savingplaces.org/)) can provide information regarding available funding to eligible parties.

A local government that fulfills historic preservation program standards for the National Park Service's Certified Local Government program, as administered by the SHPO, can become a designated Certified Local Government (CLG). After becoming a CLG, part of the program are grants that local governments can use for historic resource surveys, technical planning and assistance, educational and interpretive programs, and other preservation activities. Newtown Borough is a CLG.

To participate in this program, municipalities need to meet certain other criteria, including effective enforcement of the historic district ordinance or a historic zoning overlay, compliance with appointment, training, and reporting requirements.

In addition, certain state and federal grants, not specifically for historic preservation, have a historic preservation component. The PA Department of Community and Economic Development's

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP), allows for use of funds for construction projects that involve historic buildings. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program that allows for use of funds for historic preservation construction projects.

Income producing properties that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places are eligible for a state and federal historic preservation income tax credit for the cost of appropriate rehabilitation work. The federal tax credit is an incentive for developers of historic buildings to do rehabilitation work that meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. In exchange for appropriate rehabilitation work, the developer receives a federal income tax credit that is equal to 20 percent of the cost of the rehabilitation work. The building must be income producing, which includes residential rental units, retail, offices, hotel, and other commercial or industrial uses. The federal tax incentive is administered by the Pennsylvania SHPO in coordination with the National Park Service and the Internal Revenue Service. In 2018, in Pennsylvania developers performed \$466,800,000 worth of qualified historic rehabilitation work under the federal historic preservation tax credit incentive. This resulted in over 7,500 jobs and generated significant tax revenue at the local, state, and federal level. The federal historic preservation tax credit can also be used with low-income housing tax credits.

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania also has its own tax credit program which is applied for through the Department of Community and Economic Development and administered by the Pennsylvania SHPO. The state tax credit is similar to the federal incentive. Developers will receive a tax credit of 25 percent of the qualified cost of rehabilitation and can receive a 30 percent tax credit for a project that consists of work force housing.

### HISTORICAL AGENCIES

The Newtown Historic Association, (NHA) is an incorporated nonprofit organization dedicated to the collection of objects of historic interest, the provision of facilities for sharing interest in local history, and the encouragement of the restoration and preservation of historic properties in the Newtown area. The NHA is open for membership to any individual, family, or business interested in supporting these goals. The NHA was formed in 1964 when an old stone farmhouse known as headquarters of George Washington after his victory at the Battle of Trenton, was demolished to build a gas station. Over the years, the NHA has grown into a vibrant organization that contributes to community life in the borough. The NHA is headquartered at the Half-Moon Inn and their meetings are hosted monthly, each time with a speaker or topic exploring and celebrating the history of Newtown and surrounding Bucks County.

The Newtown Joint Historic Commission (JHC) is officially designated by Newtown Borough and Township to act in an advisory capacity for the protection and preservation of historically and architecturally significant resources. The JHC, composed of Newtown Borough and township representatives, conducts research, encourages property owners to restore and adaptively reuse historic structures, and discourages the removal of historical structures. The commission is the first review body for all demolition applications. The JHC consists of four members appointed by Newtown Borough and four members by Newtown Township.

Both Newtown Township and Newtown Borough have Historic Architectural Review Boards (HARB). The borough's HARB is appointed by Newtown Borough Council. Each HARB consists of seven members for staggered four- and five-year terms. The HARB was established in 1969 and oversees activities affecting historic resources within the Historic District and works to maintain their integrity. It issues recommendations to borough council on applications for exterior work: construction, demolition,

alteration, and signage. A request for a Certificate of Appropriateness is the formal application process for a HARB project review.

The borough should continue to support the activities of historic agencies operating in the borough.

At the state level, Preservation Pennsylvania is a nonprofit organization that advocates for historic preservation and provides technical advice for historic preservation issues. A similar organization at the federal level is the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

### HERITAGE MARKERS AND SIGNAGE

Historic landscapes and other features can be noted by plaques, street markers, or signs. This signage may describe the features itself and the reason it is significant. Historic resources can be commemorated with a marker through the Pennsylvania Historical Marker Program of the PHMC. Any individual or group may nominate a structure or site for such a marker, subject to approval through the PHMC. Each marker in Newtown Borough is an opportunity to celebrate and understand the heritage of the community. Newtown Borough is currently home to three historical markers administered by the PHMC, which are described below.

**Edward Hicks** – Famed primitive artist. His subjects included farmscapes and biblical scenes; he painted more than fifty versions of *The Peaceable Kingdom*, based on a prophecy of Isaiah. Also, a coach and sign painter; a Quaker preacher that lived on Penn Street, 1821-1849. The marker was dedicated on September 6, 1997, and is located at 122 Penn Street near the intersection of Penn Street and Congress Street.

**Loyalist Raid of 1778** – On February 19, 1778, while the British occupied Philadelphia, some 40 armed Loyalists raided the tavern here. The fighting left 5 American soldiers dead, 4 wounded, 11 captured. Tailors here were making uniforms for use at Valley Forge, and 2,000 yards of cloth were lost. The marker was dedicated on September 20, 2001, and is located at 111 South State Street near the intersection South State Street and Mercer Street.

**The First Weather Satellite** – The world’s first experimental and operational weather satellite, TIROS 1, was manufactured here by Lavelle Aircraft Corporation in 1960. Pioneering satellite TV techniques, TIROS recorded the first TV image from space. Its success led to improved satellites that provided key data to meteorology. The marker was dedicated on September 20, 2001, and is located on South State Street, near Sterling Street.

In addition to the PHMC historical markers throughout the borough, the Newtown Heritage Walk consists of 34 18-by-24-inch wayside markers at historically significant sites in the borough and Sycamore Street in Newtown Township. Each stop has been selected due to its historical value to the Newtown community, featuring sites from the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries. Self-guided walking tours are helpful educational tools and allow the community and visitors alike to engage with their surroundings. This tour highlights historical value of the Newtown community and features sites from the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries. Walking tours enhance community life and draw in tourism to the borough.

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARDS

The borough HARB manages a historic preservation awards program that recognizes the efforts of property owners to appropriately rehabilitate and maintain their historic property. This program can be a very valuable tool in preservation efforts. Awards can be provided for projects as large as appropriate rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of a historic factory building, or as small as appropriate maintenance and repair of historic details on the porch of a historic house. The recognition provided by an awards program creates an overall sense of pride in workmanship that is well done. Awards can be given annually, biennially, or upon completion of a project.

## CULTURAL HERITAGE

The borough's historic buildings and sites provide a visible link to the past. The borough also has a heritage based on traditions and a way of life passed down through generations of residents that should be preserved. The traditions of shopping in the borough, owning historic homes, dining at historic sites, visiting cemeteries, participating in the self-guided Newtown Heritage Walk, attending schools and religious institutions, and other organizations link residents with not only each other, but their forebears. These links are important to the borough and should be maintained. This heritage can be celebrated and shared with others to strengthen ties amongst each other and the past.

### CEMETERY PRESERVATION

Cemeteries hold a historical connection to the local community and allow the opportunity to bring residents closer to the past. These spaces offer stories and history, art and craftsmanship, and open space for communities to gather. As cemeteries have evolved over time, society's attitudes towards life and death have not changed. These spaces do not only have the ability to function as a memorial, but as a space for the living to enjoy the present day and to understand the past.

The primary issues facing many older cemeteries are maintenance and space for new burials. Fewer interments lead to less income for the landowner and less funding for maintenance. When cemeteries are not maintained, the likelihood of vandalism may increase. Pennsylvania statutes provide several regulations for cemeteries to deal with the many older and historic cemeteries in the state. For example, the Burial Grounds Municipal Control Act permits courts to designate local governments as caretakers of neglected burial grounds. The local government must then finance maintenance and permit public access.

The borough is home to four cemeteries. The Newtown Friends Meetinghouse Cemetery, located at the Newtown Friends Meetinghouse on Court Street, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The historic Quaker meetinghouse and cemetery were built in 1817. The site was added to the National Register on July 21, 1977.

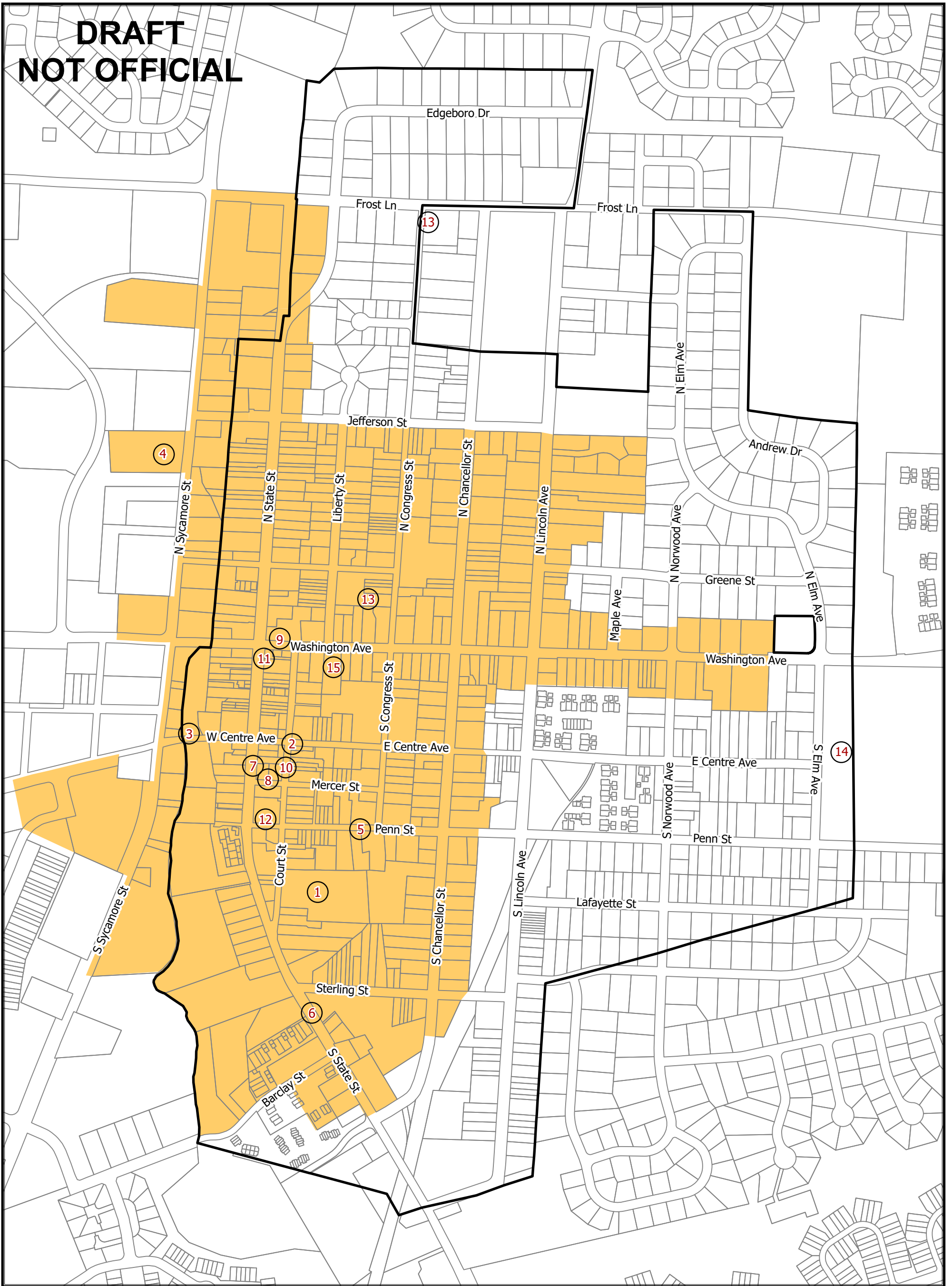
The other cemeteries in the borough include the United Methodist Church Cemetery located at Liberty and Greene Street, and St. Luke's Episcopal Church Cemetery, located at Washington Avenue and Liberty Street. Additionally, Newtown Cemetery is partially in the borough. Though these are not listed on the National Register of Historic Places, all three cemeteries have old burials on-site.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Support efforts of the HARB, the JHC, and other preservation and community organizations to preserve and enhance the architectural and historic resources within the borough. Continue cooperation with community groups to continue programs that emphasize the history and architecture of the borough.
- Design guidelines should be followed for development within the Newtown Borough Historic District. New development should be integrated into existing streetscapes and should be compatible with the borough's unique design characteristics. Encourage efforts of private property owners toward restoration and adaptive reuse of historic structures and sites by providing additional use opportunities as incentives for preservation.
- Continue to protect the integrity of the Newtown Borough Historic District and the district's National Register status.
- Update the historic resources survey to determine whether there is potential for expanding the Historic District or additional resources to be nominated to the National Register of Historic Places. Continue to update the survey as needed.
- Make use of Newtown Borough's status as a Certified Local Government (CLG) by using the programs, grants, and technical assistance for historic preservation planning projects. Funding from the CLG program can be used for hiring a consultant for the Historical Architectural Review Board (HARB), drafting a historic preservation plan, updating design guidelines, providing design assistance to property owners, nominating resources to the National Register of Historic Places, updating historic resource surveys, adaptive reuse studies, and providing education and training.
- Increase public awareness of federal and state historic preservation tax credit programs and grant opportunities for historic preservation.
- Discourage the removal of historic resources to provide parking facilities. Ensure any new construction of parking facilities are necessary and are compatible in scale and design with their surroundings.
- Consider the development of additional strategies for preserving historic resources including hiring a consultant to do a comprehensive historic preservation plan for Newtown Borough.
- Review the zoning ordinance to ensure standards to promote historic preservation.
- Promote the revision or replacement of historically compatible signage throughout the borough.
- Encourage the expansion of a village green to represent the historic Newtown Common.



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**▭ Newtown Borough**

**■ Newtown Historic District**

**National Register of Historic Places:**

- 1 Newtown Friends Meetinghouse
- 2 Half-Moon Inn
- 3 Newtown Creek Bridge
- 4 Newtown Presbyterian Church

**PA Historical Marker Program:**

- 5 Edward Hicks
- 6 The First Weather Satellite
- 7 Loyalist Raid of 1778

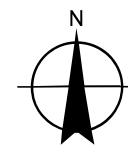
**Historic Inns and Taverns:**

- 8 Bird-in-Hand
- 9 Brick Hotel
- 2 Half-Moon Inn
- 10 Justice's House
- 11 Temperance House
- 12 White Hall Hotel

**Cemeteries:**

- 13 Newtown United Methodist Cemetery
- 14 Newtown Cemetery
- 15 St Luke's Episcopal Church
- 1 Newtown Friends Meetinghouse Cemetery
- 4 Newtown Presbyterian Cemetery

**Map 2. Historic and Cultural Resources**  
Newtown Borough  
Comprehensive Plan Update  
2022



0 150 300 450 Feet



## CHAPTER 6. COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

The residents and businesses within a community come to expect that it will be safe and that necessary services will be provided, including public amenities such as parks and other areas for recreation. Community facilities and services are key components in determining the quality of life in a community. In addition, as they affect the quality of life, facilities and services can also be an economic development tool, because businesses often look at these attributes within a community when they locate.

The borough's population is forecast to slightly increase by approximately three percent between 2020 and 2050 which may require an expansion of facilities and services. Also, technology and unforeseen events, such as a pandemic, may lead to further changes.

This comprehensive plan update was performed between 2020 and 2022 during the COVID-19 pandemic. All facility and service providers were contacted by telephone or email. The demand for most services has been stayed the same or decreased. Many businesses have closed or have reduced hours.

The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code requires that comprehensive plans include a plan for community facilities and utilities. This update of the Newtown Borough comprehensive plan surveys the general adequacy of the existing community facilities and services which serve the borough. However, if the borough or other organization intends to expand or increase the use of a facility or service, it is recommended that a comprehensive feasibility study be conducted to determine projected needs and extent of potential improvements.

In general, the existing facilities and services within the borough are currently adequate to serve the existing needs and anticipated short-term growth of the borough. Newtown is almost fully developed and any large land development projects, whether residential, commercial, or industrial may have impacts on the public and utility service facilities. Map 3 identifies the locations of various community facilities within the borough.

The borough council should periodically evaluate the need and opportunity for additional, expanded, or improved services and facilities, and plan for providing them in efficient and economical ways, partnering with other public and private agencies as necessary or when possible. Although most facilities and services will be provided at the borough level, multi-municipal or regional coordination should always be considered.

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

**PRINCIPLES:** Community, Resilience

**FINDINGS:** Currently the borough can adequately provide services for residents utilizing their existing resources and facilities, but future growth may require the borough to reassess their community services and facilities to provide for a growing population. The borough provides and supports services, including police and fire protection, libraries, schools, emergency medical services, postal services, and is home to multiple civic and religious groups.

### COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS:

- 43 percent of respondents indicated schools as a reason they choose to live in Newtown Borough.
- Overall, respondents of the survey were satisfied or very satisfied with the community services the borough provides.
  - 63 percent of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with borough administration.
  - 82 percent of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the borough's fire protection.
  - 85 percent of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the borough's police protection.
  - 64 percent of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with snow removal.
  - 60 percent of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with street maintenance and improvements.

## PUBLIC SERVICE FACILITIES

### BOROUGH ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

The borough has a council form of government. A six-member borough council and a mayor are elected by the voters. The borough council chambers are in a historic building at 23 North State Street.

The borough administrative staff is housed in the borough building. The borough secretary, treasurer, and code official have offices in borough hall. To enhance day-to-day operations council is considering hiring a borough manager.

The building, supplemented by the use of the Chancellor Center, is expected to serve municipal needs adequately for the foreseeable future. However, little storage space is available, and some records are stored offsite.

Most public meetings are held at the council chambers, including borough council work sessions. Regular monthly meeting of the borough council and other events that require more space are held at the Council Rock School District's Chancellor Center in the borough. Online meetings began to be offered in 2020 to provide social distancing, and an online or hybrid meeting setup will likely continue to be offered for future meetings.

### CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAM (CIP)

An effective means of linking borough comprehensive plan policy with plan implementation is through a capital improvement program. The borough has limited financial resources to meet the public service needs of a mature community, and little is left for major capital improvements. An effective method of coordinating and planning expenditures is through capital improvements programming, which also facilitates implementation of the comprehensive plan.

A CIP is an annual process that involves the multiyear scheduling of public physical improvements. The scheduling is predicated on the availability of fiscal resources and the selection of specific improvements to be constructed over a span of five to six years into the future. These improvements only include those expenditures for physical facilities, which are permanent and have relatively long-term use such as roads, parks, equipment, and similar facilities.

Public expenditures called for in a capital improvements program play an important role in the implementation of the comprehensive plan. Borough expenditures for targeted capital improvements can encourage or discourage growth in different parts of the borough. Investments in infrastructure and

amenities such as water, sewer, parks, signage, and roads can encourage economic development, improve property values, and enhance the quality of life within the borough.

### **PUBLIC WORKS**

Public Works responsibility is handled by a private contractor, who performs street repairs, snow removal, and signage maintenance. The contractor also maintains the borough's streets, and parks and open space areas. In addition to roads, the contractor is responsible for maintaining stormwater facilities which primarily consist of storm sewers which must be kept free of obstructions. The contractor undertakes the work under a contract and has done so for 18 years.

Parks and open space areas require ongoing maintenance of pathways, landscape areas, and various amenities. A separate contractor performs lawn mowing, mulching, litter removal, and park maintenance.

The borough contains 8.1 miles of both borough- and state-owned roadways. State Street and Washington Avenue are state routes which are owned and maintained by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation. An agreement has been made for the borough to do snow and ice removal on the state roads for which costs are reimbursed, with the exception of the streets in Newtown Station, which are owned and maintained by an HOA. The balance of the streets in the borough are owned and maintained by the borough. The borough has a comprehensive milling and paving program for borough streets.

### **POLICE PROTECTION**

The police department occupies a building at 22 Liberty Street, which it leases from the Newtown Fire Association. The police department includes a staff complement of full- and part-time officers. The department is staffed by a chief, two corporals, and three officers. The building is expected to meet the department's needs for the term of this comprehensive plan.

Members of the Newtown Borough Police Department are part of the Bucks County South Central Emergency Response Team. The members of this team are highly trained tactical officers who are called upon to resolve high-risk special assignments.

### **EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES**

Ambulance services are provided by the Newtown Ambulance Squad, Inc., based at 2651 South Eagle Road in Newtown Township. The squad is the sole provider of emergency transport services to Newtown Borough and Township and serves parts of other surrounding townships.

The emergency medical services staff includes paid and volunteer personnel and the headquarters, garages, and its fleet of emergency vehicles. Currently, office space is adequate and vehicle storage space is fully used and is supplemented off-site.

The squad provides Advance Life Support (ALS) 24 hours a day with a Paramedic and Emergency Medical Technician (EMT). During high call volumes, Basic Life Support (BLS) includes two EMTs. One BLS unit is also a Bariatric Support Unit (BSU). Paratransit services are provided, and standby EMS is offered for prescheduled large events. The BLS squad response time is approximately five minutes (2019). The ALS squad responds in approximately three minutes (2019), a time which has not changed significantly.

