

3 – Community Background

3.1 Regional Context and Influences

3.1.1 Location

Willistown Township is located in the eastern portion of Chester County, five miles east of West Chester and approximately 20 miles from Philadelphia and Wilmington, Delaware. Socially and economically the Township has a greater orientation to Philadelphia than to Wilmington. The 1980 comprehensive plan described the Township as within the "rural fringe of the Philadelphia metro area," however the western advance of development since that plan led to the conclusion in the 1997 comprehensive plan that the Township "has the appearance of being a rural island surrounded by a sea of intense development". The 2011 comprehensive plan acknowledged this assessment but went on to say that development of the Township itself represents a development pattern of dense to less dense "concentric circles" emanating from the town centers of Paoli and Malvern. In many respects, all these assessments hold true today although the Township is seeing development pressure of a different sort for two reasons: 1) much of the Township is either built out or preserved in some capacity (parkland, conservation easement land, nature preserve, etc.) and 2) COVID-19 contributed to a modest out-migration from cities to Townships like Willistown. The result has been pressure to develop some of the Township's remaining open space parcels.

3.1.2 Chester County Influence

Willistown Township is strongly influenced by its setting in Chester County, a relatively affluent suburban county of Philadelphia. A majority of the social and economic factors influencing Chester County also play a significant role in Willistown Township.

Chester County has traditionally been a strong economic engine for southeastern Pennsylvania. The County has enjoyed relatively low unemployment rates, historically under 5% since the early 1980's. Chester County is also well educated. The County has consistently had some of the highest percentages of high school and college graduates, as well as some of the highest household and family incomes in the state. Finally, the median housing value has been and remains one of the state's highest.

Chester County is particularly scenic. The gently rolling hills of the Piedmont Plateau supported the creation of a rich agricultural heritage and the County is fortunate to have a citizenry that is strongly committed to the preservation of open space and scenic landscapes. Residents of this region were among the first to champion the use of conservation easements. Many local governments (Willistown among them) have successfully experimented with innovative planning techniques for managing growth and preserving unique regional features. Residents of Chester County voted to support the first county-wide, open space preservation program in Pennsylvania and have consistently voted in favor of utilizing tax monies for preservation efforts.

Chester County appears well positioned for the future, having seen strong economic growth in industries related to home shopping, investment services, computer technology,

health services, and pharmaceuticals. Agriculture, while certainly not the economic driver of the past, continues to be an important industry to the citizens of the County. Manufacturing, defense industries, and extractive industries, although not entirely absent in Chester County, have not been significant factors in its history and are not anticipated to play a meaningful role in the future.

At the same time, an attractive landscape and healthy economy will likely continue to attract new growth to Chester County in the years to come. The County's population is expected to increase approximately 21% from year 2020 to 2050. While this percentage may not be as large as rates experienced in the past, if not managed appropriately, it will nevertheless threaten the many of the qualities which attracted growth in the first place.

Chester County adopted its Comprehensive Plan, *Landscapes*, in July 1996, updated that document with *Landscapes*² in November of 2009, and recently published *Landscapes 3* in November 2018. *Landscapes 3* encourages managed growth to ensure municipal character and quality of life. The plan establishes a preservation and growth vision for the county and its municipalities, helps to guide local municipal planning, and creates a framework for collaboration across municipal borders. According to the county's recent assessment, Willistown Township contains urban and suburban growth areas, rural resource areas, and significant natural and historic landscapes.

3.1.3 Regional Transportation Networks

The most important regional transportation components of the Township are the presence of Routes 3 and 30 which traverse the Township at its northern and southern borders. These routes are major transportation corridors for southeastern Pennsylvania and are very important influences on the Township's character, both historically and today.

Willistown Township is also somewhat influenced by regional rail systems, with easy access to both SEPTA and Amtrak at the Paoli station. The SEPTA line connects Philadelphia and Main Line communities to western Chester County, terminating in Parkesburg. The Amtrak line connects to both Harrisburg and Philadelphia (in fact, the line connecting to Philadelphia also continues to New York City). Recent upgrades to the Paoli Rail Station have created a more multi-modal transportation experience, providing better car and bus access, enhanced pedestrian circulation and more parking. Such upgrades are expected to continue and towards that goal, both Tredyffrin and Willistown Townships' have modified zoning provisions in the area to provide enhanced mixed-use opportunities. While initial investigations into bringing West Chester's train station back online have commenced, costs are likely prohibitive in the short-term and action to bring this rail service back is years away.

In addition, SEPTA operates several bus lines that provide service to portions of the Township, among them: #104 and #120 (serving portions of Routes 3 and 926), #104 (serving Route 3 with connections to #92, #106 (serving Route 30 from Paoli to Overbrook Park with connections to #92, #120, #204 and #206), #92 (linking King of Prussia to Paoli, Malvern, and West Chester), #204 (linking Paoli to Malvern, Exton and beyond), #205 (linking Paoli to Industrial Boulevard, Cedar Hollow Road, Great Valley,

Chesterbrook and beyond), and #206 (linking Paoli to Route 29, Great Valley and beyond).

The Philadelphia International Airport is approximately 45 minutes by car from Willistown Township. While no direct rail lines connect Paoli to the airport, commuters can take the train to Center City and transfer to the airport line. Airport shuttles are also readily available for door-to-door service.

3.1.4 Surrounding Municipalities and Their Plans for the Future

Malvern Borough, Chester County

Willistown Township surrounds Malvern Borough on three sides, most likely because the Borough was incorporated out of Willistown Township in 1889. The economic and social histories of Willistown Township and Malvern Borough have been linked for many years, with Malvern serving historically as a market center and transportation hub for traditionally rural Willistown Township. As auto-dependent suburban development dispersed shopping patterns and lessened the importance of rail traffic, the corresponding links between Malvern and Willistown weakened somewhat, but remains strong. In fact, the resurgence of small towns has, if anything, led to increased interest in the Borough by residents in surrounding townships. Regardless of these changes, the development character of Willistown and Malvern continues to be closely linked today.