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

The service is funded by a municipal EMS tax (0.25 mills) and insurance reimbursements. Newtown Borough provides the squad with funds annually, but the squad states it has insufficient funding, which limits the squad's ability to maintain staffing and purchase and maintain equipment.

### FIRE PROTECTION

Fire protection is provided by the volunteer members of the Newtown Fire Association and paid fire fighters of the Newtown Township Emergency Services Department. The fire station in the borough is located at 14 Liberty Street and consists of the 1901 firehouse building and adjoining three-bay garage built in 2000. The original historic station houses a museum for the display of antique fire equipment.

The fire association also maintains a station on Municipal Drive in Newtown Township. Staffing is provided by professional firefighters hired through the township from 6 AM to 6 PM on weekdays. Nights, weekends, and holidays are staffed by volunteers. The Fire Association receives funding from a borough fire tax.

The association's service area encompasses Newtown Borough and Newtown Township.

The fire association's station in the borough allows it to meet the Insurance Service Office (ISO) standards for fire protection. This national insurance industry service group recommends that suburban areas be within a 2.5-mile radius of a fire station with a first response engine. The entire borough falls within a 2.5-mile radius of the borough fire station.



The Fire Association is supported by fundraising projects (administered by the volunteer firefighters) and tax revenue from the borough and Newtown Township. To meet the costs of operation, the fire department must raise a large amount of money each year through public events. Additional efforts are necessary for fire apparatus and equipment acquisition. A great deal of effort is required to raise such funds, all of which detract from firefighting priorities and training time. Volunteers balance time between regular jobs, volunteer duties, and training. Adequate funding would eliminate the necessity for continuous fundraising needed to meet operating expenses. The borough currently levies a fire tax to support the Newtown Fire Association, which is a dedicated funding source that can defray the ever-increasing costs of equipment, as well as the general operating expenses associated with the Fire Association.

The Newtown Township Emergency Service Department is located in the Fire Association's Municipal Drive station and augments the services of the Newtown Fire Association during weekdays. In addition to assisting with fire calls, township personnel conduct fire inspections in the borough and township. The department also assists the Newtown Ambulance Squad to respond to calls from Newtown Township and Newtown Borough. The joint efforts have reduced response times and have reduced fires in commercial and industrial properties.

Staffing, space, and response time for fire protection are no longer deemed satisfactory. As volunteer membership and fire call response is decreasing, volunteer firefighter's response time is increasing. Over the next decade, it is likely that communities in Bucks County, including the borough, will need to rely more on paid firefighters. The borough, in conjunction with Newtown Township, needs to consider the

hiring of additional career firefighters. As a result of the transition from volunteers to a full-time staff of firefighters, the Fire Association will need to provide more equipment for its staff and provide a fire station that safely accommodates 24/7 career fire fighters. See the BCPC report “The Future of Bucks County’s Fire Services” for more information on fire safety trends in the county.

### **EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS/9-1-1 SERVICE**

Anyone dialing “9-1-1” from anywhere in the county will reach a county dispatcher in the Ivyland Emergency Management Center who will then contact the closest emergency service provider for response. The local fire and police departments and ambulance squad participate in this service.

### **HEALTH CARE / ELDER CARE FACILITIES**

Hospitals serve the immediate health care needs of a community by providing inpatient and outpatient medical and health care services. Long-term care facilities serve elderly patients who can no longer function independently or who have a condition requiring skilled nursing care.

Medical centers close to Newtown Borough are St. Mary Medical Center on Route 413 in Middletown Township and the Bucks Frankford Hospital on Oxford Valley Road in Falls Township.

Long-term health care for the elderly is available at the retirement community at Friends Home and Village in the borough, and nearby at The Birches at Newtown, Chandler Hall, and Pickering Manor.

The aging of the baby boom generation will be a major factor in the need for long-term health care in the upcoming years. This group, born between 1946 and 1964, started to turn 65 in 2011 and the youngest boomers will not turn 65 until 2029. An increase in the elderly population and the need for greater long-term care will likely require less costly and more appropriate alternative care methods to meet the medical and personal needs of many members of this population. These alternatives include in-home services, adult daycare, personal care facilities, and continuing life care facilities.

### **LIBRARY SERVICES**

The Newtown Library Company, founded in 1760, is located at 114 East Centre Avenue in the borough. It is a private library with a collection of more than 20,000 books, including historic and current volumes. A modest fee is charged for individual or family membership. The reading rooms are open to the public. The borough donates funding to the library annually. The library facilities are adequate for current demand.

Libraries near Newtown Borough include the Bucks County Community College library and county branch libraries in Lower Makefield Township and Langhorne Borough. For more extensive library needs, residents have access to the resources of the Bucks County Free Public Library system and have access to the county’s 893,336 total volumes, which includes those of the 11 other community libraries. In addition, the county public library system has 66,905 e-books and 48,200 e-audio titles.

### **SCHOOLS**

Students from Newtown Borough attend public schools within the Council Rock School District. The district is responsible for planning, maintaining, and operating school facilities.

There is no longer a public school operating within the borough. The Chancellor Street School, which used to house students in grades K to 2, is occupied by the administrative offices for the Council Rock School

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

District and is now known as the Chancellor Center. The center is expected to adequately meet district needs for administrative space for the term of this comprehensive plan.

School district total enrollments have declined by approximately 11 percent between 2009 and 2019. The school district implemented a redistricting plan in 2018 to revise the attendance areas for the district schools. The redistricting plan was designed to bring all elementary schools as close to 90 percent capacity as possible and to balance enrollment at the secondary schools.

The borough's elementary school students in kindergarten through 6<sup>th</sup> grades are enrolled at the Goodnoe Elementary School, located just outside borough boundaries at Frost Lane and Andrew Drive in Newtown Township. The Goodnoe School is within walking distance for most students from the borough. The district provides bus service to borough students, but it is desirable to improve and expand pedestrian routes to the school to encourage students to walk.

Students from Newtown Borough in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades attend the Newtown Middle School at 116 Richboro Road in the Township. The borough's high school students attend Council Rock High School North, located at 62 Swamp Road, west of the borough in Newtown Township. In 2002, the school district opened a second high school, Council Rock South, in Northampton Township, to handle enrollment, which was growing at the time.

### POST OFFICE

The borough is served by a post office branch located in Newtown Township east of the Borough on Terry Drive in the Newtown Business Commons.

### RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

Religious institutions in the borough play a significant role in community life by providing for spiritual needs. In addition to their religious activities, they often host outside organizations or sponsor events and programs that address cultural and social needs for residents of the borough and surrounding areas.

Congregations in the borough include St. Mark A.M.E. Zion Church, Macedonia Baptist Church, Newtown Friends Meeting, Newtown United Methodist Church, St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Newtown



*Newtown Presbyterian Church*

Presbyterian Church, and the Glazier Jewish Center. Many borough congregations worship in historic churches that date back to the early 1800s.

### CIVIC GROUPS AND FACILITIES

There are several civic groups active within the borough such as the local chapters of the Lions, Kiwanis, and Rotary clubs. Like the borough's religious institutions, civic groups contribute to the community fabric and run programs and facilities of wide-ranging benefits.

Their visible role in public and private community endeavors helps create the "small-town" quality of life prized by borough residents. Services and facilities operated by nonprofit organizations and other types of privately funded and sponsored civic groups supplement and complement the efforts of public organizations and provide cost-effective benefits to the community. Continuation of these efforts should be supported.

The primary business and economic development-oriented organization is the Newtown Business Association. The Newtown Historic Association raises funds, maintains a research center, and holds walking tours and other special events in support of its mission to preserve and celebrate the borough's historic heritage.

The Newtown Theatre was built in 1831 and offer film screenings, live theater, and community events. The theater is owned and operated by the Newtown Community Welfare Council. The council also operates the Pickering Manor residence for the elderly, which is in Newtown Township, near the borough border.

## TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Telecommunication is the transmission of voice, video, or data between two points and has become a significant part of our information-based economy and culture. The growth of the telecommunications industry has been driven by the increasing advancement of technology and has resulted in greater business and consumer demand. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Health Statistics has traced the decline of landlines as part of their ongoing studies of the health of Americans. The studies found that in 2017, 50.8 percent of U.S. households had only cell phones. The number of households with landlines-only is steadily decreasing and in 2017 stood at only 6.5 percent.

Many communities have started to realize that telecommunications will be an integral part of the municipal infrastructure just as water, sewer, and electricity are now. Planning for telecommunication systems allows for control of the right-of-way, public property, aesthetics, and enhanced quality of life. Effective telecommunications infrastructure promotes economic development, household use, and broader emergency and municipal communications.

Telecommunication facilities and equipment are located on towers outside the borough to provide wireless service to nearby communities. As the telecommunications environment matures and technology changes, infrastructure needs will change. New towers providing wide coverage may be less necessary while more antennae at lower heights may be needed to meet resident and business demand for capacity.

Distributed Antenna Systems (DAS) is a technology which involves an interconnected web of small antennae located at lower heights connected to a single base station. This system provides enhanced capacity for denser communities like Newtown and has already been installed in Doylestown Borough. This technology utilizes a network of small antennae located at heights lower than 50 feet. DAS technology allows for new carriers to share the existing antenna, equipment box, and pole. No new equipment will be necessary for multiple carriers. These antennae will provide for enhanced service for cellphones, personal computers, gaming, and other mobile devices. They will also enable 5G service which is demanded by consumers and emergency services.

Because these facilities will be more numerous and visible, aesthetics may be a concern. Some communities have developed design guidelines for DAS for appearance and safety purposes.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### BOROUGH ADMINISTRATION

- Cooperate with other community service and facility providers.
- Monitor borough facility needs to determine needs for the future.

#### CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

- Develop and adopt a Capital Improvement Program, which will facilitate the implementation of Comprehensive Plan update objectives.
- Link capital project funding to objectives of the Comprehensive Plan.
- Coordinate capital improvements with utilities serving the borough (PECO NAWC) to minimize cost and disruption.

#### POLICE SERVICES

- Monitor police operations to anticipate needs for space and equipment.

#### FIRE PROTECTION

- Continue to evaluate volunteer membership training, capabilities and response times to national standards and consider the need to hire additional career firefighters.
- Assess the need and locations for new fire stations to support requirements of the residents and businesses and the safety and health of firefighters.

#### EMERGENCY SERVICES

- Cooperate with the Newtown American Legion Ambulance Squad and Newtown Emergency Service Department to provide sufficient emergency services.

#### HEALTH CARE

- Monitor the health needs of the population to plan for future needs.

#### SCHOOLS

- Monitor school enrollments and cooperate with schools to provide adequate facilities.
- Promote walking to school by providing adequate pedestrian facilities.

#### CIVIC GROUPS AND FACILITIES

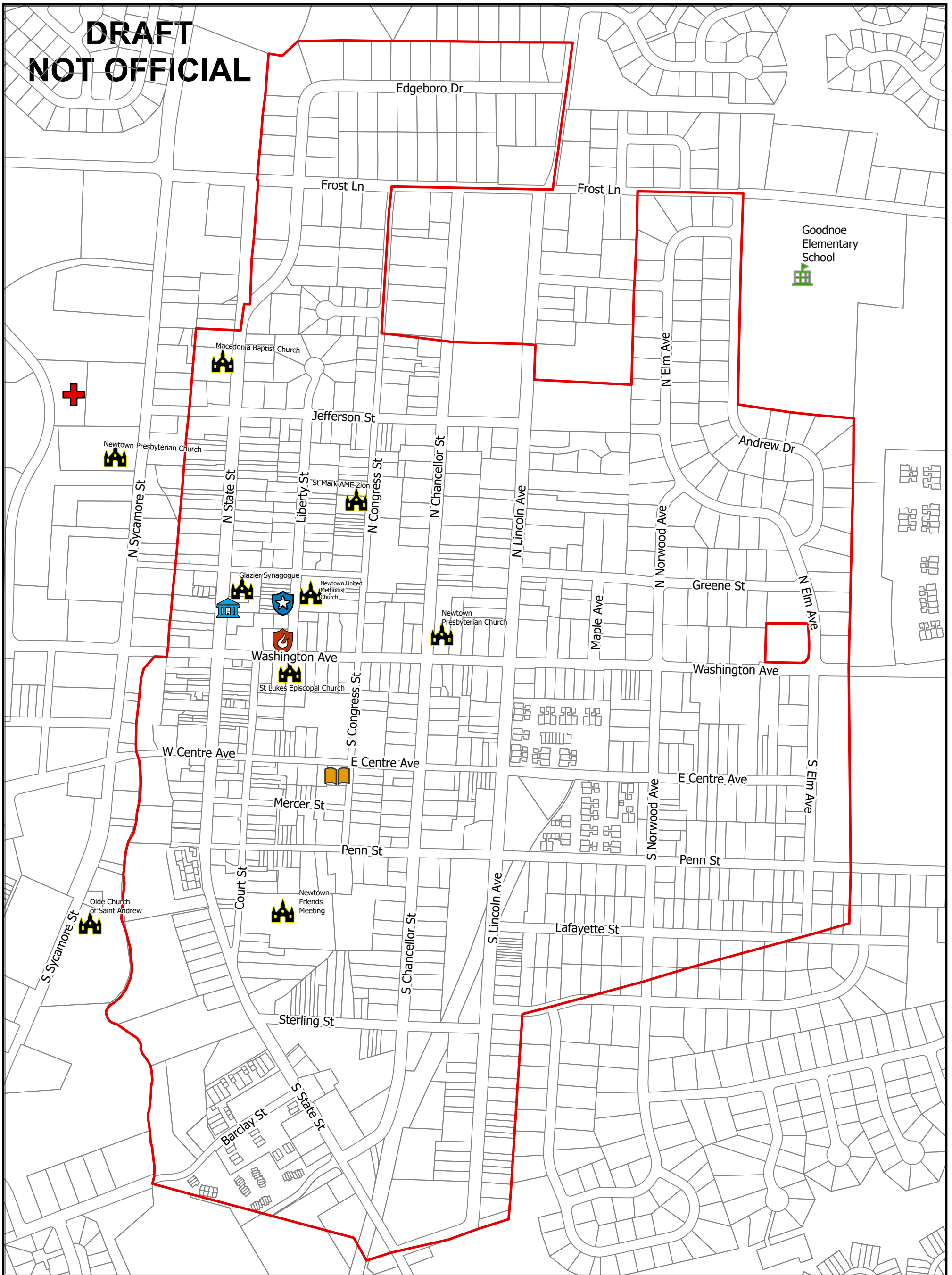
- Monitor adequacy of civic facilities, plan for renovations, expansion, or additions, as needed. Partner with public or private agencies, as appropriate.
- Support community groups, public and private, that provide services and facilities.
- Explore additional opportunities for multi-municipal or other regional approaches to the provision of services and facilities.
- Explore the need for a community center and consider potential sites.









#### TELECOMMUNICATIONS

- Coordinate the provision of telecommunications facilities which will provide for a desired level of service.
- Maintain existing telecommunication regulations and be proactive in the oversight of emerging technologies and legislation.
- Coordinate with DAS providers to enhance wireless service and provide adequate coverage where needed.

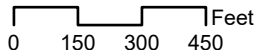


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-  Newtown Borough
-  Newtown Borough Municipal Building
-  Schools
-  Newtown Library Company
-  Newtown Ambulance Squad
-  Newtown Borough Police Department
-  Newtown Fire Association
-  Religious Institutions

**Map 3. Community Services and Facilities**  
Newtown Borough  
Comprehensive Plan Update  
2022



## CHAPTER 7. WATER RESOURCES

Water resources for purposes of this comprehensive plan are divided into three main areas: water supply; wastewater collection, treatment, and disposal; and stormwater management. The following discussion addresses concerns and considerations for each.

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

**PRINCIPLES:** Sustainability, Resilience

**FINDINGS:** This chapter divides the water resources into three main categories: water supply; wastewater collection, treatment, and disposal; and stormwater management. The borough receives its water supply from the Newtown Artesian Water Company, which relies on surface and groundwater resources from various wells and surface water from the Delaware River and North Branch Neshaminy Creek. Both the borough and Newtown Township are provided wastewater services from the Newtown Bucks County Joint Municipal Authority (NBCJMA). The borough adopted an Act 537 Plan Revision in 2013. The chosen alternative in the Act 537 Plan Revision provides for the continued use and expansion of the BCWSA Conveyance System. In terms of stormwater management, the borough has enacted a stormwater management ordinance to establish more effective stormwater management in the borough. The borough will continue to comply with NPDES Phase 2 program requirements.

### COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

- 51 percent of respondents indicated they were satisfied or very satisfied with stormwater management in the borough.

### WATER SUPPLY

Many Bucks County communities are concerned with water supply issues related to the safe yield of groundwater and surface water withdrawal, the potential reduction in groundwater recharge to local aquifers, and potential impact from pollutants on the quality of these water supply sources. The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (PaMPC) directs municipalities to consider water supply resources in municipal comprehensive planning, zoning, and the development review process.

Section 301.(b) of the code states that the comprehensive plan shall include a plan for the reliable supply of water that considers current and future water resource availability, uses and limitations, including provisions adequate to protect water supply sources. Any such plan should be generally consistent with the State Water Plan and any applicable water resources plan adopted by the Delaware River Basin Commission.

The Newtown Artesian Water Company (NAWC), the borough's water supplier, relies on both surface water and groundwater resources. The company's water system is supplied by five groundwater sources and by interconnections with the Bucks County Water and Sewer Authority (BCWSA) and the Pennsylvania American Water Company (PAWC).

The water purchased from the BCWSA is a combination of water supplied by North Wales Water Authority (NWWA) and Lower Bucks County Joint Municipal Authority (LBCJMA). NWWA supplies surface water from the Delaware River and North Branch Neshaminy Creek that has been treated at the Forest Park Water Treatment Plant. LBCJMA supplies a combination of surface water from the Delaware River that is treated at their water treatment plant and groundwater from five wells.

The water purchased from PAWC is a surface water supply also originating from the Delaware River and treated at PAWC's Yardley Water Treatment Plant and groundwater from four wells.

At the end of 2019, the water company provided service to 10,522 customers in Newtown Borough, Newtown Township, and a portion of Middletown Township north and west of Core Creek, with an average daily demand of 1.98 million gallons. The company's wells provided 39 percent of the total supply. Water purchased from the BCWSA and PAWC accounted for about 61 percent of the total supply in 2019 (BCWSA – 83.5 percent, PAWC – 16.5 percent).

Groundwater quality is continually threatened by land uses and activities that may generate potential sources of contamination. Amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act of 1986 require that states, through local land use planning and other management means, create wellhead protection programs to protect the quality of groundwater used as sources of public drinking water supplies.

In nearby Horsham Township, decades of firefighting foam used at former and active military bases led to many public and private drinking water wells in Horsham, and its surrounding communities of Warminster and Warrington Townships, testing for elevated levels of PFAS. PFAS, short for perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances, have been used since the 1940s and have been linked to health conditions including high cholesterol, thyroid disease, low birth weights, immunodeficiencies, and some cancers. In addition to their widespread use in firefighting foam, deployed by the military to battle jet-fuel fires, they are found in household goods ranging from nonstick pans to dental floss. While some PFAS chemicals have been phased out by U.S. manufacturers, they do not break down in the environment or the body and are still found in some water sources near sites where they have been produced or used.

In response to the discovery of elevated levels of PFAS in Horsham Township, the EPA established a Lifetime Health Advisory Level (HAL) of 0.070 ppb for the potentially harmful PFAS. Importantly, for water serviced by NAWC, the HAL was determined to be protective of all consumers, including sensitive subpopulations. Results indicate an average value of 0.0000108 ppt at sources of supply, with sample results ranging from non-detect (ND) to 0.000018 ppb.

The Delaware River Basin Commission has established guidelines for the preparation of Integrated Resource Plans that analyze the interrelationship of water quality and water availability for current and future water use to assist in assuring better integration of water resource protection in land use planning. Because certain land uses and activities are more compatible with maintaining good water quality and others are less compatible, municipalities can use overlay zoning to restrict or prohibit potentially detrimental land uses and activities in groundwater recharge areas.

The borough has a vested interest in making sure its water supply source is not affected by present and future development in the borough or in groundwater contributing areas outside its borders.

## WASTEWATER FACILITIES

The Newtown Bucks County Joint Municipal Authority (NBCJMA) provides wastewater services for both Newtown Borough and Newtown Township. As of 2020, the NBCJMA provided service for 9,000 customers, maintaining five wastewater pumping stations, nine metering sites, more than 50 easements, approximately 100 miles of sanitary sewers, along with 2,630 manholes, within the Newtown area.

The NBCJMA municipal conveyance and collection system operates within three drainage basins: Neshaminy Creek, Core Creek, and Newtown Creek. The Newtown Creek drainage basin encompasses the largest area within Newtown Borough and Township. This basin is about nine square miles and includes all of Newtown Borough and approximately two-thirds of Newtown Township. There are no other private or public wastewater disposal systems located within the borough.

At present, all wastewater flows from the NBCJMA are conveyed to the Northeast Philadelphia Wastewater Treatment Plant by the BCWSA's Neshaminy Interceptor.

Under a 1975 wastewater disposal agreement among the BCWSA, the borough, Newtown Township, and the NBCJMA, the BCWSA is allocated 35 million gallons per day of treatment capacity at the Northeast Philadelphia plant.

The average daily flow conveyed from the Newtown Creek Basin between 2014-2018 was 2,155,000 gallons of wastewater per day, according to BCWSA figures. This represents about 6.2 percent of the total BCWSA allocated capacity. Thus, there appears to be sufficient capacity to address wastewater flows from future development in the borough.

The borough adopted an Act 537 Plan Revision<sup>10</sup> in 2013. The chosen alternative in the Act 537 Plan Revision provides for the continued use and expansion of the BCWSA Conveyance System. Since the adoption of the plan by the borough in 2013 and the approval of the plan by PA DEP in May 2014, a new Supplemental Agreement has been signed between the NBCJMA and the BCWSA. In February 2020, the borough approved an Act 537 Plan Special Study, which amended the 2013 Plan Revision to incorporate the new agreement, includes the NBCJMA I/I Program Update, and incorporates the latest information from the BCWSA required by the PADEP.

## STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

As development or redevelopment within the borough occurs, there is a need to manage stormwater in a way that recognizes the watershed-wide scope of stormwater management problems and potential solutions. A comprehensive approach to stormwater management, addressing both water quality and quantity, can control peak flows of runoff, protect water quality, and maximize infiltration of runoff to provide groundwater recharge.

Recognizing the need to address this serious and growing problem, the Pennsylvania General Assembly enacted the Pennsylvania Stormwater Management Act (P.L. 864, No. 167, October 4, 1978). Act 167

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<sup>10</sup> The Act 537 Official Sewage Facilities Plan is mandated by the Pennsylvania Sewage Facilities Act and formulated to provide for the adequate handling of a municipality's wastewater treatment and disposal needs.

requires DEP to designate watersheds and establish guidelines for the preparation of stormwater management plans for these watersheds. Counties are responsible for preparing the plans and developing ordinance language that municipalities must adopt to manage the volume and rate of stormwater runoff and the impact on water quality.

Newtown Borough is in the Neshaminy Creek Watershed. In 2010, Bucks County prepared an updated *Act 167 Neshaminy Creek Watershed Stormwater Management Plan* to address the requirements of the Pennsylvania Stormwater Management Act. The plan encourages comprehensive stormwater management planning throughout the watershed that addresses the impacts of future development on the watershed. The plan also develops standards for municipalities to implement sound water and land use practices and ordinances to protect water quality, promote groundwater recharge, and control the amount of runoff resulting from new development.

New requirements provided in the updated Act 167 plan assist in establishing more effective management of stormwater. The plan places an increased emphasis on maintaining water quality and groundwater recharge; controlling the volume of stormwater, rather than the rate of release; preventing downstream flooding and streambank erosion; and ensuring proper long-term operation and maintenance of stormwater facilities. Low-impact design and conservation development techniques must be considered for development sites and design sequencing must be followed to avoid sensitive areas on a site, minimize site disturbance, and minimize increases in runoff and impacts to water quality.

Under Act 167, municipalities are required to incorporate the plan's provisions into their stormwater ordinances. In accordance with that requirement, in 2011, the borough enacted Ordinance 712, which was later amended by Ordinance 726, known as the Newtown Borough Neshaminy Creek Watershed Act 167 Stormwater Management Ordinance. This ordinance was enacted to comply with National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Phase 2 regulations<sup>11</sup> and the updated *Act 167 Neshaminy Creek Watershed Stormwater Management Plan*. The borough also amended Ordinance 519 in 2005, pertaining to subdivision and land development, to require all subdivision and land development plans to comply with the applicable provisions of the *Newtown Borough Neshaminy Creek and Little Neshaminy Creek Watershed Stormwater Management Ordinance*.

The NPDES Phase 2 regulations require municipalities to develop a stormwater management program that meets state permit requirements and includes six minimum control measures: public education and outreach, public participation, illicit discharge detection and elimination, and construction site and post-construction runoff control and pollution prevention. Annual reports must be submitted to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection to signify how the municipality is meeting incremental elements of the program. Thus far, Newtown Borough has submitted the requisite annual reports in accordance with the NPDES Phase 2 program. The borough remains committed to and engaged in public education and outreach, providing educational materials to residents.

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<sup>11</sup> The National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) is a two-phased federal program that seeks to establish local regulations resulting in a nationwide reduction of pollutants in waterways, including stormwater discharge regulations. The municipal NPDES program must be correlated with the community's Act 167 stormwater management plan.

Beginning in March of 2018, NPDES permit requirements for small MS4s<sup>12</sup> include the development of a Pollution Reduction Plan (PRP) for many communities. Previous regulations only required a PRP for communities within the Chesapeake Bay watershed area. A PRP requires a municipal stormwater program to identify and map all surface waters within their jurisdiction, and to identify all areas within the municipality which drain into those surface waters. Municipalities are then obligated to identify the locations where specific pollutants such as phosphorous and nitrogen are discharged into the surface waters (outfalls), and to develop strategies and best management practices for reducing the introduction of pollutants into surface waters. Development of the borough's PRP is underway.

Other required control measures, such as illicit discharge detection and elimination and the operation, maintenance, and inspection of municipally-owned stormwater facilities, are not the major issues that are typical in a small town, as there are few stormwater management facilities in the borough. Nevertheless, facilities and infrastructure will be inspected on an ongoing basis and the borough will continue to comply with program requirements.

As discussed in Chapter 3: Natural Resource Management, the borough may benefit from a network of green stormwater infrastructure incorporated throughout the borough. Such a network of stormwater management improvements has the potential to significantly lessen the burden on both the borough's surface waters and existing network of stormwater management infrastructure to effectively manage stormwater for the future.

The difference between traditional stormwater management infrastructure and green stormwater infrastructure is that traditional infrastructure manages stormwater by collecting and conveying stormwater from a site to be treated and released elsewhere, while green stormwater infrastructure attempts to retain and treat stormwater on the site by using natural vegetation in a way that allows the water to be absorbed and filtered by plants. Green infrastructure can be both environmentally and economically beneficial, as it reduces both pollution and the need for traditional, often more costly, stormwater management systems.

At a larger scale, green stormwater infrastructure can include the restoration or preservation of wetlands and floodplains. On a smaller scale, this may include rain gardens, green roofs, rain barrels, planter gardens, street trees that absorb water, the use of porous paving materials, and vegetated detention basins.

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<sup>12</sup>Polluted stormwater runoff is often transported to municipal separate storm sewer systems (MS4s) and ultimately discharged into local rivers and streams without treatment. EPA's Stormwater Phase II Rule establishes an MS4 stormwater management program that is intended to improve the nation's waterways by reducing the quantity of pollutants that stormwater picks up and carries into storm sewer systems during storm events.

<https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2015-11/documents/fact2-0.pdf>.

### LOCALIZED STORMWATER MANAGEMENT ISSUES

All stormwater in the borough ultimately drains into Newtown Creek. Approximately two-thirds of the borough's area, including all of Washington Village and much of the central and eastern portions of the borough, first drains to Old Skunky, an intermittent drainage channel described in greater detail in Chapter 3: Natural Resource Management. It connects with Newtown Creek near the intersection of South State Street and Sterling Street. The remaining one-third of the borough, primarily the western portion, drains directly to Newtown Creek.

Much of Newtown was built before stormwater management techniques, such as storm sewers and on-site water detention, were widely practiced. Over time, storm sewers have been added as streets have been maintained and reconstructed. More recently, state-mandated stormwater management requirements, including Best Management Practices, have further reduced surface water runoff in Newtown Borough.

Stormwater runoff in Newtown Borough is managed through detention basins, storm sewers, and sheet flow. Approximately 100 storm inlets feed storm sewers directly into Newtown Creek; approximately 120 inlets channel stormwater first into Old Skunky. A small detention basin is located by Brynwood Lane, and a much larger detention basin in line with Old Skunky was created next to Centre Avenue as part of the Newtown Station development. Many borough streets have no storm inlets, and water flows along the street surfaces.

Significant storm events have resulted in flooding along Old Skunky, as well as localized flooding in locations such as the lower end of Frost Lane. Recent remediation includes the addition of two storm inlets on the western half of Frost Lane to channel stormwater to Newtown Creek. In addition, Old Skunky has experienced problems with erosion and illegal dumping. In 2010, the Olde Skunky Stream Study was prepared which examined the watercourse, including stream assessments and soils analysis. The study also made recommendations for the watercourse relating to a reduction in runoff and the stabilization of eroded stream banks.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### WATER SUPPLY

Protection of the water supply is integral to ensuring a continuing supply of safe drinking water. The following actions should be incorporated to help ensure the quality of drinking water:

- Monitor efforts of the Newtown Artesian Water Company, the BCWSA, and the PAWC to continue to supply safe and adequate water to the borough.
- Modify borough ordinances to establish wellhead protection zones around each public water supply well. Encourage Newtown and Middletown townships to do the same.
- Investigate the benefit of pursuing the development of an Integrated Water Resource Plan and potential funding of such a plan in cooperation with the Newtown Artesian Water Company and Newtown and Middletown townships.

### WASTEWATER FACILITIES

The following actions should be taken to address the wastewater facilities needs of the borough:

- Monitor NBCJMA efforts to continue to provide adequate wastewater facilities.

### STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

While stormwater management ultimately must be addressed watershed-wide, there are actions the borough should take to contribute to a comprehensive approach, and to mitigate drainage and flooding problems within its borders:

- Continue to enforce the recommendations of the *Neshaminy Creek Watershed Stormwater Management Plan*, as updated.
- Continue to ensure compliance with the NPDES program and file program reports.
- Explore the development of educational opportunities aimed at engaging the public around the importance of maintaining effective stormwater management practices, including the emerging use of Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) practices.
- Review ordinances to ensure the borough is encouraging the use of state-of-the-art stormwater BMPs, including the use of green stormwater infrastructure enhancements, such as rain gardens, green roofs, rain barrels, planter gardens, street trees that absorb water, the use of porous paving materials, and vegetated detention basins.
- Create an inventory of borough-managed stormwater management facilities and establish regular maintenance schedules for such facilities. Evaluate whether a retrofit program for substandard existing facilities is needed and feasible.
- If necessary, revise the municipal stormwater management ordinance to comply with the updated Neshaminy stormwater plan.
- Create a borough stormwater management plan, addressing long-range plans for Old Skunky, streets without storm drains, education and responsibilities of borough residents and property owners, runoff remediation for land development and subdivision, and integration with the borough's street maintenance and reconstruction program.
- Implement recommendations stemming from the *Olde Skunky Stream Study* (2010) relating to reduction in runoff and stabilization of eroded stream banks.



## CHAPTER 8. PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE

Parks, recreation, and open space resources are key quality of life features available to borough residents. Open space contributes to the borough’s physical character, preserves the natural ecosystems upon which people and wildlife depend, and provides an attractive setting in which to live and work. Park and recreation facilities allow space for residents to interact, exercise, and provide a space for civic life.

Park and open space resources can be classified into public lands and privately-owned lands, and other protected lands. Public lands include publicly owned lands (e.g., parks or vacant tracts) and school district properties. Privately-owned lands include private recreational lands, such as golf courses, camps and campgrounds, and nature preserves, lands owned by nonprofit conservation organizations, and other similar lands (e.g., cemeteries). Other protected lands are owned by government or quasi-government agencies and unlikely to change in the future.

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

**PRINCIPLES:** Community, Mobility, Resilience

**FINDINGS:** Newtown Borough has multiple parks and recreation opportunities for residents to enjoy in the borough. The borough continues to support the efforts of the open space plan by continuing to offer and look for new opportunities for parks and recreation, while also working towards updating the plan. Resident survey results show that residents value the importance of parks, recreation facilities, and open space, and would like to see the borough not only continue to value these, but enhance and provide more recreation opportunities for residents in all age ranges.

### COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

- 40 percent of respondents ranked outdoor community spaces in their top five issues to be better addressed in the borough.
- Most respondents indicated they were unsure of whether enough age-appropriate recreation services and facilities were provided.
- 76 percent of respondents indicated that they are satisfied or very satisfied with the parks and recreation community services that the borough provides.

### NEWTOWN BOROUGH OPEN SPACE PLAN UPDATE

In 2022, the borough adopted the *Newtown Borough Open Space Plan Update*. The plan provides an analysis of the base conditions and policy of open space in the borough, a plan for open space and connectivity, and provides strategies for the protection of open space.

The plan focuses on key areas for improvement including Newtown Creek, the Newtown Rail Trail, Newtown Common and various borough parks including Patriots Park, Pickering Field, and Linton Memorial Park. Additionally, the plan focuses on improving connectivity in the borough through means of sidewalk extensions, such as along North State Street to Frost Lane, and providing pedestrian bridge connections, such as a new bridge over Newtown Creek at Frost Lane.

PUBLIC LANDS

**MUNICIPAL PARKS AND RECREATION LANDS**

The borough has three recreation facilities and two passive recreation areas within its boundaries.



*Brian S. Gregg Memorial Park*

Brian S. Gregg Memorial Park combines open space with a children’s playground and was dedicated to honor the borough police officer slain in the line of duty in September 2005. In 2001, the borough used a grant of \$114,465 from the Bucks County Municipal Open Space Program to purchase this one-acre parcel adjacent to the former Chancellor Street School, now the Council Rock School District’s administrative office building.

The baseball and multipurpose field at Pickering Field encompasses about three acres at the corner of Chancellor Street, Jefferson Street, and Lincoln Avenue.

The Linton Memorial Park combines open space with a children’s playground on a half-acre site on the northwestern corner of Lincoln Avenue and Penn Street.

Newtown Common is a 0.18-acre park along Newtown Creek, just off the west end of Greene Street, with benches and a stone marker. The common was once part of a much larger central green space designed by William Penn in 1684. A restoration of the Newtown Common and adjacent creek occurred in 2018, which included removal of the concrete debris at the end of Greene Street, stabilization and restoration of the creek banks, redesign of the park and its pedestrian entrance, landscaping with native plants in the park and along Greene Street, installation of solar lighting, seating, bicycle racks and educational signage, sensitive stormwater management, and step-down access to the creek. The project was partially funded by a grant from the Community Conservation Partnership Program and the Bucks County Municipal Open Space Program.

The borough purchased a 0.15-acre parcel of land at the intersection of Court Street and Mercer Street in 2019 for open space/park space and is now named Patriots Park. The land is adjacent to the historically significant Bird in Hand property and the purchase was partially funded by a grant from the Bucks County Municipal Open Space Program.

**Table 18. Borough Owned Parks and Recreation Areas**

Name	Location	Facilities	Acreage
Pickering Field	Chancellor Street, Jefferson Street, and Lincoln Avenue	Baseball and multipurpose field	3.1
Linton Memorial Park	Lincoln Avenue and Penn Street	Playground equipment, picnic tables	0.7
Brian S. Gregg Memorial Park	North Congress Street	Playground equipment, picnic tables	0.7
Newtown Common	Greene Street	Benches, picnic table	0.18
Patriots Park	Court Street and Mercer Street	Benches	0.15

**PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS**

The only school facility within the borough is Council Rock School District’s administrative offices located in the Chancellor Center at 30 North Chancellor Street. The Chancellor Center was formerly used, first as a high school, and then as an elementary school before being renovated for use as administrative offices. The historic building is located on 1.9-acre site and is adjacent to the Brian S. Gregg Memorial Park.

The Chancellor Center has been a staple facility in the borough for decades. If the current occupants of the building relocate, the borough should consider acquiring the building for municipal use. This site holds the potential to serve as a community center for the borough, adding a valuable recreation facility for residents.

**PRIVATELY-PROTECTED LANDS**

**PRIVATE RECREATIONAL AREAS**

There are three private recreational facilities in the borough. These include the Newtown Theatre, private fitness centers, and an historic association. Similar to school district properties, these facilities supplement the recreational facilities and amenities provided by the borough.

When considering other potential lands that are effectively acting as permanent open space, cemeteries also qualify. Cemeteries not only function as burial grounds but can serve as a passive open space in a park-like setting. Many cemeteries contain the graves of many of the original settlers and may also be considered historically significant. Newtown Borough contains several small cemeteries associated with places of worship. While located predominately within Newtown Township, the 21.6-acre Newtown Cemetery takes access from Penn Street within the borough.

## REGIONAL RESOURCES

The previous comprehensive plan recognized that, although the borough does not have an abundance of park and recreation resources, there are resources nearby that provide recreational opportunities for residents. These resources include the Goodnoe Elementary School, adjacent to the borough at Frost Lane and Andrew Drive in Newtown Township, which has play equipment and multi-purpose fields; Roberts Ridge Park, next to Goodnoe School; Carl Sedia Park/Chandler Fields, also in the township; Bucks County Community College; Council Rock Middle and High Schools; Tyler State Park; and Core Creek County Park. Borough residents also can use the Newtown Trail, a 3.7-mile linear park that connects through the borough, linking Tyler State Park with the township's Silver Lake Park along the Newtown Bypass. Chapter 9: Transportation and Circulation, will further discuss planning for trails and pedestrian circulation.

## RESIDENT SURVEY

A community survey was sent to each resident as part of this comprehensive plan update. Several questions within the survey were relevant to parks, recreation and open space facilities and services. When asked to name the top five issues to be better addressed in the borough, respondents ranked outdoor community spaces third (40 percent of respondents ranked this in their top 5). Only sidewalks and trails and historic preservation ranked higher.

Residents were also asked if the borough provides enough age-appropriate recreation services and facilities for designated age groups. Most respondents indicated that they were unsure of whether enough age-appropriate recreation services and facilities were provided.

When asked how satisfied respondents are with the community services that the borough provides, out of the eight categories, parks and recreation ranked third, behind police protection and fire protection. Over 47 percent of respondents were satisfied and about 29 percent were very satisfied.

Complete results from the comprehensive plan update surveys can be found on the borough's website at: <https://www.boroughofnewtown.com/plans-studies>.

## PARK PLANNING

Newtown Borough is fortunate to have quality parks and recreation facilities within the borough and close-by in the surrounding community. However, the community survey identified concerns that these facilities are not serving all segments of the borough's population. *Creating Parks and Public Spaces for People of All Ages* (2018), a joint study by AARP, 880 Cities, and The Trust for Public Land, provides a guide to developing outdoor spaces for all age groups.

Research has shown that active recreation facilities and well-designed natural features are key to capturing children's attention, getting them away from electronic devices and outside into parks. The study also shows that women, older adults, and parents with young children rate park safety and comfort as high priorities. Parks should enable inclusive and dynamic uses, with the goal to design for all. In order to serve these diverse users, the following strategies are recommended:

### CREATE COMFORTABLE PLACES

Even the most active park user needs a place to occasionally sit. Well-placed and welcoming park seating is especially vital for older adults. Quality seating encourages people to use parks more often and for longer periods of time.

### PROVIDE AMENITIES

Small-ticket items, such as functioning water fountains, clean and safe restrooms, informative signage; say a lot about the quality of a park and its home community. Signage should be legible, attractive, and consistent. While trash bins are a must-have park item, and not an amenity per se, such receptacles should enable visitors to sort their throwaways for recycling and the bins need to be regularly emptied and kept as insect- and rodent-free as possible.

### SUPPORT PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES FOR PEOPLE OF ALL AGES

Playgrounds should be available and have equipment suitable for the very young, for school-age children, including teens, and adults. Outdoor table and field games such as bocce, ping-pong, checkers, and chess can be enjoyed by people of all ages.

Pedestrian paths are an integral part of parks and are consistently rated by older adults as the most desired infrastructure feature to have. Even in small parks, walking paths with marked distances provide users with an easy way to exercise. Paths should be wide enough to accommodate visitors who are pushing strollers or using wheelchairs.

Other natural design features, such as community gardens, can encourage outdoor activities, local pride, and intergenerational projects for the community.

Incorporating these elements creates great parks, which provide spaces for active, passive, and contemplative recreation. A mixture of sports facilities, public art, open spaces, quiet nooks, running paths, and seating areas create a park that has something for everyone.

## OPEN SPACE PLANNING

The Natural Resource Management chapter provides a discussion on the management of the borough's existing and future open space resources. For dedicated open space within new developments and redevelopments, the borough highly encourages the use of native trees and other plant species and discourages the use of invasive exotic vegetation. Landscaping with plant species that are best adapted to the borough's environment can produce significant ecological and cost-saving benefits. These recommendations should also be followed for the borough-controlled open space resources.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommended activities listed below are strongly oriented toward the expansion of open space and recreation opportunities.

- Continue to implement the recommendations contained in the *Newtown Borough Open Space Plan Update*.
- Investigate opportunities for acquiring additional open space and recreation areas.
- Actively retain existing open space and recreation areas.
- Pursue open space plan priorities for protection through outside funding sources.
- Pursue opportunities to create and expand greenway corridors, and increase public access to them, particularly by means of acquisition of easements along Newtown Creek and in proximity to Newtown Common.
- Pursue intermunicipal cooperation with Newtown Township on recreation and open space activities of mutual benefit.
- Provide amenities to support a wide range of ages, particularly considering older adults.
- Preserve unimproved property in its natural state to support wildlife and effective stormwater management.
- Prioritize native plants on borough-owned property and encourage native plant use throughout the borough.

## CHAPTER 9. TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION

A transportation system provides for the movement of people and goods between places. The adequacy of this system is directly influenced by the growth of population and type of land development that occur along the system.