Malvern Borough completed its most recent comprehensive plan in 2012. In the Fall of 2020, the Borough initiated a comprehensive plan update process that anticipates an 18–24-month plan completion timeline. In fact, this plan and Malvern’s plan are likely to be adopted on a similar schedule. The current plan’s main goal is to retain and enhance the Borough’s “small-town character, which makes the Borough a special place to live and work” Towards this end, the Borough has been encouraging redevelopment and new development in the King Street Corridor that is consistent and compatible with its existing mixed-use small-town nature, including a focus on pedestrian access. Further efforts have focused on the Borough’s Victorian-era architecture, and on traditional neighborhood design that retains the Borough’s diverse existing neighborhood character.

In the intervening years, the Borough has also undertaken several other planning initiatives, including the 2013 Malvern-Willistown Greenway Plan (discussed elsewhere herein), a 2014 transit-oriented development study, a 2015 walkability study, a 2017 official map, a 2018 multimodal transportation study, and a 2020 Randolph Woods Nature Preserve Master Site Plan. Of note are the efforts undertaken on behalf Willistown and Malvern to create trail and greenway linkages between the two municipalities and beyond. The greenway plan referenced above provided a blueprint for action to link Willistown’s and Malvern’s neighborhoods with Malvern’s business center; in addition the plan recognizes the importance of historic and cultural sites such as the Paoli Battlefield, and the need to provide linkages to schools and to nearby trail systems, such as the Chester Valley Trail and the Patriots Path (a pedestrian link between Valley Forge National Historical Park in Tredyffrin Township and both the Paoli Battlefield Site/Paoli Memorial Association Grounds in Malvern/Willistown and the Battle of the Clouds Park in East Whiteland Township). One connection that has been pursued over the years is

between Greentree Park in Willistown and Randolph Woods in Malvern. The Borough's 2020 preserve plan for Randolph Woods was intended to provide a strategy for phased improvements to the preserve and the eventual goal of linking Greentree Park, the Preserve, and Borough Hall (the Preserve falls within the central portion of the identified greenway connection between the Greentree Park and Borough Hall). A further discussion of pedestrian and greenway linkages is provided in Chapter 6.

In recent years, private entrepreneurs have opened a number of shops along King Street, catering to the antique, craft and boutique shopper. This trend is likely to continue.

It is anticipated that the Borough's active comprehensive planning effort will likely address many of the issues referenced above and capitalize on many of the Borough's past efforts. Chapter 6 of this plan specifically talks to the desirability and willingness on behalf of Willistown to move coordinated trails and greenways planning forward.

East Whiteland Township, Chester County

East Whiteland Township shares two short lengths of its borders with Willistown Township. They are the northern borders of the Township on the north and west side of Malvern Borough. As stated in the 2011 plan, East Whiteland has experienced significant development activity which will likely impact Willistown for years to come. The southern portion of East Whiteland (the portion closest to Willistown) is strongly affected by the U.S. Route 30 corridor, which traverses the Township from east to west. In addition, both townships are impacted by the developing portions of the Route 202 corridor. In the Township's 2016 comprehensive plan the area of Route 30 is seen as the focus of redevelopment and revitalization in the coming years. The Township intends its land use policies and zoning to focus on village mixed use and general commercial, multifamily, and office uses.

East Whiteland's original Zoning Ordinance was adopted in 1966 and it has been updated regularly since. Currently, zoning along almost the entire length of the southern border (that which is shared with Willistown Township) is zoned for residential uses and a majority of this land is significantly built out. The portion of the border abutting Willistown Township to the west of Malvern Borough is zoned for low-density residential development.

Tredyffrin Township, Chester County

Willistown Township shares portions of its northern and eastern borders with Tredyffrin Township. Although the length of the shared border is relatively small by comparison to other neighbors, Tredyffrin (and the Paoli community in general) exerts a strong influence on Willistown Township. As a regional employment center, it provides employment for some Willistown residents and contributes to the commuter traffic volume through and to Willistown Township. As a result of this interrelationship, Willistown and Tredyffrin cooperated on a special planning district study entitled the *Paoli Community Master Plan*. The genesis for this planning effort stemmed from Amtrak's decision to relocate its train storage and maintenance operations adjacent to the Paoli station, thus providing opportunities for urban redevelopment of the site. Initial planning efforts led to the creation of the *Paoli Rail Yard and Transportation Center*

Plan, undertaken by the Townships in conjunction with Chester County, SEPTA and Amtrak. This effort, and its advancement, led the communities to prepare the long-range development plan referenced above for the Paoli Community in 2001. This plan has been the subject of implementation efforts ever since, including the improvements to the station, apartment redevelopment and commercial development. Part of this effort involved each municipality’s adoption a consistent zoning subdivision scheme for the area, intended to contribute to the livability and community character of Paoli for many years to come. The Chester County Planning Commission completed an update to Tredyffrin’s comprehensive plan in 2020; the plan recommends continued coordination with Willistown on the redevelopment of Paoli.

The Patriots Path described above includes trail creation efforts in Tredyffrin Township, as well as joint planning efforts with East Whiteland Township, Willistown Township, and Malvern Borough (also reflected in the 2020 comprehensive plan update).

Easttown Township, Chester County

Easttown Township, Chester County, shares much of Willistown Township's eastern border. Easttown completed its most recent comprehensive plan in 2018. This plan is currently being updated to reflect current trends and a vision for the future. The current plan places significant emphasis on the desire to improve pedestrian and bicyclist mobility and improve the character, design and functionality of Route 30 (the goal being to reimagine Route 30 as a “Complete Street”).

The majority of the lands abutting Willistown Township continue to be zoned AA, the Township's lowest density residential use, and “intended to provide for farming, conservation, recreation and low density single-family detached dwellings on lots of sufficient size for on-lot sewage disposal systems.” Minimum lot sizes in this district are 80,000 square feet, although the Township has a lot-averaging option which permits smaller net lot sizes, (in the case of AA, 56,000 square feet).

Much of the land area in Easttown Township along the Willistown-Easttown shared border has been subdivided into large lots. Several areas (those portions lying west of Darby Paoli Road) appear to be protected either by conservation easements or deed restrictions. In recent years infill development has occurred on both sides of the Willistown-Easttown border. Pressure in both Townships is leading to development of the remaining infill parcels.

Newtown Township, Delaware County

Newtown Township shares Willistown Township's border along Crum Creek, in the southeastern corner of the Township. The shared border is also the dividing line between Chester County and Delaware County. Traveling east on Goshen Road, away from Willistown Township and toward Newtown Square, land uses become more intense in coverage and density. Current land uses along Goshen Road and the vicinity of the shared border with Willistown Township are primarily residential. Although much of the land bordering Willistown has been developed, several parcels remain open, and it is likely

these parcels will eventually be developed according to the Township’s suburban density R-1 residential zoning (60,000 sq. ft. per unit).

Edgmont Township, Delaware County

Edgmont Township borders Willistown Township on the south side. The shared border also forms the boundary between Chester and Delaware County.

Edgemont’s current comprehensive plan was adopted in 2015. The land along the border between Edgmont Township and Willistown is currently a mix of single-family residential development, agriculture/ farmland, light industrial/ warehousing and recreation/ open space (Ridley Creek State Park and what was the Edgmont Country Club, which was sold in 2016). The owners of the former country club are developing the site with single-family and carriage style homes, surrounded by open space and setback from West Chester Pike (RT.3). Other than the former country club, significant additional land use change seems unlikely, although some infill could occur in the Township’s low density residential districts, which permit lots of between 2 and 4 acres.

Westtown Township, Chester County

Westtown Township lies to the west of Willistown Township and shares a small portion of Willistown Township's border at the very southwestern corner of the Township.

Westtown Township’s 2019 comprehensive plan shows land uses bordering Willistown to be predominantly single family residential, commercial and open space. The Township’s future land use map urges the preservation of the current residential uses but encourages linking adjacent open spaces and converting much of the land along Rt. 3 to mixed use (commercial and housing)

Most of the land areas abutting Willistown Township are developed. A small parcel of land on the south side of Route 3 and directly abutting Willistown Township is multi-family development. Several commercial uses are located to the east on Rt. 3. Land use along the remaining border is predominantly single family residential.

One of the main commuter routes into Willistown Township is Route 926, which travels along the border of Thornbury Township (Chester County) and Westtown Township, where it terminates at Rt. 3. Traffic on Route 926 is likely to continue increasing in the years to come.

East Goshen Township, Chester County

Willistown Township shares almost its entire western border, along Township Line Road, with East Goshen Township.

East Goshen Township’s most recent comprehensive plan was adopted in 2015. A majority of the land bordering Willistown Township is low density residential (principally 1 acre residential zoning). While most of this land has been built out, several large tracts to the southeast remain open along Ridley Creek. Of interest is the Paoli Pike

Corridor, which is identified as transforming to a more mixed-use corridor (referred to as a walkable, connected artery).

3.2 Historic Development

3.2.1 Historic Settlement Themes

Willistown Township illustrates several major historical themes as documented by local historians. Among them are *settlement along a watershed*, first by Native Americans, then by settlers for industrial and agricultural reasons; *interface of early settlers with Native Americans* as part of the settlement process, as evidenced by the district containing the site of William Penn's first and only land grant for an Indian reservation; *Quaker settlement within a compact area for proximity to a "meeting"*; *agricultural land use over three centuries*; and *vernacular and regional architecture* as interpreted by the Quakers and later land owners.

3.2.2 Exploration and Settlement

The Holmes Map of 1681 holds the first written reference to Willistown as Willeston.

Willistown was a part of the 50,000-acre Welsh Tract surveyed for William Penn in 1684. It was to be reserved for settlement by persons from North and South Wales and adjacent counties of Haverfordshire, Shropshire, and Cheshire. Penn made six grants within the Township, but there is doubt that the grantees ever lived on the land other than the Okehocking tribe of the Leni Lanape to whom he granted a 500-acre reservation.

Native Americans

William Penn's respect for and protection of the Native Americans found in Pennsylvania is well documented. He used a variety of mechanisms on their behalf, including legal purchase of land, establishment of courts to adjudicate Native American complaints, and creation of manors as places of refuge. The Okehocking Historic District, listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1993, is in the heart of Willistown. It is the sole example of Penn's creation of a place of refuge (reservation) for Native Americans. It was possibly the first reservation in the country and the only one established in Pennsylvania. From its creation in 1702 until its abandonment in 1735, it was known as Okehocking Indian Town.

Despite the good intent of its creators, the reservation's boundaries were poorly conceived for the Okehocking tribes' purposes. The hilliest tract was without water much of the time. In 1710 neighboring farmers succeeded in having a road laid out through the middle of the tract, rather than along their own property lines. The road did nothing to foster a lasting bond with this particular land for the Native Americans. The Okehocking tribe chose to leave the land as forest. They occupied it only intermittently and left it for extended periods each year during hunting season. By 1735 they ended their occupancy of the land. Under terms of the deed, the land reverted to the Proprietary. In 1737, the land was reallocated to Quaker brothers Amos and Mordecai Yarnall.

Quaker Settlement

Much of Willistown Township's historic pastoral landscape and patterns of early 18th century settlement by English Quakers remains. The rural Quaker lifestyle was reflected by the strong, agriculturally oriented communities of families located within a half-day's distance of a meeting house, the site of all their religious life.

Three English Quaker extended families dominated the history of much of Willistown Township; the Yarnalls, the Smedleys and the Garretts. The written record paints them as agriculturally oriented and more interested in natural science than the "frivolous" pursuits of art, music and literature. As Quakers, they held a respect for history, cherished their homesteads, and kept family and community records.

In the same year that the Okehockings were deeded their reservation (1702), 400 acres abutting the Native American land were sold to Charles Whitaker. His purchase included most of the watercourses and fertile bottom land denied to the Native Americans. In turn, he sold the 400-acre tract to Francis Yarnall, his brother-in-law, who obtained by patent another 150 acres west of his original purchase in 1713. His sons, Mordecai and Amos, inherited much of his lands and added to them.

Following the reversion of the Native American lands to the Proprietary in 1737, the brothers Mordecai and Amos obtained the Okehocking lands. The Yarnalls intermarried with other Quaker families and occupied farms on the original purchases through the 1800's.