Good land use planning is critical to prevent adverse effects to the transportation system. Transportation improvements should be designed to address the needs of the public, individual property owners, and neighborhoods. Where appropriate, transportation improvements should allow multi-purpose use and foster the safe movement of pedestrians, bicycles, public transit, and motor vehicles.

In response to an increase in pedestrian related safety concerns, Newtown Borough created the Walk Friendly Newtown committee. The committee's goal is to get all those who live in, work in, and move through the borough to be active participants in making the community safe for pedestrians.

The borough's high quality of life depends on the advantages that a well-functioning transportation system provides. Maintaining and enhancing the quality and efficiency of the system will support the borough's economic development efforts. This chapter examines the transportation system in the borough and provides analysis and recommendations for the various modes of transportation that serve it.

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

**PRINCIPLES:** Mobility, Sustainability

**FINDINGS:** The three basic components of the transportation circulation system within the borough are the vehicular system, the parking facilities, and multimodal transportation. The borough's grid pattern streets provide for increased connectivity within the borough and to the surrounding area, which may cause congestion on borough roads during peak travel times, creating more potential hazards for pedestrians and bicyclists. Through various planning efforts, this chapter reviews potential actions the borough can take to ensure safety for all types of transportation.

### COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

- When asked what modes of transportation the residents in their household use to get to work (if employed) most respondents (93 percent) indicated that residents in their home use a car as a mode of transportation to get to work. Additionally:
  - 5 percent bike to work
  - 12 percent take the train
  - 12 percent walk
  - 26 percent work from home
  - 2 percent utilize ride share services
- 75 percent of respondents indicated walkability as a reason they choose to live in Newtown Borough.
- When asked what modes of transportation the residents in their household use to get around, traveling by car was the most popular answer, with 99 percent of residents using cars. Additionally:
  - 43 percent travel by bicycle
  - 14 percent use the train to get around

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

- 75 percent walk
- 2 percent take a bus to get around
- 11 percent utilize ride share services
- Access to sidewalks, crosswalks, protected bicycle lanes, traffic enforcement, and traffic calming initiatives were all highly ranked by survey respondents as initiatives the borough could implement to enhance public safety.
  - 59 percent of respondents indicated that they would like to see tax money redirected to enhance the above safety initiatives, 12 percent indicated they would not like to see tax money redirected to those initiatives, and 29 percent were unsure.
- Sidewalks/trails and traffic calming measures both appeared in the top five issues residents would like to be better addressed in the borough. Sidewalks/trails was the answer with the most responses, with 53 percent of respondents indicating it as an issue in the borough. 38 percent of residents indicated traffic calming as one of the top five issues in the borough.

## TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

There are three basic components of the transportation circulation system within Newtown Borough. These are the vehicular system, the parking facilities, and multimodal transportation. For the circulation system to function well, each component must operate properly.

Streets in the borough serve many purposes. While their typical purpose is to carry vehicles to destinations in and outside the borough, they also serve the purpose of providing an area for parking, local vehicle movement, and pedestrian movement.

As the borough maintains and upgrades its roads, a balance among parking needs, local vehicle movements, and pedestrian movements must be upheld. The livability of neighborhoods and the historic character of the borough must also be considered.

### VEHICULAR SYSTEM

The primary roads within Newtown Borough are Washington Avenue/Newtown-Yardley Road, North and South State Streets and North and South Lincoln Avenues. These roadways carry the highest volumes of traffic within the borough and provide access to the central business district. Furthermore, the Newtown Bypass has a direct effect on traffic patterns in the borough even though it is not located within its borders. Particularly, during peak traffic times heavy congestion occurs where the bypass intersects with State Street, Newtown-Richboro, and Buck Roads. Commuters will often try to go around these heavily congested areas by driving through the borough.

The street system in the borough is laid out in a grid pattern. This grid pattern provides Newtown Borough with an increased level of connectivity. The connectivity is high since there are multiple routes and connections serving the same destinations and origins, making it an attractive commute option for people trying to avoid congestion. As more cars enter the borough because of the borough's connectivity a significant increase in traffic volumes occurs. This causes a decrease in the efficiency of the borough's grid-pattern and makes it a more dangerous environment for both vehicles and pedestrians.

When operating efficiently, the grid also reduces travel times because it allows people to travel the shortest distance between two points. It also allows emergency vehicles to respond more quickly and use

alternative routes if one is blocked. Finally, the grid pattern has the benefit of spreading out traffic and reducing vehicle speeds.

This high level of connectivity allows people to have the option of walking or biking because the routes to schools, parks, and businesses are shorter. However, pedestrian connectivity in the borough has suffered due to gaps in the sidewalk system.

The surveys taken for this comprehensive plan update reveal that traffic and creating a safer vehicular system are top concerns for borough residents and businesses. Survey respondents indicate that traffic calming should be a top five priority for the borough. In total 38 percent of respondents cited traffic calming as the third most important public safety issue that should be addressed by the borough. Furthermore, traffic calming (40 percent) and traffic enforcement (38 percent) were viewed by residents as the top two public safety initiatives that could be implemented by the borough.

Coupled with making streets safer and calmer, respondents indicated continued concerns over traffic volume and congestion within the borough, specifically traffic coming from the Newtown Bypass to cut through the borough. In 2012 improvements to the bypass were completed to allow for efficient timing between signals and more turning lanes but concerns about bypass related congestion persist. These concerns must be weighed against the need for traffic to be able to easily access the borough's main street and central business district.

Two studies, DVRPC's 2005 study *Taming Traffic, Context Sensitive Solutions in the DVRPC Region* and the 2012 *Newtown Borough Integrated Transportation and Circulation Study* identify multiple sites and corridors for improvements that increase pedestrian access and calm traffic. Two locations that appeared in both studies, and have received modest improvements, are Washington and Lincoln Avenues. Washington Avenue now has crosswalks installed at the majority of its intersections. A crosswalk has also been installed at Lincoln Avenue and Jefferson Street which connects to a recently installed sidewalk on Jefferson Street. These locations serve as examples of how simple improvements like crosswalk and sidewalk development can calm traffic and help abate traffic congestion. These improvements also maintain current levels of accessibility and maintain the borough's current business climate.

To continue to develop this safe and efficient vehicular system the borough should continue with the following actions:

- Continue to develop and implement street improvements found within *Taming Traffic, Context Sensitive Solutions in the DVRPC Region, Newtown Borough Integrated Transportation and Circulation Study*, and subsequent studies.
- Support improvements to the Newtown Bypass to take cut-through traffic out of the borough.
- Maintain the high level of connectivity of the borough's street pattern.
- Continue to improve streets to ensure the safety of residents, pedestrians, and motorists.

## Parking

Parking remains an important issue for Newtown Borough. Future land development in areas having a shortage of parking may exacerbate parking deficiencies. Arrangements such as shared parking and connections to existing parking areas should be evaluated as new land development is proposed. The borough should also require that applicants evaluate all parking alternatives during the land development process by adding regulatory language to its subdivision and land development ordinance, including provisions for valet parking and shared parking areas.

The issue of employee parking was discussed in both the resident and business surveys. Business owners cited parking for employees as the fifth biggest challenge for businesses in the borough and cited it as the fourth most important improvement the borough could make to improve business. Customer parking was cited as an even larger concern for borough businesses. It was cited as the fourth biggest challenge for borough businesses and cited as the most important improvement the borough could provide to help improve business. In the resident survey, respondents frequently cited parking concerns in multiple open ended response fields. Based on this feedback Newtown Borough is facing major challenges regarding parking. The borough has regulations that require employee parking needs to be met without using spaces closest to the businesses they serve. Based upon the survey results, these regulations are not enforced, and some employees do not voluntarily leave nearby spaces available for patrons.

The borough should conduct an updated parking study to update the inventory and usage of parking spaces for businesses in the downtown commercial area. A parking study for the borough was last completed in 1990. An updated study should assess the current inventory of parking spaces and their use, and reconsider previous recommendations, such as instituting or reducing time limits and providing short-term parking in high turnover business areas.

Possible recommendations from this study may include:

- increasing the availability of parking spaces close to businesses through long-term parking permits in public lots
- coordinating efforts with businesses to reserve nearby spaces for customers rather than employees and to enforce employee off-site parking requirements
- increasing public, private, and institutional sector cooperation to foster arrangements for shared parking for all users
- improving and marketing public and private parking lots through improved directional and informational signage
- where appropriate, consolidating private parking areas to improve efficiency
- limiting time length of parking on additional side streets in downtown
- analyzing time limits on all streets within the downtown commercial area
- investigating the pros and cons of increasing parking violation enforcement efforts
- investigating opportunities for installing one-way streets to maintain or implement on-street parking
- analyzing a parking permit fee structure
- investigating feasibility of a new parking garage and additional surface lots

## Public Transportation

Newtown Borough is served by the Route 130 Bus Line operated by the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA). SEPTA's Route 130 bus traverses the borough as it makes connections between the Bucks County Community College in Newtown Township, Neshaminy Mall in Bensalem

Township, Parx Casino in Bensalem Township, and Philadelphia Mills in Northeast Philadelphia. The stop at the Neshaminy Mall links to several other bus routes. The Route 130 bus also connects to SEPTA's Langhorne West Trenton Regional Rail station in Middletown Township.

While Newtown is currently served by only one bus route, the borough should continue to support public transportation efforts. Newtown Borough should promote public transportation through the following activities:

- Monitor bus service routes and schedules and providing comment to SEPTA and the TMA of Bucks County.
- Promote and market bus routes as an alternative to automobile use since the availability of public transportation is a benefit to all residents in the area.
- Support public transportation service connections for the borough.
- Promote public transportation service connections as residential and commercial development occurs.

### ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION AND THE MULTI-MODAL SYSTEM

Newtown's street grid pattern affords its residents the opportunity to traverse the community through biking and walking instead of using their private automobile. Having commute options creates a multi-modal transportation system that integrates vehicular, public transportation, pedestrian, and bicyclist systems. Active transportation modes, such as biking and walking not only have positive benefits on resident health but also support the economic vitality of the borough, contributing to its character making it one of Bucks County's most livable communities.

To continue the development of the borough's multi-modal transportation system, the borough should develop an active transportation plan. Active transportation is any type of human powered mode of transportation, specifically walking and biking. These modes of transportation are often viewed as unsafe in communities as development typically prioritizes inactive modes of transportation, such as automobiles and trucks, over the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists. By focusing on active modes of transportation the borough would not only renew its commitment to walking and biking but start to develop a truly multi-modal transportation network that advances the health and safety of its residents and businesses.

An active transportation plan would provide the borough with the opportunity to consolidate planning goals identified through previous planning efforts and create a formalized bicycle and trails plan and complete streets policy within one comprehensive planning document. The active transportation plan would lay out a vision to promote physically active modes of transportation throughout the borough while safely integrating them with its existing vehicular system. Underpinning the development of this system would be a complete streets policy that balances the needs of residents, businesses, commuters, and visitors while developing a transportation system that is accessible to all users.

Speeding and high cut-through traffic volumes on neighborhood streets can create an atmosphere in which non-motorists are intimidated or even endangered by motorized traffic. A complete streets policy ensures that the entire right-of-way is planned, designed, constructed, operated, and maintained to provide safe access for all users. Complete streets as a concept seeks to ensure the safe passage of all users within a roadway network. Complete streets policies and practices help develop and monitor these facilities as they are created to ensure safe user passage. This is typically achieved by implementing traffic calming measures which include, but are not limited to, curb extensions, lane width reduction, street

parking, crosswalks, bike lanes, sidewalk extensions, and squaring off skewed intersections. These measures can increase both the real and perceived safety of pedestrians and bicyclists. Their role in traffic calming is usually emphasized because they are self-enforcing. In other words, measures such as lane width reduction and curb extensions slow motorized vehicles in the absence of a police presence.

The borough should pursue adopting an official complete streets policy. A complete streets policy would set forth an official vision, design standards, performance measures, and implementation steps to establish sustained long-term development of complete streets facilities.

Complete streets measures should affect driver behavior and improve the safety of the streets for all roadway users. They must be designed so they do not impede emergency access by police, fire, ambulance, or rescue personnel. Finally, allowing for public participation during the design and placement of traffic calming measures will help to ensure their acceptance.

Sycamore Street in neighboring Newtown Township is a good example of the positive effects transportation policy can have. The project consisted of new curbs and driveway aprons, sidewalks with decorative concrete patterns, patterned crosswalks, antique styled streetlights, park benches and trash receptacles. These improvements have transformed Sycamore Street into a pedestrian-friendly environment, while at the same time, allowing for efficient vehicular movement.

To ensure the success of a complete streets policy, the borough should establish performance measures to monitor the effectiveness of this policy. These performance measures may include:

- a decrease in traffic on neighborhood streets
- reduction in speeding on major roadways within the borough
- increase in the number of people bicycling and walking
- reduction in crash frequency and severity
- increases in on street parking
- increases in pedestrian satisfaction amongst residents and merchants
- increase parking satisfaction amongst residents and visitors

The 2012 *Newtown Borough Integrated Transportation and Circulation Study* identified five priority locations for roadway improvement. These improvements, while not developed with the guidance of a complete streets policy, will have a significant impact on pedestrian safety and congestion within the borough and enforce many of the principles behind complete streets.

- Install clearly defined white roadway edge lines, pedestrian crossing signs, painted cross walks, and rapid flashing beacons along Washington Avenue, specifically near the intersection of Washington Avenue and Congress Street.
- Revise signal timings and add a textured/colored crosswalk to the intersection of Washington and Lincoln avenues. A suggested increase in the amount of yellow signal time at the intersection would give more time for cars to stop while textured/colored would draw attention to pedestrians to help alleviate crashes at the borough's most dangerous intersection.
- Revise signal timing, add pedestrian phase and add textured/colored intersection to the intersection of State Street and Centre Avenue.
- Install pedestrian crossing signs, painted crosswalks, and if feasible, add on-street parking along South State Street to alleviate dangerous conditions for pedestrians and bicyclists.

- Install bike lanes along Lincoln Avenue north of Washington Avenue to provide space for bicyclists, while at the same time, slowing automobile traffic.
- Install lighting at key intersections and streets to encourage walking throughout the borough.

### Pedestrians and Bicyclists

According to the 2017 National Household Travel Survey by the Federal Highway Administration, roughly 35 percent of all trips taken by car are less than two miles in length. By making some of these short trips on foot or by bicycle, rather than in a car, citizens can have a substantial and positive impact on local traffic and congestion, as well as their physical health. In addition to those who bicycle by choice, there are residents, including children and some low-income workers, whose use of this mode of transportation is a necessity.

When people choose to leave their cars at home and make their trips on bicycles, they also make a positive environmental impact. They reduce their use of gasoline, which in turn, reduces the volume of pollutants in the air. Other positive environmental impacts can be a reduction in neighborhood noise levels and improvements in local water quality, as fewer automobile-related discharges end up in the local rivers, streams, and lakes.

### Essential Safety Improvements

Roadway improvements that ensure the safety of bicyclists and pedestrians are critical to developing a safe, multi-modal transportation network that serves all of Newtown Borough's residents and businesses. Improvements that reduce speed, improve intersection safety, and can control vehicle use anchor these safe design trends and are hallmarks of a complete streets policy. There are many low-cost improvements the borough can pursue to start creating a safe multi-modal transportation network in the short term, these include:

- Speed Reduction
  - Narrower lane widths (10 feet wide)
  - Add landscaping and on-street parking
  - Install right-turning lanes as appropriate
  - Synchronize lights for moderate speeds
- Safe Intersection Design
  - Ban turning movements in crash prone areas
  - Install high visibility crosswalks
  - Install pedestrian countdown clocks
  - Provide a leading pedestrian interval at intersections
- Controlling Vehicle Use
  - Restrict truck use on neighborhood streets and commercial streets to trucks with dimensions of DL-23 or SU-30 (standard parcel delivery vehicles)
  - Design roadways and intersections for an area's most used vehicle, while permitting encroachment into adjacent lanes for larger vehicles utilizing those areas.

The borough should coordinate with the County, PennDOT, and Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs to develop a list of low-cost streets improvements that will address the issues of speed reduction, safe intersection design, and controlling vehicle use.

## Pedestrians

One of the keys to the vitality of the borough is how easily people can walk to get to their destinations. The *Newtown Borough Pedestrian Circulation Report* completed by the Bucks County Planning Commission in 2005 identified several proposed improvements to the pedestrian systems through engineering.

Through the provisions of the subdivision and land development ordinance, the borough can ensure that new developments, both residential and nonresidential, include construction of sidewalks. Sidewalks provide alternative methods to make certain needed trips, in addition to their use for exercise and recreation.

Newtown Borough seeks to maintain and improve its walkability. It should continue to implement the recommendations of the report and build upon its findings by incorporating the update to the report as part of a larger active transportation plan:

- identifying streets that do not have sidewalks
- developing a sidewalk strategy that gives highest priority to sidewalks that provide the most significant pedestrian access to schools and the downtown business area
- for roads without sidewalks on either side of the streets, determining which side of the street should receive sidewalks first
- defining a strategy for the infill of sidewalks as streets are rebuilt or properties are developed, to include a plan for sidewalks where gaps exist
- providing sidewalks along streets that do not have sidewalks, improving substandard sidewalks, and installing safe and accessible transitions at locations where new and existing sidewalks abut, and where new sidewalks end at existing paved, unpaved, or other unfinished condition
- facilitating pedestrian access from residential areas to public facilities, such as parks and community facilities
- improving pedestrian crossings at street intersections through measures such as raised crosswalks, limited cartway radii, countdown pedestrian signals, and traffic calming
- providing connections to the surrounding township sidewalk, trail, and bicycle systems
- developing pedestrian facilities between the State Street and Sycamore Street retail corridors, Jefferson Street and Elm Avenue, and mid-block crossings on State Street at the Newtown Theatre and on North Congress Street at the Chancellor Center.

## Bicyclists

A bike-friendly town is typically associated with a high quality of life and a sense of community. In many communities, bicycle systems are important and much appreciated facilities. They increase the social connections that take place when residents are active and spend time outdoors in their community. Bicycling also reduces short automobile trips and preserves parking areas for those whose only travel option may be by car.

The bicycle system proposed for the borough would consist of a combination of off-road trails and bike-friendly roads. A bicycle plan should be prepared, as part of a larger active transportation plan, to determine the best routes to connect existing and anticipated developments with schools, shopping areas, parks and playgrounds, employment centers, and other key community locations. A bicycle system would be used and enjoyed by borough residents, as well as by people who work, shop, or visit Newtown Borough.