The Smedley family settled in Willistown and intermarried with the Yarnalls and other Quakers. George Smedley, born in Derbyshire, England, established a plantation on 400 acres to the west of Francis Yarnall's holdings in 1706. In 1713, he and son Thomas acquired another 200 acres immediately to the east. Thomas inherited his father's holdings in 1723. In addition to farming, he operated a bark mill and tanyard on portions of his land which straddled Ridley Creek. At his death in 1758, the plantation and holdings in other parts of the Township were divided among his several sons; the tanyard was left to the family to hold jointly for 10 years. Succeeding generations of Smedleys lived on the land, acquired other nearby parcels, built additional houses and operated farms and mills well into the mid-19th century.

The third major Quaker family to settle Willistown Township was the Garrett's. William Garrett (originally Garat) emigrated from Leicester, England to Darby, Pennsylvania in 1684. By 1739, William's grandson, Isaac, held a mortgage on 141 acres of Mordecai Yarnall's land along Ridley Creek. This parcel was deeded to his son Isaac II in 1793. The Garrett family eventually held Yarnall land through the marriage of Amos Yarnall to Sarah Garrett, the widow of Samuel Garrett (first cousin to Isaac). Two of her sons married Yarnall women and another, Aaron, inherited the Amos Yarnall homestead.

Scattered villages emerged in the late 1700's as businesses grew, usually at major crossroads, and contained schools, taverns, general stores and craft shops. Prime early examples of these are Sugartown, White Horse and Plumsock. Sugartown was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1984.

Religion and Education

Initially, early settlers were members of meetings in other townships but by 1753, enough Quakers had settled in this area of Willistown to justify a school in which to educate their children. In that year, land was deeded by Francis and Ann Smedley to various local Quakers for the purpose of building a "commodious school" and hiring a teacher. Quaker meetings were held there until 1798 and it was used by the Orthodox group for meetings between 1828 and 1873.

In the 1780s, the Quaker population had swelled to the point that a larger meeting house was required. Permission was sought to hold a Preparative Meeting through the 1780's and in 1793 permission was granted to build a two-story stone meetinghouse which was erected adjacent to the school in 1798 on land deeded by Ann Smedley, Francis' widow. This deed also provided for a burying ground which in 1809 was walled in stone from monies raised by subscription. The large meetinghouse, six bays wide with two entrances, adequately served the needs of the local Quaker community until the 1870's when some minor changes were made. In 1956, an addition containing classrooms was built.

Popular tradition and some written accounts hold the area and early peoples of part of Willistown as being involved in the 19th century's Underground Railroad movement. William Hibbard Jr. (of Plumsock Farm) is noted in the *History of the Underground Railroad* by R.C.Smedley (1883) along with Davis Garrett for taking slaves to Philadelphia in two one-horse dearborns. The Rising Sun Tavern still has tunnels on its property that are said to have been involved in this massive, Quaker-supported movement, although no evidence supports this. Members of the Garrett family of Willistown were also relatives of Thomas Garrett, a noted abolitionist of Wilmington, Delaware.

The Revolutionary War

The Battle of Paoli, fought on the evening of September 20, 1777, spanned parts of northern Willistown, including what is now the Borough of Malvern. British troops encamped in Tredyffrin descended upon General Wayne's Pennsylvania Division Continentals camped in modern day Malvern. In fact, much of the fighting took place southwest of the intersection of Monument and Warren Avenues in Malvern. In retreating, the Continental Army (and the pursuing British) crossed much of northwest Willistown. The battle became known as the "Paoli Massacre" for the brutal and one-sided defeat of forces under American General Anthony Wayne and is thought to have become the first American battle rallying cry "Remember Paoli". The Paoli Memorial Grounds, located in the Borough, is the burial site for dozens of soldiers who died during the battle.

In the early 2010's, Chester County received a grant from the American Battlefield Protection Program to fund a project to study and map Revolutionary War troop movements, recommend archaeological sites for further investigation, and identify existing historic resources that contribute to our understanding of the Paoli Battlefield

area. This project, completed around 2015, produced a Battle of Paoli historic resource atlas, an animated battle map, and historic resources atlases for Willistown, Easttown, Tredyffrin, East Whiteland and East Goshen Townships. Malvern Borough's atlas was completed in 2008. Although education is a key component of this project, information available to identify, preserve and interpret historic resources related to the battle can be used to influence land use planning at the municipal level. Several undeveloped pieces still exist in Willistown, and Chester County has developed maps that identify troop encampments and troop movements in relation to remaining open space parcels.

Transportation

Transportation and milling were early factors in the settlement and development of Willistown. The first roads in Willistown were Indian trails. As the Township grew, new routes were needed. Goshen Road was laid out in 1710 as the main road between Willistown and Philadelphia, followed by Boot Road (1710) and Sugartown Road (1710 and 1732).

In the 1800s, railways became important to the development of Willistown. In 1832, Chester County's first operating railroad "The West Chester Rail Road" was completed running from West Chester to its eastern terminus in Willistown. It linked West Chester to the Philadelphia and Columbia Railroad (later the Pennsylvania Railroad) at Malvern Borough. A trolley line linked Philadelphia to West Chester over what is now the West Chester Pike.

Through the 1870's, a stagecoach also traveled from West Chester to White Horse via Sugartown three days a week, delivering mail and passengers.

The electrification of the Paoli and the Main Line commuter railway in 1915 increased suburbanization in the area. Vehicle Routes 76, 202 and 476 have spurred this development since the second half of the 20th century.

Commerce

In 1796, the following trades were represented in the Township: 5 cordwainers, 2 carpenters, 2 tanners, 2 masons, 3 wheelwrights, a weaver, a saddler, 3 storekeepers, a cooper, 2 fullers, an innkeeper, a clock and watchmaker, 2 millers, a tailor, a chairmaker, and a smith.

Mills were an important industry in the Township through the 1800s. Thus, much of the Township's settlement occurred along the Ridley Creek watershed. Between 1720 and 1900 the Okehocking area contained Willistown Township's most active milling enterprises. The full gamut of milling occurred here, including bark mills, fulling mills, sawmills, grist mills, tilt mills, and paper mills. Only scattered ruins make evident the existence of these mills today.