The borough should ensure that bicycling is a convenient, safe, and practical means of transportation by developing and implementing a trail and bike system plan within the larger active transportation plan. The plan should include:

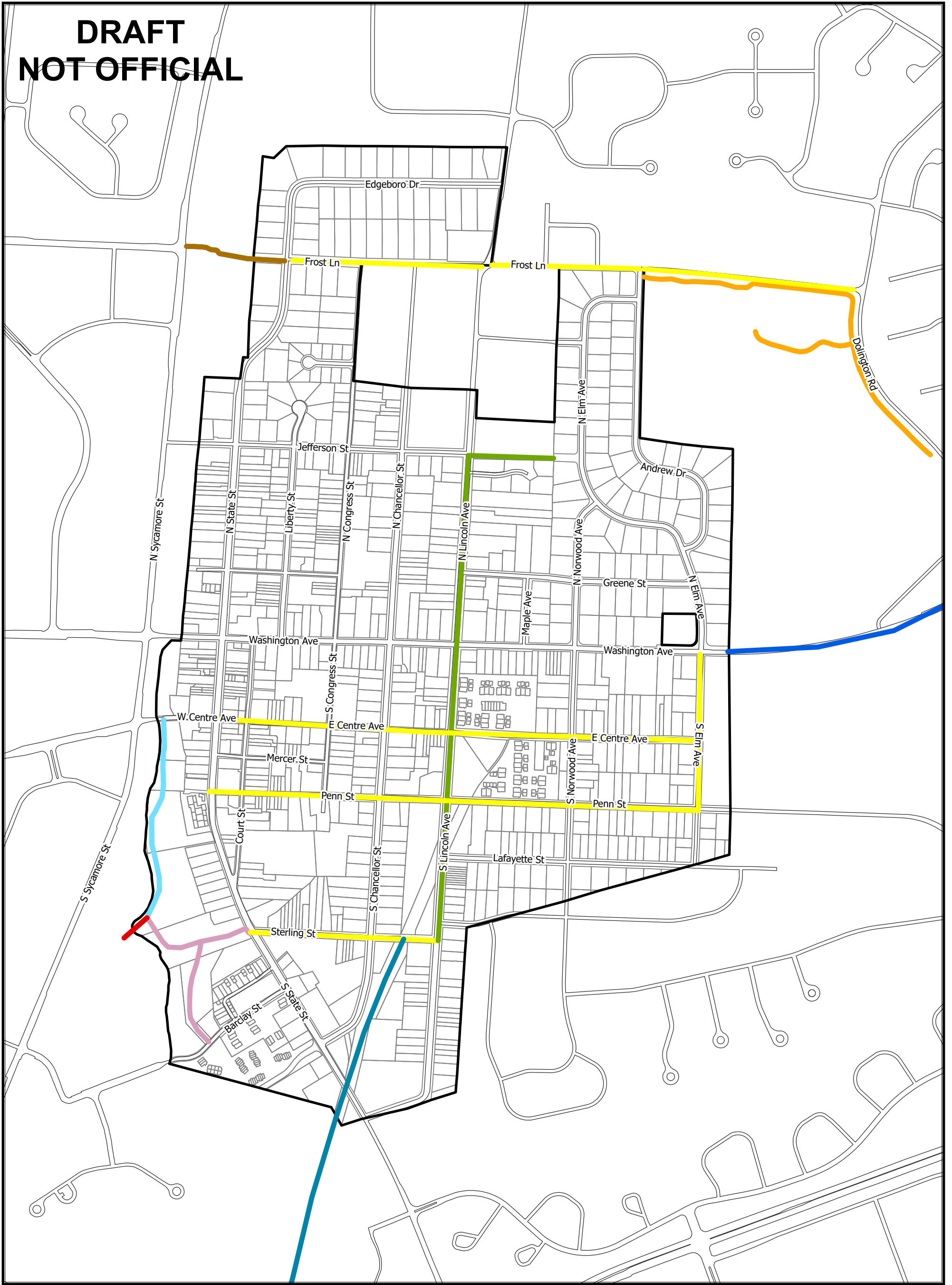
- consideration of dedicated bike lanes on appropriate borough roads
- addition of bike racks in the shopping district, by the municipal parking lots, and near strategic transit stops
- identification of off-road bike trails
- identification of gaps in the bicycling system and recommendation of improvements needed to fill these gaps in the system
- provision of bike trail connections to schools, parks, and community facilities
- identification of potential connections to existing and proposed bike paths in Newtown Township

In recent years, bicycle and trail systems have been brought to the forefront of transportation development in Bucks County. Given its central location in the county, Newtown Borough can connect itself with several trail and bike systems that promote growth within the borough and foster deeper connections with neighboring communities. Toward this end, the borough should consider working with Goodnoe Elementary and Council Rock School District to develop a Safe Routes to Schools' program for Goodnoe Elementary students. This program will educate students on how to safely ride bicycles, walk throughout the borough, and develop lifelong confidence when bicycling and walking. Trail users can enjoy pedestrian and trail connections with the area including:

**Table 19: Potential Bicycle and Trail Connections**

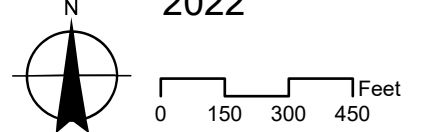
Name	Type	Length (Feet)	Status	
Newtown Rail Trail	Shared Use Trail	2,325	Proposed	Would be located in the SEPTA owned right-of-way of the former Newtown Line
Sterling St Bike Sharrows	Bike Sharrows	1,200	Proposed	Segment between the Newtown Rail Trail and Lincoln Avenue is part of the Newtown Rail Trail
Lincoln Avenue Bike Lanes	Bike Lanes	3,100	Proposed	Segment between Sterling Street and Penn Street is part of the Newtown Rail Trail
Frost Lane Bridge and Trail	Shared Use Trail	600	Proposed	Would connect Newtown Borough to Newtown Township along former trolley route
Steeple View Creek Walk Trail	Shared Use Trail	1,200	In Development	Will be developed as part of the overall Steeple View Creek Walk development project
Steeple View Creek Walk Trail Extension	Shared Use Trail	200	Proposed	Would extend the Steeple View Creek Walk Trail into Newtown Township via a bridge connecting to Carl Sedia Park
Frost Lane Bike Sharrows & Sidewalks	Bike Sharrows & Sidewalks	950	Proposed	Would provide a connection to Goodnoe Elementary School, Roberts Ridge Park and the future trail in development along Lower Dolington Road in Newtown Township
Newtown Creek Trail	Shared Use Trail	1,400	Proposed	Proposed on property located between South State Street, Newtown Creek and Barclay Street
Bike Facilities along Lower Dolington Road	Bike Lanes and Sharrows	7,500	Proposed	Support the creation of a bike trail along Lower Dolington Road to connect Newtown Borough with Lower Makefield Township as part of linking Newtown to the Delaware Canal towpath
Centre Avenue Bike Sharrows	Bike Sharrows	2,900	Proposed	Segment between South State Street and South Elm Avenue
Penn Street Bike Sharrows	Bike Sharrows	2,900	Proposed	Segment between South State Street and South Elm Avenue
South Elm Avenue Bike Sharrows	Bike Sharrows	1,600	Proposed	Segment between Penn Street and Washington Avenue

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-  Newtown Borough
-  Bike Lanes
-  Bike Sharrows
-  Existing Sidewalks
-  Newtown Rail Trail
-  Newtown Creek Trail
-  Frost Lane Bridge Trail
-  Steeple View Creek Walk Trail
-  Connection to Delaware Canal Trail
-  Steeple View Creek Walk Trail Extension

**Map 4. Proposed Trails and Bicycle Routes**  
 Newtown Borough  
 Comprehensive Plan Update  
 2022





## RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to promote a coordinated, multiple-use system of transportation and circulation within the borough, the following activities are recommended:

- Maintain and improve streets to ensure the safety of residents, pedestrians, and motorists and the livability of neighborhoods, while maintaining the high level of connectivity of the borough's street pattern.
- Conduct a parking study to update the parking space inventory and associated usage; prepare and implement a parking plan utilizing best practices to address local parking issues.
- Work with SEPTA and TMA Bucks to ensure that the public transportation needs of residents are being met.
- Coordinate with the county and PennDOT to develop a list of street improvements that will address the issues of speed reduction, pedestrian safety, intersection design, and control vehicle use.
- Develop an active transportation plan to create a comprehensive vision that incorporates all aspects of the borough's multi-modal transportation system. Areas to focus on should include:
  1. Complete Streets Policy - A formalized Complete Streets Policy would provide design guidelines, preferred traffic calming measures, performance measures and implementation steps that help bring bicycle and pedestrian-friendly systems to fruition.
  2. Pedestrian Circulation - Identify gaps in the sidewalk system and develop strategies to fill in those gaps. Can serve as the Borough's update to the existing Pedestrian Circulation Report.
  3. Trail and Bicycle System Plan - An active transportation plan that can serve as the borough's formalized trail and bike system plan.
- Continue to develop the borough's transportation system by implementing projects identified in the current *Pedestrian Circulation Report* and *Integrated Transportation and Circulation Study* until the new Active Transportation Plan or similar plan is created.



## CHAPTER 10. SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

**PRINCIPLES:** Sustainability

**FINDINGS:** Though not currently mandated by the recycling Act 101 to recycle, many borough residents and businesses still actively recycle. There are actions the borough can take to enhance the recycling program in town, such as working with a hauler to provide a municipal curbside trash and recycling pickup program, working with the county recycling coordinator to provide additional education and outreach programs for residents regarding recycling, and providing a leaf/yard waste pickup for residents.

### COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

- 53 percent of respondents indicated they believe the borough should consider selecting a single hauler to provide trash and recycling pickup for residents.

### CURRENT SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Solid waste management may be described as the process of providing an economically and environmentally sound means of storing, collecting, transporting, processing, and disposing of waste and recyclable materials. In Pennsylvania, Act 101, the Municipal Waste Planning, Recycling, and Waste Reduction Act of 1988, determined that municipalities with populations greater than 10,000 and smaller municipalities with a population of 5,000 to 10,000 residents with a population density of more than 300 residents per square mile are considered mandated municipalities and therefore are required to establish a program to source-separate and collect a minimum of three types of recyclables, plus yard waste, and to adopt resolutions, ordinances, regulations, and standards to carry out the responsibilities of solid waste management. These responsibilities may be accomplished through municipal programs or through the regulation of private firms that collect and haul municipal waste. At this time, the borough is not considered a mandated municipality under Act 101.

Act 101 also authorizes counties to prepare and periodically update a 10-year plan to guide the management of municipal solid waste. *The Bucks County Municipal Waste Management Plan* was approved by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP) in January of 2019, and adopted by the Bucks County Commissioners in December of 2018. It was recently submitted to the municipalities, by the County of Bucks, for their adoption. The plan was adopted by the Newtown Borough Council on August 8, 2018. The revised plan provides continued guidance for solid waste management throughout the county to the year 2028.

Because the borough is not a mandated community, borough administration is not currently involved in the collection of solid waste for residents or businesses. Municipal waste collection and recycling are provided by private waste haulers contracted out by each individual household or business. Haulers deliver the collected waste for disposal at a nearby landfill or waste-to-energy facility while the recyclable material is delivered to recycling facilities in the region. Residents and businesses are responsible for securing a contract with a hauler to handle their trash, recycling, and yard waste disposal needs. Due to

the residents’ ability to choose their waste hauler, there are multiple waste haulers that service the borough and pickup schedules and routes vary.

Although not currently mandated by Act 101, the borough could create an ordinance for solid waste management to ensure that both residents and businesses are recycling. The borough can work with the Bucks County Recycling Coordinator and representatives from the PA Department of Environmental Protection to establish regulations or guidelines for recycling and solid waste management in the borough.

In addition to new regulations around recycling and waste, the borough can work with a hauler to provide recycling pickups for their residents. Switching to a single hauler municipal contract ensures that all residents are provided curbside recycling and can lessen the truck traffic of multiple trash haulers collecting waste in the borough.

The borough also participates in the Southeast Pennsylvania Regional Household Hazardous Waste Collection Program. This program provides the opportunity for residents to properly dispose of the hazardous component of the residential waste stream that should not be disposed of in local landfills or waste-to-energy facilities. In 2021, the county collected 162 tons of hazardous material to be properly disposed of.

The figures noted in the table below, reported as part of the borough’s annual municipal recycling report for 2020, show the results of the recycling efforts of the residents and businesses of Newtown Borough. Over 631 tons of recyclable materials were diverted from the waste stream by the residents of the borough, along with an additional 69 tons of material from borough businesses.

**Table 20. Newtown Borough Recycling Program, 2021**

Residential Recycling (Tons)	Commercial Recycling (Tons)	Total Reported Recycled (Tons)
631	69	700

*Source: Municipal Annual Recycling Report*

Recycling efforts on the part of residents and businesses in Newtown Borough will continue to conserve limited landfill space and contribute to the long-term sustainability of the environment.

## FUTURE NEEDS

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania set a goal in 1997 to recycle 35 percent of the municipal waste stream by 2003. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the County of Bucks both reportedly reached this goal in 2002. Although this goal has been attained, continued effort on the part of each community is important to continue this success and possibly even increase these rates.

Contamination of the recycling stream with non-recyclable material is a growing problem. Increasing education efforts for residents can increase proper recycling practices and decrease contamination rates. Communication with businesses and schools in the borough can provide assurances that they have recycling programs in place and enable borough and county recycling staff to help in the review of their waste management programs. A program to institute a recycling education and enforcement program could benefit the residents by reducing their waste output while simultaneously increasing the rate and

volume of recycling in the borough. Potential grant funding for these efforts can be applied for through the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP).

Food waste has become a growing concern for the waste stream. According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, approximately 31 percent of the municipal waste stream is comprised of food and yard waste. The borough can help reduce its overall waste output and divert material away from the landfill by increasing efforts to educate residents on composting and providing programs such as online compost bins sales and compost classes to help reduce food waste throughout the borough.

These continued efforts will further increase the diversion of materials from the waste stream. Increased recycling tonnages may be included on the municipal Act 101 Recycling Performance Grant application, resulting in greater grant funding being available to the borough.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Consider a municipal contract for trash and recycling to provide waste management and recycling services to all residents.
- Work with the PA DEP and Bucks County Recycling Coordinator to create an ordinance regarding solid waste management.
- Expand recycling education efforts to reduce contamination in the recycling stream with aid from the PADEP Recycling Program Development & Implementation Grant.
- Work with the county recycling coordinator to conduct waste audits in businesses and schools to get a better understanding of their current recycling and solid waste output trends.
- Work with county recycling coordinator and the DEP to increase composting education efforts and apply for grants to facilitate residential composting programs in the borough.
- Provide yard waste pickups for residents.



## CHAPTER 11. ENERGY AND SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is the achievement of meeting the needs of the present generation while protecting resources for future generations. Sustainability recognizes that natural resources and systems are essential to providing both economic benefits and improving the quality of life. Concepts of sustainability and sustainable development are implicit in the principles, strategies, and actions of the *Newtown Borough Comprehensive Plan Update*. The borough's compact nature and older buildings make it inherently more sustainable, as its design encourages a walkable community, and the reuse of existing buildings and resources. Energy sustainability means becoming more energy efficient and making use of low-carbon, renewable energy sources. Bucks County is committed to reducing energy demand and greenhouse gas emissions. The Bucks County Commissioners voted in the spring of 2021 to adopt the Sierra Club's Ready for 100 resolution. The RF100 resolution pledges governments to improve their operations and adopt policies that will limit their use of fossil fuels and eventually eliminate their carbon footprint.

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

**PRINCIPLES:** Sustainability, Resilience

**FINDINGS:** There are three primary categories that can be implemented at the municipal level that can increase energy conservation and efficiency and lower the borough's carbon footprint including: transportation, municipal government operations, and building and development. The borough has taken steps towards becoming more sustainable through actions such as joining the Regional Streetlight Procurement Program, conducting an energy audit of municipal facilities and equipment, and participating in Council Rock North High School's LED light bulb swap out program. The borough can enhance their sustainability efforts by encouraging green building standards and regulating additional alternative energy sources in their zoning ordinance.

### COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

- 22 percent of respondents listed Renewable Energy as one of their top five issues they would like to see better addressed in the borough.

### SUSTAINABILITY

The availability of energy resources is important to residents, businesses, developers, institutions, and all levels of government. Energy is required and critical to our modern personal, vocational, and professional lifestyles. As continuing technology advancements are made, our reliance on energy resources increases. Energy conservation is crucial as the consumption of nonrenewable resources impacts the borough's environment. The use of fossil fuels contributes to air and water pollution, advancing the impacts of climate change.

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

There are three primary categories that can be implemented at the municipal level that can increase energy conservation and efficiency and lower the borough's carbon footprint.

1. Transportation
2. Municipal Government Operations
3. Building and Development

### TRANSPORTATION

The use of energy for transportation includes fuels used by vehicles in transporting goods and services, as well as the energy required for vehicle manufacture and maintenance, building of transportation infrastructure and maintenance of the transportation systems. Energy sustainability requires a reduction in energy demand in the transportation sector through reducing vehicle miles traveled, improving energy efficiency, using more renewable fuels, and expanding travel options. The borough should take the following actions relative to energy conservation associated with transportation:

- Develop complete streets policies and design standards to provide support for walking and biking.
- Ensure that all parks and libraries are accessible via bike paths or sidewalks.
- Establish requirements for bicycle parking as part of new commercial and retail development.
- Establish publicly accessible electric vehicle charging stations.

### MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

Newtown Borough can set an example and consider the following actions relative to energy conservation associated within the operations of the borough government:

- conduct periodic energy audits of borough facilities
- encourage decreases in energy consumption associated with municipal operations
- institute a policy requiring that all lights and computers be shut off in municipal facilities when not in use
- seek assistance to replace incandescent signs, traffic control, and other such municipally maintained fixtures with low-cost LED (light-emitting diode) bulbs
- provide information to borough residents and businesses on energy conservation techniques and energy audits

### NEWTOWN BOROUGH'S SUSTAINABLE ACTIONS

In 2016, Newtown Borough joined the Regional Streetlight Procurement Program (RSLPP) through the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC). This program aims to replace streetlights with LED lamps for long-term energy reduction. The borough has replaced over 150 street light fixtures with high-efficiency LED lamps. LED lights reduce maintenance costs because they depreciate at much slower rates. LED lights do not use toxic chemicals such as mercury, consume little energy, and save money in the long run. In 2017, the LED streetlights were installed, creating lower energy and maintenance costs for the borough.

Other sustainable actions taken by the borough include:

- regular replacement of police vehicles to maintain an energy efficient fleet
- conducting an energy audit of municipal facilities and equipment
- participation in Council Rock North High School Green Team's LED light bulb swap out program

## BUILDINGS AND DEVELOPMENT

More than 40 percent of U.S. energy consumption is devoted to heating and cooling residential and commercial buildings. Powering homes and businesses consumes over 70 percent of all U.S. electricity use with over 20 percent of this energy being wasted.

Future development or renovations of existing buildings can use green building practices to allow for the most efficient use of energy in buildings. Green building is the practice of creating or renovating structures using systems and materials that are environmentally responsible and resource-efficient throughout a building's life-cycle. Green buildings aim to reduce the environmental impact of buildings by taking advantage of renewable resources, implementing good site design, improving energy, water, and material usage, improving air quality, optimizing operations and maintenance, and reducing waste.

Although initial building costs may be greater with green buildings, the upfront investment pays off through lower utility bills, maintenance costs, and higher occupant satisfaction due to increased natural light and improved air quality. Several programs promote and encourage creating sustainable and efficient buildings and developments:

### ENERGY STAR HOME

This is a program developed by the United States Environmental Protection Agency. To earn the ENERGY STAR, a home or apartment must meet energy efficient requirements established by the ENERGY STAR Residential New Construction program. Program requirements are available for single-family homes, multifamily buildings, manufactured homes, and homes undergoing gut rehab. ENERGY STAR certified homes and apartments are at least 10 percent more efficient than homes built to code and achieve a 20 percent improvement on average.

### LEED

The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) is the most widely used green building rating system in the world. Available for virtually all building, community and home project types, LEED provides a framework to create healthy, high-efficient and cost-saving green buildings. LEED is for all building types and all building phases including new construction, interior fit outs, operations and maintenance, and core and shell.

### GREEN BUILDING INITIATIVE

Green Building Initiative (GBI) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that owns and administers the Green Globes green building assessment and certification. Using the Green Globes certification process ensures energy conservation, lowered water consumption, and responsible use of materials.

### SITES

Administered by the Green Business Certification Inc. (GBCI), SITES offers a comprehensive rating system designed to distinguish sustainable landscapes, measure their performance, and elevate their value. The SITES and LEED rating systems are complementary and can be used independently or in tandem. SITES certification applies to new construction projects as well as existing sites that include major renovations. SITES can be applied worldwide to a variety of project types including open spaces, streetscapes and plazas, and commercial, residential, educational, and institutional buildings.

In addition to incentivizing these green building initiatives the borough should take the following actions to increase energy conservation associated with building and development.

- Provide incentives for developers who develop in accordance with green building design standards, alternative energy sources, or green roof standards.
- Encourage the use of Energy Star compliant products, LED light bulbs, tankless water heaters, programmable thermostats, high reflectance roofs on buildings, and high levels of insulation.
- Provide subdivision and land development ordinance provisions for solar orientation and building form to require primary living spaces on the south side of the structure and take advantage of natural cooling and ventilation.
- Prohibit homeowner associations from enacting restrictions that contravene energy efficiency.
- Provide information to borough residents and businesses on energy conservation techniques, energy audits, and retrofits.

## ENERGY

Equally important to energy conservation is the production of energy. Renewable energy is used to replace fossil fuel at the power plant and at the home or business of the end-user via the use of geothermal heat pumps, solar collectors, wind turbines, and hydro turbines. Access to affordable, secure supplies of energy is required for almost every activity of government, business, and residents. The goal of the borough's energy policy should be to assure and enhance the near-term and long-term quality of life for all current and future residents at the lowest costs to energy users and the environment. This can be accomplished by supporting the development of energy systems which are sustainable and locally based, including those that can be built on the site of a home or commercial property.

### SOLAR ENERGY

All energy comes from the sun, so it should follow that solar energy would be one of the simplest and most easily adopted renewable energy sources. Capturing free solar energy can be as simple as proper placement of buildings on a lot to provide for optimal solar access for heating by taking advantage of solar heat gain. Proven and still-evolving photovoltaic panels technology and solar water heating systems also provide realistic opportunities to harness the sun's free energy on both a commercial and an individual lot basis.

The borough can adopt the following additional provisions designed to encourage the use of solar energy and the provision of solar access:

- Prohibit solar restrictions in homeowner associations' regulations (such as prohibiting solar panels on rooftops).

- Allow properly sited and buffered solar panels as an accessory use.
- Require a minimum percentage of energy in new developments be obtained from solar energy.
- Establish standards for protecting solar access and maximizing solar orientation.
- Require energy-efficient windows for new construction and renovation.
- Develop standards for solar power in industrial and commercial districts.

### WIND ENERGY

Wind power is a clean alternative to fossil fuels because it produces no greenhouse gas emissions during operation. It is also plentiful, renewable, widely distributed, and uses relatively little land. Electric power generation from wind energy is one of the fastest growing forms of new electricity generation in the United States. However, as with many Bucks County locations, Newtown Borough has low potential for the use of wind power as an alternative energy source.

### GEOTHERMAL ENERGY

Geothermal heat pumps (GHPs) use the natural heat storage capacity of the earth or groundwater to provide energy efficient heating and cooling. GHPs should not be confused with air-source heat pumps that rely on heated air. Geothermal heat pumps use the relatively constant temperature of the ground or water several feet below the earth's surface as a source of heating and cooling. Geothermal heat pumps are appropriate for retrofit or new homes, where both heating and cooling are desired. In addition to heating and cooling, geothermal heat pumps can provide domestic hot water. A geothermal heat pump system consists of indoor heat pump equipment, a ground loop, and a flow center to connect the indoor and outdoor equipment. The heat pump equipment works like a reversible refrigerator by removing heat from one location and depositing it in another location. The ground loop, which is invisible after installation, allows the exchange of heat between the earth and the heat pump.

Geothermal heat pumps can be open-loop or closed-loop. Closed-loop, or earth-coupled systems, use a water and antifreeze solution circulated in a ground loop of pipe to extract heat from the earth. Open-loop systems work in a similar way, but an open-loop system uses groundwater as the refrigerant liquid that is circulated through the system. The type of system employed depends on many factors including the availability of groundwater, soil type, energy requirements, and size of the lot. Despite their benefits, geothermal systems have a minimal risk of contaminating groundwater because of their placement into the ground or use of groundwater from wells. Therefore, the construction quality of the underground portion is the most critical component for ensuring that the system is environmentally sound. Additionally, water quality is an important issue with open loop systems. Mineral deposits can build up inside the heat exchanger, iron and other impurities can clog a return well, and organic matter from ponds and lakes can quickly damage a geothermal system. Water should be tested for acidity, mineral content, and corrosiveness.

The Bucks County Health Department regulates the drilling of wells, including geothermal wells. The borough should periodically review these regulations to ensure they are in keeping with local requirements.

## CURRENT BOROUGH ZONING

The borough addresses geothermal energy in the borough zoning ordinance and permits closed-loop geothermal heating units as an accessory use. There are currently no set regulations within the borough's municipal code that provide any guidance regarding other renewable energy sources. The addition of standards for other renewable energy sources, such as solar power, can provide easier access to these energy sources within the borough.

The Bucks County Planning Commission has developed a Model Alternative Energy Ordinance that serves as a template for municipalities to use as a guide when incorporating alternative energy standards in their code. The model ordinance includes a purpose and objective, definitions, land use and dimensional regulations, and bonus provisions for alternative energy sources. The borough may refer to this model ordinance as a guide to incorporate new alternative energy regulations moving forward.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Reduce energy demand in the transportation sector by encouraging walking and bicycling, the use of public transit, and support for electric vehicles.
- Encourage green building standards in existing and new development
- Continue to conduct periodic energy audits of borough facilities.
- Encourage decreases for energy consumption associated with municipal operations.
- Refer to the Bucks County Planning Commission Model Alternative Energy Ordinance to expand on the renewable energy types permitted in borough ordinances and support the development of renewable energy sources such as solar and geothermal in the borough.

## CHAPTER 12. HAZARD MITIGATION

Hazardous incidents and disasters can stretch local resources and budgets. Hazard mitigation planning is the effort to reduce loss of life and property by lessening the impact of disasters. Hazard mitigation planning addresses both natural hazards and those caused by human activity. Stakeholders such as emergency management personnel, elected officials, businesses, institutions, local historical and environmental organizations collaborate to support proactive efforts that will minimize risks to life and property. Pre-disaster mitigation actions are taken in advance of a hazard event and are essential to breaking the disaster cycle of damage, reconstruction, and repeated damage. With careful selection, pre-planned mitigation actions can be cost-effective means of reducing the risk of loss.

*The Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000* requires local and county governments to have an official mitigation plan to receive federal disaster mitigation funds. Bucks County adopted its *Hazard Mitigation Plan Update* (HMPU) in 2021 to identify and assess areas of vulnerability in municipalities and prioritize the mitigation strategies with an implementation schedule. The updated plan is a pre-disaster plan that guides the county towards comprehensive multi-hazard mitigation, while respecting the needs and character of municipal communities. It is a blueprint for reducing property damage and saving lives from future disasters and enhancing community resiliency following an event. Furthermore, the approved plan qualifies Bucks County and its municipalities for pre- and post-disaster grant funding.

The Borough Council adopted the HMPU on October 12, 2021.

Municipalities also prepare emergency operations plans that outline how the local government and its various departments will respond in the event of a disaster or emergency, including local fire, police, and public works personnel. The Newtown Borough Emergency Management Organization is responsible for the preparation and maintenance of the borough's emergency operation plan.

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

**PRINCIPLES:** Resilience, Sustainability

**FINDINGS:** Much like the rest of Bucks County, Newtown Borough faces the risk of facing a series of natural and human-made disasters including flooding, tornados, hurricanes, winter storms, utility interruptions, and transportation incidents. By adopting the *Bucks County Hazard Mitigation Update* (2021), the borough is committing to preparing for these risks. The borough has also taken steps towards mitigating potential hazards in the form of the updated floodplain ordinance, which includes limits on location of development, utilities installation, elevation, and flood proofing requirements.

### RISK ASSESSMENT

The Bucks County 2021 HMPU identified 21 hazards as being prevalent throughout or in parts of the county; they are listed in Table 21.

The methodology for assessing risk factors assigns a weighted value for probability, impact, spatial extent, warning time, and duration. In assessing risks for Newtown Borough, it was noted that the highest ranked hazards are (1) flood, flash flood, and ice jam; (2) winter storm; (3) hurricanes, tropical storms, and

nor'easters; (4) environmental hazards; and (5) utility interruption. The moderately ranked hazards are (1) transportation accident; (2) urban fire and explosion; and (3) pandemic. None of these hazards in the assessment are valued greater than those hazards for the county as a whole.

From this assessment, it appears that mitigation activities should be directed toward weather-related events. Recommended mitigation strategies for protecting property and life under such hazards include increasing resident awareness of emergency actions, reviewing the floodplain ordinance, incorporating snow removal and emergency access logistics with new development planning, and securing access to generator power.

**Table 21. Bucks County Hazards**

Natural Hazards	Human-Made Hazards
Drought	Dam Failure
Earthquake	Hazardous Materials Releases
Extreme Temperature	Gas and Liquid Pipelines
Flood, Flash Flood, Ice Jam	Terrorism
Hailstorm	Transportation Incidents
Hurricane, Tropical Storm, Nor'easter	Urban Fire and Explosion
Landslide	Utility Interruption
Lightning Strike	
Pandemic and Infectious Disease	
Radon Exposure	
Subsidence, Sinkhole	
Tornado, Windstorm	
Wildfire	
Winter Storm	

*Source: Bucks County 2021 Hazard Mitigation Plan Update*

## FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT

The HMPU identifies Newtown Borough as a participant in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) with local floodplain management regulations. The NFIP recognizes the one percent-annual-chance flood, also known as the base flood, as the standard for identifying properties subject to federal flood insurance purchase requirements. The boundary of the one percent annual flood event is regulated within the local floodplain management ordinance as the Special Flood Hazard Area.

The borough's floodplain ordinance, Chapter 300 of the Newtown Borough Code, was updated in 2015 with an amendments made in 2017. The ordinance contains provisions for the protection of floodplain areas that comply with the National Flood Insurance Program and the Pennsylvania Floodplain Management Act. The ordinance contains specifications that limit development within the borough unless a permit has been obtained by the Floodplain Administrator. This includes strict limits on location of development, utilities installation, elevation, and flood proofing requirements.

**CRITICAL FACILITIES**

The *Bucks County 2021 Hazard Mitigation Plan* also evaluates the vulnerability of the borough’s critical facilities. For the purposes of the plan, critical facilities are those entities that are essential to the health and welfare of the community, transportation infrastructure, and facilities related to the care of children. This includes law enforcement, emergency response, medical services, wastewater plants, correctional facilities, airports, rail stations, municipal buildings, day cares, and schools. The list of critical facilities was developed based on information available from the Bucks County Emergency Management Agency (EMA), the Bucks County Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Department, PEMA, and FEMA. Table 22 provides a complete listing of the borough’s critical facilities and their vulnerability to individual hazards.

**Table 22. Vulnerability to Identified Hazards**

Critical Facility Type	Critical Facility	Street Address
Church / School	Presbyterian Church	25 N Chancellor Street
Fire Department	Newtown Fire Association	14 Liberty Street
Municipal Building	Newtown Borough Municipal Building	23 N State Street
Retirement Home	Friends Home	50 S. Congress Street
Police Department	Newtown Borough Police Department	22 Liberty Street
Municipal Building	Chancellor Center	30 N Chancellor Street

*Source: Bucks County 2021 Hazard Mitigation Plan Update*

**COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

During the preparation of this comprehensive plan, the borough found itself in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, a worldwide event that affected the physical and economic well-being of the borough’s residents. Since this event was ongoing, the extent of the effects on the borough could not be known for some time. However, there are some lessons that can be taken from early experiences in Bucks County. Shortages of essential supplies and equipment and disruptions to business and government operations were evident in the initial of stages of response to the event. These issues along with coordination with county, state, and federal agencies should be addressed in future emergency management and government operational planning efforts.

**MITIGATION ACTION PLAN**

As background to specific actions for Newtown Borough, it is important to look at the six categories of mitigation actions that can be taken.

**PREVENTION**

Government administrative or regulatory actions or processes that influence the way land and buildings are developed and built. These actions also include public activities to reduce hazard losses. Examples include planning, zoning, building codes, code enforcement, subdivision regulations, hazard specific

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

regulations (such as floodplain regulations), capital improvement programs, and open-space preservation and stormwater regulations.

### PROPERTY PROTECTION

Actions that involve modifying or removing existing buildings or infrastructure to protect them from a hazard. Examples include the acquisition, elevation and relocation of structures, structural retrofits, flood-proofing, storm shutters, and shatter-resistant glass. Most of these property protection techniques are considered to involve “sticks and bricks;” however, this category also includes insurance.

### PUBLIC EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

Actions to inform and educate citizens, elected officials, and property owners about potential risks from hazards and potential ways to mitigate them. Such actions include hazard mapping, signage indicating flood prone areas, outreach projects, library materials dissemination, real estate disclosures, the creation of hazard information centers, and school age / adult education programs.

### NATURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION

Actions that, in addition to minimizing hazard losses, also preserve or restore the functions of natural systems. These actions include sediment and erosion control, stream corridor restoration, forest and vegetation management, wetlands restoration or preservation, slope stabilization, and historic property and archeological site preservation.

### STRUCTURAL PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Mitigation projects intended to lessen the impact of a hazard by using structures to modify the environment. Structures include stormwater controls (culverts), dams, dikes, levees, and safe rooms.

### EMERGENCY SERVICES

Actions that typically are not considered mitigation techniques but reduce the impacts of a hazard event on people and property. These actions are often taken prior to, during, or in response to an emergency or disaster. Examples include warning systems, evacuation planning and management, emergency response training and exercises, and emergency flood protection procedures.

*The Bucks County 2021 Hazard Mitigation Plan* recommends specific municipal actions based on the priorities of hazards. Of all the mitigation actions listed for the 2021 Hazard Mitigation Plan, Newtown Borough is identified for the following general actions:

**Table 23. Hazard Mitigation Priority Actions**

Priority	Action	Implementation Schedule
<b>High</b>	Evaluate, implement, and perform mitigation projects identified in this and other planning mechanisms, including acquisition, elevation, foundation and building stabilization, securing access to generator power and other mitigation methods.	Continuously for the next 5 years
<b>Medium</b>	Work with borough officials to increase awareness of model floodplain ordinance and with property owners, including informal mailings to property owners in the 1% annual chance floodplain, and sponsoring a series of workshops about costs and benefits of: Acquiring and minimizing the cost of flood insurance coverage, and property acquisition, relocation, elevation, dry floodproofing, and wet floodproofing.	Continuously for the next 5 years
<b>Medium</b>	Review and consider updates to the floodplain ordinance, on an annual basis.	Ongoing

*Source: Bucks County 2021 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

The HMPU is a living document, and it requires continuous monitoring. Like all the municipalities in Bucks County, Newtown Borough should have a designated representative from the community, such as the local emergency management coordinator, to regularly review mitigation activities and hazard events. This person will be integral to the future planning process when the HMPU is again updated. The Bucks County Planning Commission began that process in 2020, collaborating with municipal representatives and the Bucks County Emergency Management Agency.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continue to regularly monitor the mitigation activities and hazard events listed in the HMPU.
- Identify residents with the highest relative vulnerability to the effects of severe weather (elderly or people with special needs) and prepare an implementation plan to enhance response capabilities and foster mitigation measures.
  - Require disclosure of flood hazard risk in real estate transactions for properties located in floodplain.
  - Have high-risk residents sign a memo of understanding that if they do not evacuate when instructed, emergency personnel may not be able to respond to their needs.
- Continue to maintain coordination and communication among emergency providers in the borough and Newtown Township so that resources are used appropriately and efficiently.
- Evaluate and implement the most effective mitigation projects (e.g., acquisition, elevation, and buy-out of flood-prone properties).
- Provide hazard mitigation education outreach efforts (e.g., presentations, courses, and fact sheets) to increase public awareness of actions to be taken during an emergency and opportunities for mitigation.
- Review, on an annual basis, and update, as needed, the borough floodplain ordinance.
- Participate in the update to the Bucks County HMPU.

## CHAPTER 13. REGIONAL COMPATIBILITY

*The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (PaMPC)* requires that comprehensive plans consider the planning efforts in the surrounding areas, county, and region. Development impacts do not stop at municipal boundary lines, but rather transcend a region. The purpose of the following discussion is to ensure that policies developed for Newtown Borough do not create conflicts with adjoining lands but encourage a regional approach to address planning problems and issues.

### NEWTOWN AREA JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Newtown Township is the only municipality that borders Newtown Borough. The most recent comprehensive plan for Newtown Township is the *Newtown Area Joint Comprehensive Plan Update* from 2009. This plan provides a framework for the future growth and development of Newtown Township, Upper Makefield Township and Wrightstown Township. As part of this plan, a future land use map was incorporated to guide future land use policy decisions. In general, the current and future land uses for Newtown Township are compatible with the land use of Newtown Borough. Both the current and future land use maps of the *Newtown Area Joint Comprehensive Plan* show commercial land use adjacent to the western border of the borough, which aligns with the borough's central business district along State Street. The future land use map of the plan shows predominantly medium to high density residential use on the north, south, and east borders of the borough.

### REGIONAL

#### BUCKS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

*The Bucks County Comprehensive Plan (2011)* seeks to coordinate and assist the county's municipalities, agencies, and general public in the planning, development, and management of its natural and built environment. The plan reaffirms the county's long-term goals of sustainability and good stewardship. The following principles identify priorities of the plan and serve to guide future decisions:

- Protect natural, historic, and scenic resources
- Promote energy conservation and efficiency
- Protect water resources and reduce waste
- Mitigate hazards to life and property
- Provide adequate community facilities and services
- Enhance transportation mobility
- Promote economic opportunity, housing diversity and efficient use of land

The Future Land Use Plan map provides a countywide vision to implement the principles of smart growth. Smart growth is a land use planning strategy which seeks to focus development on existing developed areas, preserve open space and natural resources, and link transportation and land use planning efforts. This map is meant to assist in the coordination and implementation of local and regional planning efforts. On the Future Land Use Map in the county plan, the borough, in addition to areas of Newtown Township adjacent to the borough, fall within the Town Center category. Town Centers have a unique history, character and sense of place that are typified by high-density land uses and mixed-use building types. Town Centers are pedestrian-oriented and may include SEPTA regional rail services and public services

including hospitals, schools, and social services. The residential areas are traditional neighborhoods, and the primary commercial areas are typical of “Main Street.”

Newtown Borough complies with the *Bucks County Comprehensive Plan (2011)* by addressing each of the plan’s principles in various chapters of this plan.

### DVRPC: CONNECTIONS 2045 PLAN FOR GREATER PHILADELPHIA

Adopted in 2017 by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC), *Connections 2045* is the long-range plan for Greater Philadelphia that establishes a vision for the growth and development of the region. The DVRPC is the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization for a diverse nine-county region in two states. *Connections 2045* considers transportation, land use, the environment, economic competitiveness, equity, and quality of life issues in planning for the region’s long-term growth. The plan was developed around five integrated core principles:

1. Sustain the Environment
2. Develop Livable Communities
3. Expand the Economy
4. Advance Equity and Foster Diversity
5. Create an Integrated, Multimodal Transportation Network

Similar to the *Bucks County Comprehensive Plan (2011)*, DVRPC: *Connections 2045* designates Newtown Borough as a Town Center. This plan describes Town Center as having a mixture of high-density residential and commercial uses that also display a unique history and sense of place. They are often identifiable by a thriving downtown or Main Street that is pedestrian friendly, transit oriented, and surrounded by traditional residential development. Additionally, *Connections 2045* designates Newtown Borough as a Developed Community, which is described as a place that has already experienced most of its population and employment growth.

## CHAPTER 14. LAND USE

This chapter considers the existing land use and zoning in the borough and makes recommendations for a future land use plan. A future land use plan provides a framework for planning for the future based on the borough's existing mix of development, zoning districts, land use patterns, and its base of historic, cultural, and natural resources. Though the borough is predominantly developed, a well-considered land use policy can help shape the borough's future land use to achieve the goals set forth in this plan.

### EXISTING LAND USE

Existing land uses as of 2021 are shown on Map 5. Several observations can be made about existing land use in the borough:

- The predominant land use is residential, and most of the land occupied for residential purposes is occupied by single-family detached dwellings (64 percent). The next highest land use category is commercial development with 13 percent of the total.
- The North Norwood Avenue, Frost Lane/Edgeboro Drive, and Elm Avenue/Andrew Drive areas are entirely suburban-style, single-family detached development.
- Two-family and multifamily housing units are situated throughout the borough in the BR-2, BR-3, and BR-4 zoning districts.
- Most nonresidential uses can be found in four key areas of the borough: along State Street between Jefferson Street and the intersection with Court Street; along South Lincoln Avenue between Centre Avenue and Sterling Street; along Washington Avenue near the eastern borough boundary; and near the southwestern entrance of the borough along State Street.
- There is a limited amount of recreational land within the borough.
- There are several public, religious, governmental, and utility uses, most found on the west-central portion of the borough, from Jefferson to Sterling Streets, and from Newtown Creek to Chancellor Street. These land uses encompass almost 6 percent of the total land use.
- There is very little vacant land remaining in the borough (2.5 percent). Most is located within the Delta School Tract on South State Street at the intersection of Sterling Street.
- The area on State Street from Greene to Jefferson Streets contains a mixture of single-family homes, apartments, offices, and retail and service uses. A number of the nonresidential uses are located in buildings initially intended solely for housing, and many now contain apartments on floors above the nonresidential uses. This is a very attractive area in the borough that has more of a residential feel to it than does the town's commercial core.
- The commercial core is located along State Street from Greene Street to Court Street. Most of the buildings are occupied for retail and service uses, with some offices.
- South of Penn Street, the uses include single-family and multi-family dwellings, the vacant Delta School tract, and commercial and professional offices, including the Stocking Works office complex.

Overall land use has changed little since the previous comprehensive plan was adopted. A continuing issue the borough faces is teardowns and redevelopment outside of the borough's character in the low-density residential areas. The northern portion of the borough, especially along Frost Lane and Edgeboro Drive, continues to see teardowns, resulting in an inconsistent neighborhood feel with a large variety in house types and values.

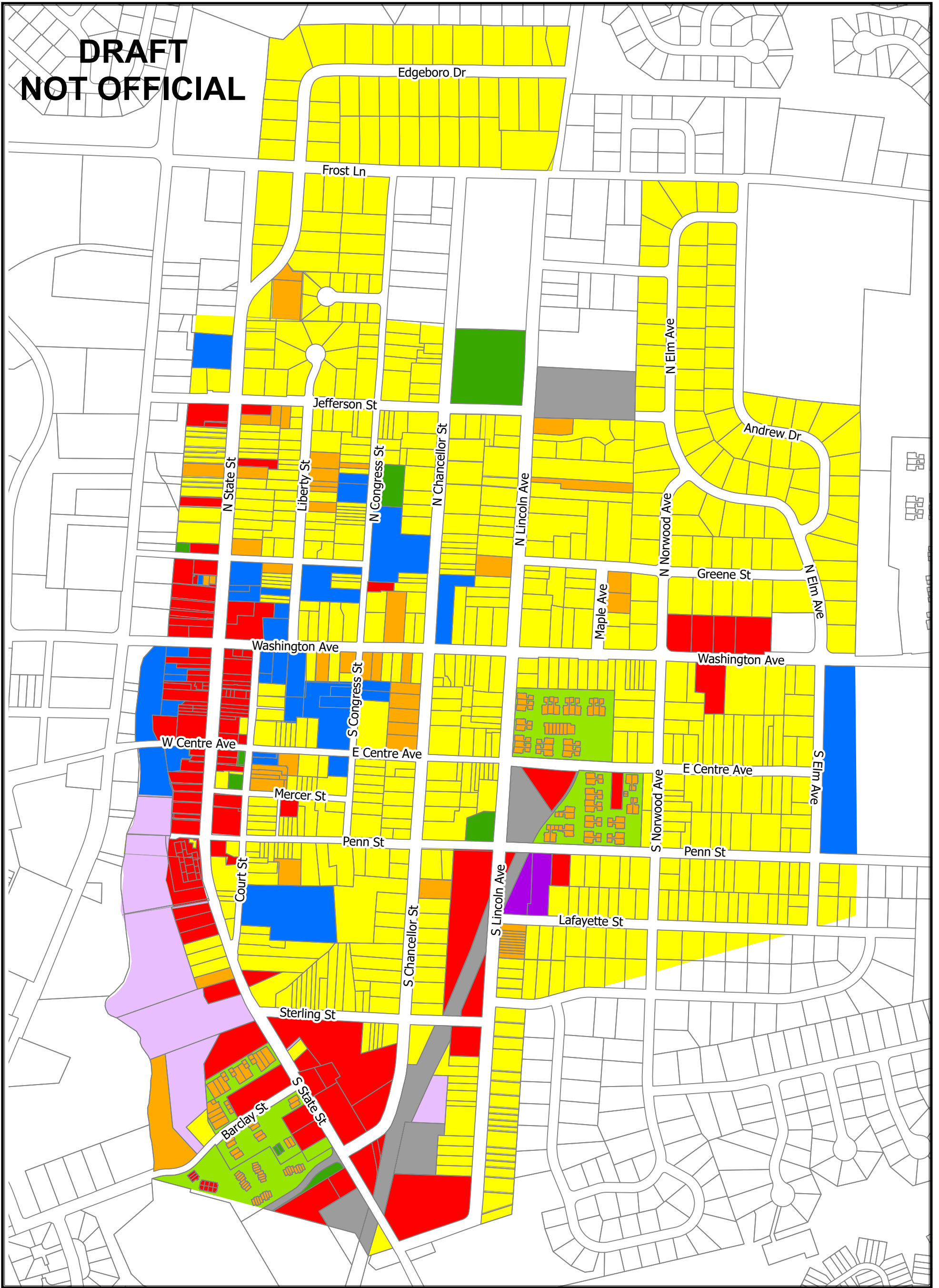
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

Land use by acreage and percentage is itemized in Table 24 below.