Blacksmith and wheelwright operations, inns, and other services grew up along the major routes of travel. Standing examples include Goshen Road's Rising Sun Tavern and the State Road's (now West Chester Pike) Willistown and William Penn Inns.

In 1865, one of the country's first platinum refineries was located in Sugartown. It was destroyed by fire in 1903.

Agriculture

Agriculture was one of the most important industries in the Township from the period of first settlement until the 1950's. While not nearly as significant today, agriculture does continue to dominate the local landscape character. Much of the Township's historic architecture reflects its agricultural roots and the changes that occurred in that industry over the last 250 years.

The agricultural evolution began with 18th-century family farms producing a variety of crops, among them grains, such as wheat and corn, or orchards. By mid-19th century, farms grew larger and included crops of wheat, Indian corn, oats, potatoes, hops, hay, butter, as well as livestock such as horses, sheep, cows, beef cattle, and swine. Mid-19th century barns reflect these expansions with large forebays and shed additions to accommodate a larger variety of crops and livestock. From the latter decades of the 1800s to the mid-20th century, dairy farming was prevalent throughout much of the Township.

In the early 1900's Dr. Thomas G. Ashton of Philadelphia acquired many small farms and assembled them into the mammoth Ridley Valley Farm, known today as the Delchester Farm. Ashton assembled more than 1,400 acres of land in about 1913 and joined the ranks of the area's "millionaire-owned" breeding establishments.

Ashton established a model horse breeding operation at Del-Chester Stock Farm along Ridley Creek, with initial efforts centering on Percheron horses and some cattle. By the 1930's, Delchester Farm, while maintaining its horse breeding, had shifted its major focus to dairying and was distributing milk it produced (as well as milk it obtained from other farmers) locally. In the 1940's, Delchester joined other dairy farms in selling directly to Abbot's Dairy in Philadelphia. The herd was sold after a disastrous fire in 1943.

On October 2, 1909, Charles E. Coxe, the owner of Willisbrook Farm, deeded land and a building to the Township for the first permanent Township Office and Meeting Room.

In 1996, Willisbrook Farm was designated by the Commonwealth as a Century Farm to honor continuous farming by the same family for over one hundred years. The owners of this farm have also participated in Chester County's Agricultural Lands Preservation Program.

In 1981 the State Legislature adopted Act 43 which authorized a borough or township to establish an Agricultural Security Area in its municipality. Two hundred and fifty (250) or more acres of viable farmland, not necessarily contiguous, may be included at the request of landowners. Including farmland in an Agricultural Security Area protects farmers from ordinances that would restrict their farming practices; in addition, it makes it more difficult for state and local agencies to acquire the farmland through the power of eminent domain. Membership in an Agricultural Security Area is required for farmers to become eligible for both State and County "purchase of development rights" programs.

Architecture

Willistown has a splendid collection of rural vernacular architecture dating from 1720. Most noteworthy are the Township's massive stone "Pennsylvania" bank barns.

Many of the residential structures in the Township can be characterized as Pennsylvania additive farmhouses which started with modest stone cores and grew as family size demanded and economic prosperity permitted. Materials were locally obtained, and plans were modest and utilitarian. Only a few significant historic houses vary from the more utilitarian examples. One is the frame Victorian Harvey Garret house, with its Gothic crossed-gables and bits of bargeboard; another is the A. Atwater Kent House, designed in the Georgian Revival style. Both of these exceptions are testaments to the late 19th and early 20th century styles.

Historic Resources and Districts

The Township has no individual resources listed on the National Register of Historic Places. As mentioned above, however, three historic districts, Sugartown, Okehocking, and White Horse, are listed on the National Register.

The Willistown Township Historic Commission is charged with gathering information, documenting, and helping to preserve the Township's resources through planning efforts such as this. As an advisory agency, the Commission also helps the Township administer its Historic Preservation Ordinance, Article XXIX of Chapter 139, Zoning.

Conservation

Willistown Township is known in the region for its extensive private and public open space network. Willistown Township residents have displayed a strong conservation ethic for many decades as witnessed by the number of private landowners placing conservation easements on their land. Illustrating their commitment to conservation, Willistown residents passed an open space referendum in 1999 with a resounding 80% of the vote. Since then, the Township has continued to leverage its Open Space Fund with federal, state, and county funding to protect publicly accessible park, trail, and preserve land both on its own and in private/public partnerships with local non-profit organizations.

Conservation Organizations working in Willistown

Brandywine Conservancy

Land conservation efforts began over 40 years ago as the Brandywine Conservancy's Willistown Area Conservation Program. Between 1980 and 1996, the Program's staff worked closely with more than ninety landowners in Willistown and neighboring townships to protect their lands in perpetuity through the donation of conservation easements.

Willistown Conservation Trust

With the encouragement of the community and key local conservation leaders, the Brandywine Conservancy's Willistown Area Conservation Program evolved into the Willistown Conservation Trust in 1996. The mandate of this independent, non-profit, community-based land trust is to meet the increasing challenges that threaten the area's critical, natural, scenic, and historic resources and to assure the continuation of vigorous conservation efforts in Willistown Township and surrounding communities using the Crum, Ridley and Darby Creek watersheds to delineate their 28,000-acre program area.

Despite tremendous growth pressures that have contributed to sprawl development in neighboring communities, the Willistown Conservation Trust program area still remains largely an oasis of green space. The Trust's programs and services fall into six major categories: (1) Land Protection; (2) Bird Conservation; (3) Habitat Restoration; (4) Community Farm; (5) Watershed Protection and (6) Education and Community Outreach.

The Trust's holistic approach to conservation explores the connections among land, birds, habitat, farm and water. Although their land protection efforts are local to the Willistown area, much of their work has regional and national conservation impact.

Protecting open land in the Willistown area is the Trust's highest priority, and they are working to add another 4,000 acres of land to the already protected 7,500 acres in their program area. The Trust believes the land they protect inspires people to be good stewards of nature. Their programs enable hands-on research, internships, workshops, training, youth education, and conservation leadership.

The Trust employs all available conservation tools including donated conservation easements from private landowners, the purchase of conservation easements, the purchase of land, seeking and leveraging public funds to acquire land or easements, and accepting donations of land. All Trust easements are monitored annually to ensure that the provisions of the easement agreements are upheld.

In 2010, the Trust started a Bird Conservation Program dedicated to advancing avian research and education, dedicated to fostering a love of birds whose populations are in rapid decline. Since the program's inception, over 12,000 birds have been banded at their federally licensed banding station and the Trust leads the effort to expand the Motus network in the Northeastern U.S., a system that tracks bird migration. The Program's primary initiatives include bird banding, bird monitoring, and habitat restoration and is nationally recognized. It attracts students, scholars, and scientists from all over the country.

The Trust Land Stewardship efforts focus on habitat restoration in their preserves and stewardship guidelines for properties held in private ownership. Native tree, shrub, and wildflower plantings are the most common habitat restoration projects used enhance bird and wildlife habitat and to protect water resources.

Willistown Township has partnered with the Willistown Conservation Trust on numerous conservation projects including the acquisition of Kirkwood Preserve, owned by the Trust, Okehocking Preserve, owned by the Township. the Bryn Mawr Rehabilitation Hospital project which resulted in the Township's ownership of its Serpentine Preserve, the protection of the Greater Chester Valley Soccer Association property, and a 60 acre addition to Natural Land's Willisbrook Preserve.

Natural Lands

Natural Lands is a non-profit organization that has been saving open space, stewarding nature, and connecting people to the outdoors in eastern Pennsylvania and southern New Jersey since the early 1950s. Today, nearly five million people live within five miles of lands under permanent protection. Natural Lands' first preserve in Willistown was a section of Willisbrook Preserve donated in the mid-1960's by the Lange family.

Natural Lands was a partner with Willistown Township, the Willistown Conservation Trust, and the Greater Chester Valley Soccer Association in saving 109 acres of the Bryn Mawr Rehabilitation Hospital, 60 of which were added to their then 66-acre Willisbrook Preserve. Along with Willistown Township and Chester County, Natural Lands holds a Declaration of Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions on Kirkwood Preserve and monitors the Declaration for the group.

Township Conservation Efforts

In addition to the specific projects mentioned above, in 1999, Willistown Township approached the Willistown Conservation Trust to assist in the presentation and passage of the Township's Open Space Referendum. The referendum asked residents to favor increasing the Township's earned income tax by 1/8th of one percent to establish a fund solely for the purchase and preservation of open space. Township voters overwhelmingly passed the referendum reflecting their strong valuation of protection of open space for natural, scenic, historic, and recreational lands. The Open Space Review Board, comprised of seven Township volunteers appointed by the Board of Supervisors, was created in 2000 to identify, review, evaluate, and rate the desirability of parcels for acquisition and make recommendations to the Board. The additional establishment of the Open Space Fund has enabled the Township to leverage significant dollars from other public sources, principally Chester County, the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), and the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund, as well as private donations, toward the purchase of natural, scenic, historic, and recreational lands. Over 400 acres has been protected to date through public/private partnerships.

3.3 Land Use Patterns

3.3.1 General Description of Land Uses

The land use patterns in Willistown Township reflect the Township's rural, agricultural origins in the south and the development of markets and rail transportation in the north (see Map 1: Existing Land Use, 2020). Although only a handful of farmers still operate

within the Township, the nature of large farming operations is to create and sustain a very rural landscape. Thus, active farming and/or large residential uses (over 6 acres per unit), many of which are equestrian-based, comprise approximately 5,141.42 acres (43.94%) of the Township's land area. Agricultural/rural residential uses remain the largest uses of land in Willistown Township and are a testament to the enduring use of land for agricultural purposes. Substantial acreage has been permanently preserved throughout the southern portion of Willistown Township. These lands continue to perpetuate the Township's rural landscape character even though agriculture as a leading industry ended in the 1950's.

In addition to being fairly open, buildings in the rural portion of the Township are few and widely separated from one another except in the villages of Sugartown, White Horse, and Okehocking. Buildings are often old and true to Willistown's rural roots. This is a landscape that has maintained its historic integrity. Signs and other visual intrusions are rare. In today's world, this landscape is a rare jewel, especially as the broader landscape becomes more developed and auto oriented. Clearly, the actions of Willistown and many of its partner conservation organizations have contributed greatly to the preservation of land in this and other portions of the Township.

It must be noted that the land uses along Route 3 in the southern part of the Township demonstrate a more intensely developed pattern than does the rural heart, although not at the same level as does Route 30 or Paoli Pike. Nevertheless, Route 3 contains isolated commercial uses (such as restaurants) and townhouse complexes. Where permitted, additional commercial and higher density residential uses will likely be drawn to this accessible corridor. However, the Township has taken great pains to ensure that such uses do not overwhelm adjacent lands, that access is carefully managed, and that limits are placed on the extent to which such uses are permitted to encroach on the rural heart of the Township. It has been the Township's energy and vision that have largely contributed to the protection of viewsheds along the Route 3 corridor and its continued vigilance will be needed if these viewsheds are to be preserved in the future.

Heading north toward Paoli Pike, land use becomes more suburban, reflecting a significant growth period between 1950 and 1970. Although lots are smaller (often between one-half acre and two acres), the land uses are predominantly residential in nature. Within many of these residential developments, particularly those where density is higher and houses are closer to one another, the sense of community is strong. In fact, Willistown Township was described as a community of neighborhoods in the 1980 *Guidelines for Growth*; such neighborhoods include Paoli Manor, Ronnie Park, Stonehenge, and Willistown Acres, among others. Large parcels in these areas of the Township are often utilized for institutional, educational, or religious purposes. Such uses do not tend to detract from the residential character but contribute to it.

Land use in the northernmost portion of the Township is more varied and intense than that in the south. It is characterized as suburban and urban in some places, particularly around Malvern Borough and near Paoli. North of Devon Road and Paoli Pike on both sides of Malvern Borough, land uses are even more intense, both in terms of density and variety of land uses. Commercial, retail, transportation centers, and quasi-industrial uses

are found. Land adjacent to Route 30 and Paoli Pike east of Malvern is strongly oriented to vehicular traffic.