**Table 24. Newtown Borough Land Use (2021)**

Land Use	Acreage	Percentage
Single Family Residential	185.2	64.0%
Multifamily Residential	15.3	5.3%
Commercial	38.9	13.5%
Government and Institutional	16.0	5.5%
Industrial	1.3	0.4%
Parks, Recreation and Protected OS	15.4	5.3%
Transportation	10.0	3.5%
Vacant	7.3	2.5%
Total	289.4	100.0%

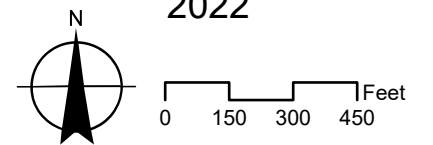
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**Existing Land Use**

- Single Family Residential
- Multifamily Residential
- Commercial
- Government and Institutional
- Industrial
- Parks, Recreation and Protected Open Space
- Common Areas
- Transportation
- Vacant

**Map 5. Existing  
Land Use**  
Newtown Borough  
Comprehensive Plan Update  
2022





## FUTURE LAND USE

The primary purpose of this comprehensive plan is to set out a vision for the future of Newtown Borough and provide the necessary tools and techniques for achieving this goal. Factors that affect future land uses include population growth, transportation network, infrastructure (water and sewer), natural resources, and compatibility with other regional comprehensive plans.

The future land use plan is only a concept of how the borough envisions future development. It is not zoning. A zoning ordinance is the basic regulatory tool for implementing the vision of the future land use component of the comprehensive plan and can only be changed upon approval by the borough council. This chapter, the Future Land Use Map 6, and recommendations contained within this plan do not themselves change any current district boundaries, permitted uses, or dimensional standards.

However, zoning is required by law to be generally consistent with a municipal comprehensive plan. So, while this plan itself is not a zoning document, it is intended to influence and inform any future zoning actions that are taken by the borough council. It is important to note that while a comprehensive plan is prepared periodically to chart the growth of the borough, the zoning ordinance is also periodically reviewed to maintain validity and best implement the vision depicted in the comprehensive plan.

## PRINCIPLES OF DEVELOPMENT

The future land use plan is intended to provide for land uses within residential neighborhoods that will foster human scale and walkability and maintain residential neighborhoods as quiet and safe places in which to live. The types and scale of land uses within all borough neighborhoods should be consistent with the human scale and streetscapes. Mixed land uses in suitable settings and diversity of the housing stock should be protected.

Conversions of buildings and reuse of buildings should continue to be permitted in some areas of the borough through the zoning ordinance. When conversions and reuse occur, the livability and architectural integrity of neighborhoods should be maintained through appropriate standards in the zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances.

“Teardowns,” subdivisions, and lot consolidations that lead to greatly increased bulk, height, and density of replacement or new construction, or to incompatible appearance, should be discouraged, particularly in residential neighborhoods outside of the historic district. Borough policy protects neighborhood scale and encourages diversity of housing choice and population by zoning and subdivision regulations that restrict development or redevelopment of inappropriate scale or design.

The historic central business district, which incorporates both residential and commercial components, contributes to an organic traditional neighborhood of the type of growing municipalities seek to create. Mixed uses in the commercial core contribute to economic vitality and are in keeping with borough history and architecture. A residential component within the district should be preserved, as it contributes to the market for downtown businesses and diversifies the housing stock. In addition to stores, the business district should continue to encompass service firms, professional offices, and housing in spaces above street level.

It is important that development of any remaining undeveloped land be compatible with surrounding land uses. Landscaping, buffering, and screening should be employed as necessary to preserve visual appearance and privacy, where appropriate.

**FUTURE LAND USE CATEGORIES**

This comprehensive plan sets forth the following land use categories for the determination of the plan’s future land use recommendations. They are largely consistent with current land use and align with the zoning districts established under the Newtown Borough Zoning Ordinance. Each future land use category provides a summary of underlying zoning, current land use, future challenges and opportunities, and future land use recommendations, including recommendations stated in previous plan chapters.

Category	Zoning District
<b>Low-Density Residential</b>	The Borough Residential District 1 (BR-1) permits detached single-family houses and limited nonresidential uses, with a minimum lot area of 15,000 square feet.
<b>Current Land Use</b>	
Single-family detached residential	
<b>Challenges</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Teardowns” – demolition and replacement of an existing home with a much larger one, often of a different architectural style and scale from neighboring properties</li> <li>• Flooding and drainage issues in the Edgeboro neighborhood</li> </ul>	
<b>Opportunities/Strengths</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homes in this area contribute to the diversity of housing in the borough</li> <li>• Newtown Creek</li> </ul>	
<b>Recommended Actions</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider whether additional stormwater management or other regulations would help to address drainage problems in the Edgeboro neighborhood.</li> <li>• Discourage waivers from curb and sidewalk requirements in future development proposals.</li> <li>• Construct a pedestrian footbridge across Newtown Creek at the Frost Lane footbridge to connect this neighborhood to Sycamore Street and adjacent Newtown Township.</li> <li>• Consider whether additional regulatory tools should be employed to encourage the continuing consistency of architectural style and scale.</li> </ul>	

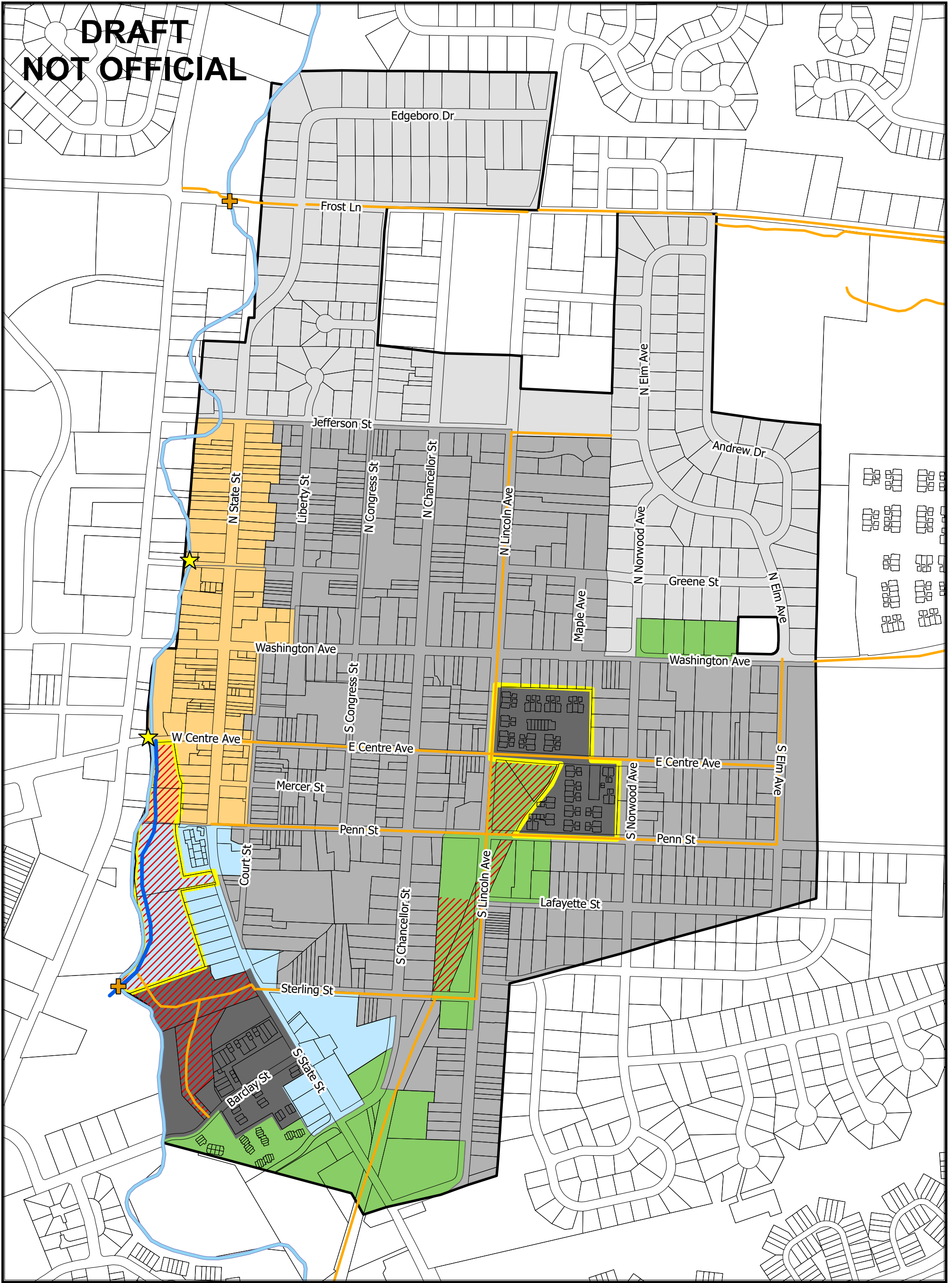
Category	Zoning Districts
<b>Medium-Density Residential</b>	The Borough Residential District 2 (BR-2) and Borough Residential District 3 (BR-3) permit detached single-family houses, two-family houses, and limited nonresidential uses. Minimum lot sizes range from 3,000 to 6,000 square feet.
<b>Current Land Use</b> Single-family residential is the predominant land use in these areas, though there are a few two-family homes, non-conforming commercial uses, apartments, and community facilities	
<b>Challenges</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The bulk of housing in the BR-2 district, and nearly all of it west of Lincoln Avenue and along Washington Avenue, lies within the borough’s historic district overlay and is therefore subject to design guidelines that apply to alteration, construction, and reconstruction</li> <li>• Expansion and renovation have been taking place, including expansion and replacement of homes within the historic district; there may be pressures to expand non-historic homes as well</li> </ul>	
<b>Opportunities/Strengths</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chancellor Center</li> <li>• Historic District</li> <li>• SEPTA lot</li> </ul>	
<b>Recommended Actions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the zoning ordinance to ensure that that standards for this area balance homeowners’ ability to improve properties and realize their market value against neighborhood aesthetics and sustainability, and the preservation of economic diversity in the borough housing stock.</li> <li>• Consider adjustment of conventional development standards as needed to limit development scale, and/or the potential for application of other regulatory techniques such as a conservation district overlay adjacent to the historic district.</li> <li>• Evaluate the future of the SEPTA lot and adjacent lands for potential open space and community uses</li> <li>• Consider options for the borough to preserve the Chancellor Center for community use in the event the school district leaves the site in upcoming years.</li> </ul>	


Category	Zoning District
<p><b>High-Density Residential</b></p>	<p>The Borough Residential District 4 (BR-4) is intended to provide for a full range of housing types: detached single- and two-family, apartments, and mobile home parks, as well as a few types of nonresidential development. The permitted intensity of development ranges from a minimum lot size of 4,000 square feet per dwelling for detached single-family detached homes to a density of 7.5 units per acre for multiple-family dwellings.</p>
<p><b>Existing Land Use</b> This area is characterized by multifamily development, single-family homes, offices, and a few commercial establishments</p>	
<p><b>Challenges</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Managing density and uses in the BR-4 to ensure consistency with current residential uses and historic nature of the borough</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Opportunities/Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Historic District</li> <li>• Delta School tract</li> <li>• Newtown Creek</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Recommended Actions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen the zoning ordinance regulations for riparian buffers to protect the section of the creek corridor within this area.</li> <li>• Acquire the Delta School tract and preserve as open space.</li> </ul>	

Category	Zoning District
<b>Town Center</b>	Town Center District (TC) permits one- and two-family housing, business and professional offices, retail, and cultural. The minimum lot size is 3,000 square feet. The area zoned Village Conservation (V-1) permits primarily single- and two-family housing and business and professional offices. The minimum lot size is 4,000 square feet.
<p><b>Existing Land Use</b></p> <p>This area mainly contains commercial and office uses, though it includes a few single-family homes, apartments above commercial uses, public parking lots, the Newtown Borough Council Chambers, the District Court, and a religious/cultural center.</p>	
<p><b>Challenges</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintaining mixed uses and a balance of commercial and residential uses in the TC District</li> <li>• Providing adequate parking for both residents and visitors of the borough</li> <li>• Lack of open space for public use</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Opportunities/Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Historic district</li> <li>• Newtown Borough Council Chambers</li> <li>• District Court</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Recommended Actions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider measures to confine retail uses, when present, to the ground floor. Office and professional uses should be channeled to floors above street level.</li> <li>• Conduct a parking study to update the parking space inventory and associated usage; prepare and implement a parking plan utilizing best practices to address local parking issues.</li> <li>• Continue to support the maintenance and planting of street trees in accordance with subdivision and land development ordinance standards and the borough’s street tree plan.</li> <li>• Continue to ensure the borough zoning ordinance provides for nonresidential uses at the appropriate location and intensity.</li> </ul>	

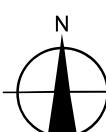

Category	Zoning Districts
<p><b>Business and Professional</b></p>	<p>Business and Professional uses are located in three zoning districts: the Borough Professional Services District (BPS), Business Gateway (B-1), and the Business/Mixed Use (B-2) District. The purpose of the BPS district is to permit and regulate types of office uses appropriate in proximity to a single-family residential district adjacent to Washington Avenue. The minimum lot area is 15,000 square feet. The primary permitted use in the district is business and professional offices. Business and Professional uses are also permitted in the (B-1) and (B-2) Districts. These districts allow for compatible coexistence of residential and non-residential uses.</p>
<p><b>Existing Land Use</b> The area includes professional offices, commercial uses, and a mix of housing including single-family, two-family, and multifamily housing.</p>	
<p><b>Challenges</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development pressure to convert commercial land use to residential use</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Opportunities/Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BPS District location in the Historic District</li> <li>• SEPTA rail corridor located within the B-1 and B-2 districts</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Recommended Actions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review zoning regulations and consider amending them to acknowledge and regulate existing residential uses, while maintaining the area’s strong orientation to professional offices and services and its historic character.</li> </ul>	

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-  Newtown Borough
-  Low-Density Residential
-  Medium-Density Residential
-  High-Density Residential
-  Town Center
-  Professional and Business
-  Village Gateway
-  Pedestrian Bridge
-  Creek Access
-  Trails and Bicycle Routes
-  Newtown Creek
-  Steeple View Creek Walk
-  TND
-  Opportunity Parcels

**Map 6. Future  
Land Use**  
Newtown Borough  
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Category	Zoning District
<b>Village Gateway</b>	The minimum lot size for nonresidential uses is 5,000 square feet, and for residential uses (except for traditional neighborhood development), it is 6,000 square feet.
<b>Existing Land Use</b>	
The use mix includes single- and two-family dwellings, business and professional offices, some open land, and the Stocking Works office complex at the corner of State and South Chancellor streets	
<b>Challenges</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vacant/underutilized land along Newtown Creek</li> </ul>	
<b>Opportunities/Strengths</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gateway to central business district</li> <li>• Newtown Creek</li> </ul>	
<b>Recommended Actions</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a trail from West Centre Avenue south along Newtown Creek.</li> <li>• Construct a pedestrian footbridge across Newtown Creek to the Carl Sedia Park in adjacent Newtown Township.</li> <li>• Strengthen riparian buffer standards or employ other techniques to protect the section of the Newtown Creek corridor within this area.</li> <li>• Ensure the vision of the Steeple View TND is properly executed, including the provision of useable public space.</li> </ul>	

**OPPORTUNITY AREAS**

Since the borough’s 2010 comprehensive plan update, there have been two major land use achievements accomplished by the borough.

After closing in 2011, the Stockburger Service Site left a large vacant building on South State Street that intruded on the fabric and scale of the Historic District. The building has recently been demolished and a new development of two-family homes is scheduled to be built. This addition of homes in the borough will be more in line with the character of the surrounding neighborhood, while also providing more housing opportunities.

The borough also recently purchased the vacant portion of the former Bird in Hand property. Located along South State Street just north of Mercer Street, the Bird in Hand property was once home to the Bird in Hand Tavern, in the 1700-1800’s and served as a center of activity for the borough for over 125 years.

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

The purchase of this property fulfills a future land use goal of the 2010 comprehensive plan by providing more open space for residents in the form of a pocket park. This new park, Patriots Park, provides an area for residents and visitors to enjoy while visiting the borough's town center

In addition to Patriots Park, the Newtown Historic Association, along with the Newtown Rotary, are working together to make a parcel of their privately owned land on the southwest corner of Court Street and Centre Street mor accessible to all, providing an additional open space resource for the community.



*Patriots Park,  
formally the Bird in Hand Property*

There remain additional opportunities to achieve the borough's future land use vision. These opportunities are described below and shown on Map 6: Future Land Use.

### STEEPLE VIEW TND

The Steeple View site is being developed into a Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND). This TND is located on the western edge of the borough, south of Centre Avenue, and is bordering Newtown Creek. The first phase of development for this site has been completed with a mixed-use building that includes ground floor retail and upper-level condominiums, west of State Street.

This developed portion of the site is located in the Village Gateway (V-2) district, which has a goal to preserve, maintain, and encourage the existence and feel and intensity of the nonresidential uses while also preserving the residential uses in the area. The inclusion of the mixed-use buildings allows for the preservation of the residential area while also providing additional nonresidential uses to enhance this area of the borough.

The northern portion of the site is located at the southern end of the borough's Central Business District (CBD) in the Town Center (TC) zoning district and includes two underutilized parcels of land between Centre Avenue and Penn Street, bordering Newtown Creek. These parcels currently consist of a paved driveway off Centre Ave that leads to a parking lot and a vacant building that once served as a liquor store. The site borders Newtown Creek and is proposed to include the northern portion of the Steeple View Creek Walk Trail.

This portion of the site is proposed to include a piazza, or outdoor open area, for visitors of the area. The addition of an outdoor area would add variety to the uses in the CBD and serves as a useful and aesthetically pleasing connection between the CBD and the Steeple View TND.



*The Residences 202 South State Street*

In addition to the existing and potential housing opportunities, the proposed Steeple View site borders Newtown Creek, and provides the potential for trails and open space in the borough. As mentioned in Chapter 9: Transportation and Circulation, the Steeple View Site includes the proposed Steeple View Creek Walk Trail that is in development, providing a walking path along Newtown Creek. It is also suggested that this trail be extended with a footbridge over Newtown Creek into Newtown Township's Carl Sedia Park and to the Delta School Tract, another opportunity area mentioned later in this chapter. The development of these trails will not only

provide more open space and trails opportunities within the borough but will enhance the overall connectivity within the borough and provide connections to Newtown Township as well.

### SEPTA LOT

This lot is approximately one acre of land that has been previously proposed for municipal acquisition to be used for open space. The use of this lot as open space would be beneficial to the borough, as it will provide more open space for residents and is in line with the goals of the TND to provide multiple land uses, including open space and recreational opportunities within each TND.

The SEPTA lot is located adjacent to the Newtown Station TND in the Borough Mixed Use (B-2) zone and once served as an industrial area of the borough. The purpose of this district is to allow for the continuation of existing industrial uses and for the transition to mixed-use development, allowing for limited types of residential and nonresidential uses. Being that much of the area is now developed as residential and mixed use, it may be beneficial for the borough to consider re-zoning this area to reflect these changes, as the area is no longer transitioning from industrial to residential.

There is an additional parcel located between the SEPTA lot and the Newtown Station TND on Centre Avenue. This parcel is currently privately owned for business use, with no built structures on-site. With the proximity to both the TND and potential open space, the borough may find it opportune to discuss the future of this parcel with the property owner. Potential future uses for this site can work in conjunction with the plans the borough has to acquire a lease for the SEPTA lot, greatly enhancing this area of the borough.

Portions of the SEPTA rail right-of-way from Sterling Street to the SEPTA lot parcel, and the southern portion of the CVS lot, south of Lafayette Street, also present opportunities for the borough. The southern portion of the CVS lot is not currently used and can provide another potential open space area for the borough that is well connected to the SEPTA lot.