Land Use	1980		1995		2008		2020	
	Acres	%	Acres	%	Acres	%	Acres	%
Agricultural/Residential (6+ acres)	6,590	55.9	6,387	54.2	5,242.91	44.86	5,141.42	43.94
Agricultural/Residential (4-6 acres)	810	6.9	1,218	10.4	1,341.62	11.48	1,337.57	11.43
Agricultural/Residential (2-4 acres)	1,640	13.9	1,689	14.4	1,576.15	13.49	1,571.65	13.43
Residential (1-2 acres)	450	3.8	1,211	10.3	550.88	4.71	550.07	4.7
Residential (< 1 acre)	510	4.3	73	0.62	579.64	4.96	674.68	5.77
Multifamily	60	0.5	162	1.38	418.81	3.58	469.46	4.01
Institutional (Semi-public)	1,200	10.2	755	6.4	863.56	7.39	863.56	7.38*
Institutional (Public)	70	0.6	38	0.33	48.18	0.41	10.87	0.09
Industrial	70	0.6	90	0.76	106.5	0.91	106.5	0.91*
Commercial	60	0.5	73	0.62	188.42	1.61	185.20	1.58
Parkland	30	0.2	71	0.60	415.82	3.56	415.82	3.55*
Roads	280	2.4	-	-	355.63	3.04	362.69	3.10
Total								
	11,770	100	11,700	100	11,770	100	11,770	100
			11,767		11,688.12		11,689.48	
			(see Note 1)		(see Note 2)		(see Note 2) (see Note 3)	

Notes:

1. Actual amount rounded to nearest 10th
 2. Actual amount totals less than previous accountings.
 3. Percentages based on 11,700 original 1980 acres
- * No Change in Acres from 2008

It is useful to look closely at Table 3-1: Summary of Land Uses in Willistown Township, 1980, 1995, 2008, and 2020. One distinction from the 1997 plan is the allocation of what had been called “vacant land” into the Agricultural/Residential category. The main reason for this reallocation is that it became clear there is no real distinction between what had been labeled “vacant” and what had been open land on larger agricultural/residential properties. Map 8: Protected and Developed Lands differentiates developed from undeveloped or uncommitted lands in order to more fully understand what land is truly “vacant.”

Changes in other categories also warrant explanation. For example, the residential 1–2-acre category shows a marked increase from 1980 to 1995; although it is tempting to explain this as a partial consolidation of lots due to a decline in residential <1 acre, a thorough evaluation of current GIS data assembled from local and county databases indicates a much closer allocation of acreage in both categories for 2008 and 2020. The most likely explanation for this anomaly is the misallocation of acreages for these two categories in 1995. Another interesting anomaly is the decline in institutional (public) land from 1980 to 1995, followed by a slight increase in 2008 and another significant

decline in 2020. The explanation here is attributed to a slight increase in land for this category from 1995 to 2008 and a decline in land since 2008. Furthermore, the Township has seen increases in land used for industrial and commercial purposes (a good indication of the success of the Township’s efforts to provide a fair share of such uses), although commercial land uses dropped slightly since 2008. Also worth noting is the large jump in parkland from 1995 to 2008 (much of which is attributable to acquisitions such as the Okehocking Preserve).

In general, the Township continues to see a decline in land attributable to agricultural/residential (6+ acres) consistent with increases in land allocated to other residential categories [agricultural/residential (4-6 acres), residential (1-2 acres), residential (<1 acre), and multifamily]. This is likely attributable to several things: simple subdivision (where applicable), changes in zoning categories, and the use of overlay provisions that provide for higher density development in select zoning districts. It should also be noted that the methods of accounting used from 1980 to 2020 may have contributed to slight differences in data sets. This type of variation may always be an issue although the use of GIS for calculating acreages may reduce inconsistencies over time.

3.3.2 Notable Land Uses

Many institutional uses are located within Willistown Township. In fact, prior planning efforts note that other than residential or agricultural uses, institutional uses accounted for the largest proportion of land uses. This category appears to have increased substantially during the 1960's. Uses include the American Institute for Property and Liability Underwriters, Bryn Mawr Rehabilitation Hospital (now a division of Main Line Health), Daylesford Abbey, the Devereux School, Norbertine Seminary, Paoli Memorial Hospital, Phelps School, the Radnor Hunt Club, Villa Maria Academy, the White Manor Country Club, and the General Wayne and Sugartown schools.

As noted above, most of these institutional uses do not diminish neighborhood character. Rather, they often enhance quality of life for neighbors by ensuring sufficient property maintenance, keeping large portions of properties “green”, and by making properties available to neighbors to enjoy. Such institutions tend to be good neighbors.

Willistown has been a hub for equestrian farms and sport for many decades. For example, the Radnor Hunt, which was founded in 1883, is recognized by the Masters of Foxhounds Association of America as the oldest continuously active fox hunt in the United States. It moved to Willistown Township in 1931 and has continuously operated, albeit with reduced frequency, ever since. In 1954, the Radnor Hunt Pony Club was founded to promote fox hunting among children. The pony club, located next to Radnor Hunt, thrives to this day. For the last 40 years, Radnor Hunt has been hosting the Radnor Hunt Races. Top-level flat and timber horses have participated in the “Races for Open Space,” raising funds and awareness for the Brandywine Conservancy’s open space and clean water programs. The 91st Radnor Hunt Races will be run in 2022.

Yet these land uses also have great potential for impacting landscape character. They occupy large parcels of land yet may be significantly under-utilized. During difficult economic times,

some of these institutions may seek to ease financial woes by selling off or developing portions of their land. In fact, proposals like this have been presented to the Township in recent years (most notably, the residential development approved on lands formerly owned by Bryn Mawr Rehabilitation Hospital). While this kind of planning effort cannot anticipate such development proposals, the Township has attempted to maintain a dialogue with local institutions; this effort should be encouraged in the future.

It should be noted that a significant amount of Township land, particularly in the southern portion of the Township, is set aside as open space, either through ownership (such as the Okehocking Preserve) or through the voluntary donation of conservation easements. Taken as a whole, land either protected or already developed makes up a large percentage of the Township’s overall land area; as such, the Township’s uncommitted or undeveloped land (potentially available for future development) has diminished greatly in recent years. As development pressures intensify regionally, Willistown will likely see its remaining uncommitted lands developed; in fact, the Township is currently seeing the acquisition and possible development of several large remaining parcels. It is also likely the Township will experience increased redevelopment as the scarcity of “green fields” intensifies.