### DELTA SCHOOL TRACT

Located between the Steeple View site and Barclay Street with access to Newtown Creek, the Delta School tract is an opportune parcel in the borough. This tract is the largest vacant tract of land in the borough. It would be advantageous for the borough to preserve all or part of this area as open space and acquire easements to protect the Newtown Creek corridor and improve public access to it.

Currently, the Delta School tract is in the Borough Residential 4 (BR-4) district which allows for the highest-density residential land uses. This lot provides a great opportunity to provide open space in a higher density area of the borough. This tract is also mentioned in the *Newtown Borough Open Space Plan Update* from September 2010 as a potential preservation area. The open space plan also notes the preservation of this tract as being a top priority, as it forms extensive frontage along the borough's southern creek border and is highly vulnerable to being developed.



*Delta School Tract*

### CREEK ACCESS

The borough is fortunate to have Newtown Creek bordering the west side of the borough. In addition to the Creek Walk Trail and connecting foot bridge mentioned previously in this chapter, there are other areas that hold potential for better creek access in the borough.

In the northern portion of the borough at the end of Frost Lane, the addition of a footbridge over Newtown Creek would allow for an additional pedestrian access point to the creek. Connecting this footbridge to a walking path along Frost Lane to the Goodnoe Elementary School would also increase pedestrian connectivity between the borough and Newtown Township. This footbridge and path are discussed in Chapter 9: Transportation and Circulation.

There are currently no access points to Newtown Creek in the borough's town center. It would be beneficial for the borough to provide access along the creek with a potential pathway to the creek next to the municipal parking lot between Washington Avenue and Centre Avenue. This will provide more public access to the creek in an area that is more frequently visited.

This, in addition to the proposed access points in Steeple View and on Frost Lane, would provide access points to Newtown Creek throughout the borough, providing easier access to this beautiful resource for all residents and visitors.

## OPPORTUNITY AREA RECOMMENDATIONS

- Strengthen riparian buffer standards or employ other techniques to protect the Newtown Creek Corridor.
- Consider whether additional stormwater management or other regulations would help address drainage problems in the Edgeboro neighborhood.
- Construct a pedestrian footbridge across Newtown Creek at the Frost Land footbridge to connect this neighborhood to Sycamore Street and adjacent Newtown Township.
- Construct a pedestrian footbridge across Newtown Creek to the Carl Sedia Park in adjacent Newtown Township.
- Develop a creek walk trail from West Centre Avenue south along Newtown Creek.
- Acquire the Delta School tract and preserve as open space.
- Evaluate the future of the SEPTA lot and adjacent lands for potential open space and community uses.
- Consider adjustment of conventional development standards as needed to limit development scale, and/or the potential for application of other regulatory techniques such as a conservation district overlay adjacent to the historic district, or form-based zoning.
- Consider options for the borough to preserve the Chancellor Center for community use in the event the school district leaves the site in upcoming years.
- Ensure the vision of the Steeple View TND is executed properly, including the provision of useable public space.
- Consider measures to confine retail uses, when present to the ground floor. Office and professional uses should be channeled to floors above street level.
- Ensure the borough zoning ordinance provides for nonresidential uses at the appropriate location and intensity.

## BOROUGH-WIDE CONSIDERATIONS

Many land use issues defy boundaries and apply in many areas across the borough. The following land use recommendations are taken from plan element chapters:

### HOUSING

- Update the borough's zoning ordinance and subdivision and land development ordinance as to continue support of residential adaptive reuse.
- Periodically review housing conversion and residential accessory regulations to ensure their appropriateness to real estate market conditions and preservation of the borough's stock of historic housing.

### NATURAL RESOURCES AND OPEN SPACE

- Explore opportunities for acquiring additional open space and recreation areas.
- Pursue opportunities to create and expand greenway corridors, and increase public access to them, particularly by means of acquisition of easements along Newtown Creek and in proximity to Newtown Common.
- Continue to support the maintenance and planting of street trees in accordance with subdivision and land development ordinance standards and the borough's street tree plan.

### COMMUNITY FACILITIES

- Explore the need for a community center and consider potential sites.

### ENERGY AND SUSTAINABILITY

- Encourage green building standards in existing and new development; support the development of renewable energy sources such as solar and geothermal energy.

### HISTORIC RESOURCES

- Update the historic resources survey to determine whether there is potential for expanding the Historic District. Continue to update the survey every five years.
- Review the zoning ordinance to ensure standards to promote historic preservation.

### TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION

- Work with SEPTA and TMA Bucks to ensure that the public transportation needs of residents are being met.
- Develop an active transportation plan to create a comprehensive vision that incorporates all aspects of the borough's multi-modal transportation system.

### WATER RESOURCES

- Create a borough stormwater management plan, addressing long-range plans for Old Skunky, streets without storm drains, education and responsibilities of borough residents and property owners, runoff remediation for land development and subdivision, and integration with the borough's street maintenance and reconstruction program.
- Develop strategies to incorporate green infrastructure throughout the borough for the purpose of lessening the burden on surface waters to effectively manage the borough's stormwater.

### HAZARD MITIGATION

- Identify residents with the highest relative vulnerability to the effects of severe weather (elderly or people with special needs) and prepare an implementation plan to enhance response capabilities and foster mitigation measures.
- Require disclosure of flood hazard risk in real estate transactions for properties located in floodplain.
- Have high-risk residents sign a memo of understanding that if they do not evacuate when instructed, emergency personnel may not be able to respond to their needs.
- Review, on an annual basis, and update, as needed, the borough floodplain ordinance.

**SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDED ACTIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION**

This section summarizes the recommendations of this comprehensive plan by each chapter. Each recommendation includes recommended activities and a “Record of Action” where municipal officials can note the completion of the activity.

<b>Housing</b>		
	<b>Recommended Action</b>	<b>Record of Action</b>
1.	Promote maintenance of existing housing in good physical condition. Enforce housing, zoning, health, safety, historic preservation, and property maintenance codes for rental and owner-occupied housing to maintain sound buildings, property values, historicity, attractive neighborhoods; and improve affordability.	
2.	Explore possibilities for providing smaller, more attainable housing options in the borough to help diversify the housing stock.	
3.	Work with limited-income borough residents to identify programs such as the Housing Rehabilitation Program that are available to help them meet their housing expenses and maintain their homes.	
4.	Explore methods of encouraging energy efficiency improvements and stemming adverse environmental impacts of existing or potential new construction, while protecting the visual character of historic housing.	
5.	Preserve neighborhood fabric by preventing “teardowns” that result in construction, reconstruction, or renovation of housing at an inappropriately large scale.	
6.	Update the borough’s zoning ordinance and subdivision and land development ordinance as to continue to support of residential adaptive reuse. Periodically review housing conversion and residential accessory regulations to ensure their appropriateness to real estate market conditions and preservation of the borough’s stock of historic housing.	

Natural Resources		
	Recommended Action	Record of Action
1.	Pursue conservation action items outlined in the <i>Upper and Middle Neshaminy Creek River Conservation Plan (RCP)</i> prepared by the Delaware River Keeper Network (2003).	
2.	Pursue planning recommendations outlined in the <i>Newtown Creek Coalition Planning Recommendations &amp; Report</i> (2010).	
3.	Pursue conservation action items outlined in the <i>Newtown Creek Watershed Conservation Plan</i> , prepared by the Heritage Conservancy (2011).	
4.	Continue to investigate opportunities for making Newtown Creek more accessible and usable to the public.	
5.	Continue to support efforts to improve conditions along Newtown Creek, including a visual assessment to identify areas of the creek in need of mitigation and repair.	
6.	Continue to review subdivision and land development plans with respect to ensuring the protection of Newtown Creek and Old Skunky.	
7.	Incorporate recommendations from the Old Skunky engineering study into plans and processes for cleanup and maintenance of Old Skunky.	
8.	Develop strategies to incorporate green infrastructure throughout the borough for the purpose of lessening the burden on surface waters to effectively manage the borough’s stormwater.	
9.	Amend the zoning ordinance to incorporate provisions for planting native plant species and restricting invasive exotic plant species.	
10.	When complete, implement the updated Master Street Tree Plan. The borough should review the planting recommendations in the plan to ensure a diversity of tree species. To guard against the possibility of large-scale devastation by both native and introduced insect pests and diseases, no single species should account for more than 10 percent of the total tree population. The list of recommended trees should be updated to include only pest-and disease-resistant trees.	
11.	Identify and acquire additional vulnerable natural resources for open space, passive recreation, and greenway corridors.	
12.	Continue resource management efforts, including clean-ups, stream bank stabilization of waterways, construction of green infrastructure, and planting of native species to enhance existing open space and natural resources.	

Nonresidential Activity		
	Recommended Action	Record of Action
1.	Develop a coordinated and unified marketing plan that understands the demographics and preferences of the target market, how the message will be delivered, and the stores and amenities that will bring the target market to the business district.	
2.	Help create or repurpose an organizing entity that can be solely responsible for the improvement of the district and link marketing and organizations efforts with Newtown Township’s business district.	
3.	Continue to hold and promote special events on State Street to bring more attention to the area.	
4.	Ensure a mix of retail stores in keeping with the identity and marketing efforts of the business district.	
5.	Sponsor promotional activities that create a consistent, positive image for the downtown, consistent with community characteristics and history.	
6.	Provide more outdoor dining and seating opportunities for businesses on State Street and ensure useable public and semi-public space. Consider special events specifically featuring street closures and expanding outdoor dining.	
7.	Ensure a mix of uses in the district, including residences and professional offices in spaces above street level.	
8.	Promote coordinated improvements at borough gateways, including landscaping, street amenities, pavers, storefronts, and signage. Establish guidelines for the type and placement of street furnishings, where appropriate to maintain the character of the borough.	
9.	Conduct a parking study to update the parking space inventory and associated usage; prepare and implement a parking plan utilizing best practices to address local parking issues.	
10.	Promote the maintenance and planting of street trees in accordance with subdivision and land development ordinance standards and the borough’s street tree plan.	
11.	Encourage owners of properties to maintain and improve properties and ensure code enforcement efforts remain effective at addressing substandard conditions that would create a negative perception of the commercial core.	
12.	Ensure the borough zoning ordinance provides for nonresidential uses at the appropriate location and intensity.	
13.	Support multi-modal mobility and access throughout the business district.	

Historic and Cultural Resources		
	Recommended Action	Record of Action
1.	Support efforts of the HARB, the JHC, and other preservation and community organizations to preserve and enhance the architectural and historic resources within the borough. Continue cooperation with community groups to continue programs that emphasize the history and architecture of the borough.	
2.	Design guidelines should be followed for development within the Newtown Borough Historic District. New development should be integrated into existing streetscapes and should be compatible with the borough’s unique design characteristics. Encourage efforts of private property owners toward restoration and adaptive reuse of historic structures and sites by providing additional use opportunities as incentives for preservation.	
3.	Continue to protect the integrity of the Newtown Borough Historic District and the district’s National Register status.	
4.	Update the historic resources survey to determine whether there is potential for expanding the Historic District. Continue to update the survey as needed.	
5.	Make use of Newtown Borough’s status as Certified Local Government (CLG) by using the programs, grants, and technical assistance for historic preservation planning projects. Funding from the CLG program can be used for hiring a consultant for the Historical Architectural Review Board (HARB), drafting a historic preservation plan, updating design guidelines, providing design assistance to property owners, nominating resources to the National Register of Historic Places, updating historic resource surveys, adaptive reuse studies, and providing education and training.	
6.	Increase public awareness of federal and state historic preservation tax credit programs and grant opportunities for historic preservation.	
7.	Discourage the removal of historic resources to provide parking facilities. Ensure any new construction of parking facilities are necessary and are compatible in scale and design with their surroundings.	
8.	Consider the development of additional strategies for preserving historic resources including hiring a consultant to do a comprehensive historic preservation plan for Newtown Borough.	
9.	Review the zoning ordinance to ensure standards to promote historic preservation.	
10.	Promote the revision or replacement of historically compatible signage throughout the borough.	
11.	Encourage the expansion of a village green to represent the historic Newtown Common.	

<b>Community Services and Facilities</b>		
	<b>Recommended Action</b>	<b>Record of Action</b>
1.	Cooperate with other community service and facility providers.	
2.	Monitor borough facility needs to determine needs for the future.	
3.	Develop and adopt a Capital Improvement Program, which will facilitate the implementation of Comprehensive Plan update objectives.	
4.	Link capital project funding to objectives of the comprehensive plan.	
5.	Coordinate capital improvements with utilities serving the borough (PECO NAWC) to minimize cost and disruption.	
6.	Monitor police operations to anticipate needs for space and equipment.	
7.	Continue to evaluate volunteer membership training, capabilities and response times to national standards and consider the need to hire additional career firefighters.	
8.	Address the need and locations for new fire stations to support requirements of the residents and businesses and the safety and health of firefighters.	
9.	Cooperate with the Newtown American Legion Ambulance Squad and Newtown Emergency Service Department to provide sufficient emergency services.	
10.	Monitor the health needs of the population to plan for future needs.	
11.	Monitor school enrollments and cooperate with schools to provide adequate facilities.	
12.	Promote walking to school by providing adequate pedestrian facilities.	
13.	Monitor adequacy of civic facilities, plan for renovations, expansion, or additions, as needed. Partner with public or private agencies, as appropriate.	
14.	Support community groups, public and private, that provide services and facilities.	
15.	Explore additional opportunities for multi-municipal or other regional approaches to the provision of services and facilities.	
16.	Explore the need for a community center and consider potential sites.	
17.	Coordinate the provision of telecommunications facilities which will provide for a desired level of service.	
18.	Maintain existing telecommunication regulations and be proactive in the oversight of emerging technologies and legislation.	
19.	Coordinate with DAS providers to enhance wireless service and provide adequate coverage where needed.	

Water Resources		
	Recommended Action	Record of Action
1.	Monitor efforts of the Newtown Artesian Water Company, the BCWSA, and the PAWC to continue to supply safe and adequate water to the borough.	
2.	Modify borough ordinances to establish wellhead protection zones around each public water supply well. Encourage Newtown and Middletown townships to do the same.	
3.	Investigate the benefit of pursuing the development of an Integrated Water Resources Plan and potential funding of such a plan in cooperation with the Newtown Artesian Water Company and Newtown and Middletown townships.	
4.	Monitor NBCJMA efforts to continue to provide adequate wastewater facilities.	
5.	Continue to enforce the recommendations of the <i>Neshaminy Creek Watershed Stormwater Management Plan</i> , as updated.	
6.	Continue to ensure compliance with the NPDES program and file program reports.	
7.	Explore the development of educational opportunities aimed at engaging the public around the importance of maintaining stormwater management practices, including the emerging use of Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) practices.	
8.	Review ordinances to ensure the borough is encouraging the use of state-of-the-art stormwater BMPs, including the use of green stormwater infrastructure enhancements, such as rain gardens, green roofs, rain barrels, planter gardens, street trees that absorb water, the use of porous paving materials, and vegetated detention basins.	
9.	Create an inventory of borough-managed stormwater management facilities and establish regular maintenance schedules for such facilities. Evaluate whether a retrofit program for substandard existing facilities is needed and feasible.	
10.	If necessary, revise the municipal stormwater management ordinance to comply with the updated Neshaminy stormwater plan.	
11.	Create a borough stormwater management plan, addressing long-range plans for Old Skunky, streets without storm drains, education and responsibilities of borough residents and property owners, runoff remediation for land development and subdivision, and integration with the borough's street maintenance and reconstruction program.	
12.	Implement recommendations stemming from the <i>Old Skunky Stream Study</i> (2010) relating to reduction in runoff and stabilization of eroded stream banks.	

Parks, Recreation, and Open Space		
	Recommended Action	Record of Action
1.	Continue to implement the recommendations contained in the Newtown Borough Open Space Plan Update.	
2.	Investigate opportunities for acquiring additional open space and recreation areas.	
3.	Actively retain existing open space and recreation areas.	
4.	Pursue Open Space Plan priorities for protection through outside funding sources.	
5.	Pursue opportunities to create and expand greenway corridors, and increase public access to them, particularly by means of acquisition easements along Newtown Creek and in proximity to Newtown Common.	
6.	Pursue intermunicipal cooperation with Newtown Township on recreation and open space activities of mutual benefit.	
7.	Provide amenities to support a wide range of ages, particularly considering older adults.	
8.	Preserve unimproved property in its natural state to support wildlife and effective stormwater management.	
9.	Prioritize native plants on borough-owned property and encourage native plant use throughout the borough.	

Transportation and Circulation		
	Recommended Action	Record of Action
1.	Maintain and improve streets to ensure the safety of residents, pedestrians, and motorists and the livability of neighborhoods, while maintaining the high level of connectivity of the borough’s street pattern.	
2.	Conduct a parking study to update the parking space inventory and associated usage; prepare and implement a parking plan utilizing best practices to address local parking issues.	
3.	Work with SEPTA and TMA Bucks to ensure that the public transportation needs of residents are being met.	
4.	Coordinate with the county and PennDOT to develop a list of street improvements that will address the issues of speed reduction, pedestrian safety, intersection design, and control vehicle use.	
5.	Develop an active transportation plan to create a comprehensive vision that incorporates all aspects of the borough’s multi-modal transportation system. Areas to focus on should include: Complete Streets Policy, Pedestrian Circulation, and a Trail and Bicycle System Plan.	
6.	Continue to develop the borough’s transportation system by implementing projects identified in the current <i>Pedestrian Circulation Report</i> and <i>Integrated Transportation and Circulation Study</i> until the new Active Transportation Plan or similar plan is created.	

<b>Solid Waste Management</b>		
<b>Recommended Action</b>		<b>Record of Action</b>
1.	Consider a municipal contract for trash and recycling to provide curbside waste management and recycling services to all residents.	
2.	Work with the PA DEP and Bucks County Recycling Coordinator to create an ordinance regarding solid waste management.	
3.	Expand recycling education efforts to reduce contamination in the recycling stream with aid from the PADEP Recycling Program Development and Implementation Grant.	
4.	Work with the county recycling coordinator to conduct waste audits in businesses and schools to get a better understanding of their current recycling and solid waste output trends.	
5.	Work with county recycling coordinator and DEP to increase composting education efforts and apply for grants to facilitate residential composting programs in the borough.	
6.	Provide yard waste pickups for residents.	

<b>Energy and Sustainability</b>		
<b>Recommended Action</b>		<b>Record of Action</b>
1.	Reduce energy demand in the transportation sector by encouraging walking and bicycling, the use of public transit, and support for electric vehicles.	
2.	Encourage green building standards in existing and new development and, where appropriate in the Historic District, in conjunction with the Secretary of the Interior Standards.	
3.	Refer to the Bucks County Planning Commission Model Alternative Energy Ordinance to expand on the renewable energy types permitted in borough ordinances and support the development of renewable energy sources such as solar and geothermal in the borough.	
4.	Conduct periodic energy audits of borough facilities.	
5.	Encourage decreases of energy consumption associated with municipal operations.	

Hazard Mitigation		
	Recommended Action	Record of Action
1.	Continue to regularly monitor the mitigation activities and hazard events listed in the HMPU.	
2.	Identify residents with the highest relative vulnerability to the effects of severe weather (elderly or people with special needs) and prepare an implementation plan to enhance response capabilities and foster mitigation measures.	
3.	Continue to maintain coordination and communication among emergency providers in the borough and Newtown Township so that resources are used appropriately and efficiently.	
4.	Evaluate and implement the most effective mitigation projects (e.g., acquisition, elevation, and buy-out of flood-prone properties).	
5.	Provide hazard mitigation education outreach efforts to increase public awareness of actions to be taken during an emergency and opportunities for mitigation.	
6.	Review, on an annual basis, and update, as needed, the borough floodplain ordinance.	
7.	Participate in the update to the Bucks County HMPU.	

Future Land Use		
	Recommended Action	Record of Action
1.	Strengthen riparian buffer standards or employ other techniques to protect the Newtown Creek Corridor.	
2.	Consider whether additional stormwater management or other regulations would help to address drainage problems in the Edgeboro neighborhood.	
3.	Construct a pedestrian footbridge across Newtown Creek at Frost Lane to connect this neighborhood to Sycamore Street and adjacent Newtown Township.	
4.	Construct a pedestrian footbridge across Newtown Creek to the Carl Sedia Park in adjacent Newtown Township.	
5.	Develop a creek walk trail from West Centre Avenue south along Newtown Creek.	
6.	Acquire the Delta School tract and preserve as open space.	
7.	Evaluate the future of the SEPTA lot and adjacent lands for potential open space and community uses.	
8.	Consider adjustment of conventional development standards as needed to limit development scale, and/or the potential for application of other regulatory techniques such as a conservation district overlay adjacent to the historic district, or form-based zoning.	
9.	Consider options for the borough to preserve the Chancellor Center for community use in the event the school district leaves the site in upcoming years.	
10.	Ensure the vision of the Steeple View TND is executed properly, including the provision of useable public space.	
11.	Consider measures to confine retail uses, when present, to the ground floor. Office and professional uses should be channeled to floors above street level.	
12.	Ensure the borough zoning ordinance provides for nonresidential uses at the appropriate location and intensity.	