3.4 Demographic Profile

3.4.1 Population Analysis

Population Growth

Since 1950, Willistown Township has experienced a substantial population increase. By the year 2020, its net gain of 8,564 residents represented a growth rate of 316% during that 50-year period. On a decade-to-decade basis, the rate of growth has fluctuated. In the 1950's, a rather modest population base more than doubled, as Willistown's northern end felt the impacts of post-war suburbanization, spurred in this case by rail access to center city from Paoli. During the 1970's, the Township lost population. More recently, as reflected in data from the U.S. Census for 1990, 2000, 2010 and 2020, the growth in population has become more moderate and less volatile. This places Willistown in a comparable position to several of its neighboring municipalities as a maturing community with a diminishing reservoir of developable land.

Census figures for the Township through the year 2020, including the rate of growth during each decade, are as follows:

Year	Number (%)
1950	2,709
1960	6,492 (139.6)
1970	9,128 (40.6)
1980	8,282 (-9.2)
1990	9,380 (13.2)

2000	10,011 (9.4)
2010	10,497 (4.9)
2020	11,273 (7.4)

Table 3-2: Population Growth and Percentage Rate of Growth for Willistown Township

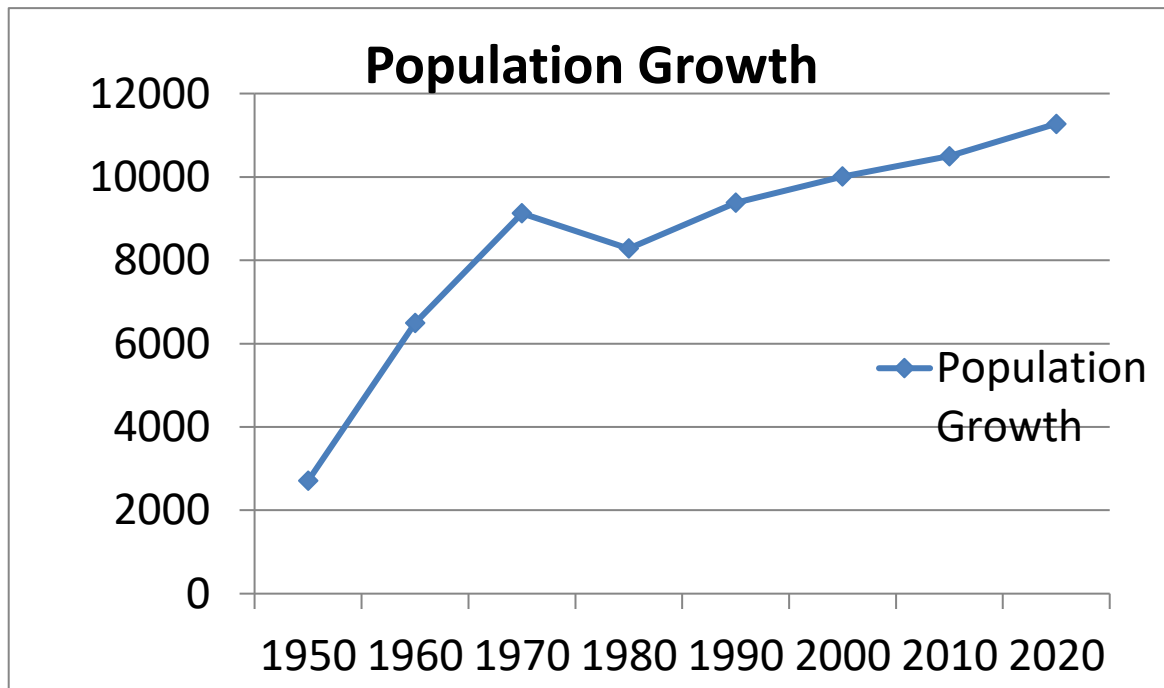


Figure 3-1: Willistown Township Population, 1950-2020

For the period 1960-2020, the U.S. Census documents the overall rate of growth in Chester County and Willistown Township as follows:

Location	%
Chester County	154%
Willistown Township	74%

Table 3-3: Rate of Growth in Chester County and Willistown Township

Population changes for the most recent two decades (based on U.S. Census Bureau information) place Willistown roughly in the middle of its Chester County municipal neighbors with respect to growth rates, well behind Malvern and East Whiteland, on par with Tredyffrin, and Chester County as a whole, while outpacing East Goshen, Easttown and Westtown. The amounts and rates of population growth in the County, Willistown, and its neighboring municipalities compare as follows:

Location	2010	2020	% Increase 2010-2020
Chester County	499,132	534,413	7.0
Willistown	10,497	11,273	7.4
East Goshen	18,026	18,410	2.1
Easttown	10,477	10,984	4.8
East Whiteland	10,650	13,917	30.6
Malvern	2,998	3,419	14.0
Tredyffrin	29,332	31,927	8.8
Westtown	10,827	11,154	3.0

Table 3-4: Population Growth and Rate of Growth for Chester County, Willistown and Neighboring Communities

For the year 2021, the Township approved one land development proposal for 34 single family dwellings. At an average household size of 2.64 (as reported in the 2020 Census), the new dwellings represented by these permits could be expected to add an increment approximately 90 to the estimated 2020 population of 11,273, producing an estimated current population of 11,363.

Population Characteristics Data from the 2000 U.S. Census offer a statistical depiction of a variety of aspects of the Township's residents, as well as the ability to make comparisons over time and with the population of Chester County. Among them are the following:

Township population density (persons per square mile; 18.11 sq. mi. total)				
1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
455.2	515.4	541.1	579.6	622.5

Table 3-5: Willistown Township Population Density

This measure can be seen as a surrogate for tracking population growth. As noted in past planning efforts, it has a bearing on such matters as planning for recreation facilities. In that regard, it continues to be true that the Township's overall population density consists of the relatively dense northern sector and the far less dense southern area. For purposes of context, the 2020 population densities among Willistown's neighbors included, East Goshen (1,753 persons per sq. mi.), Easttown (1,334), East Whiteland (1,272), Malvern (2,713), Tredyffrin (1,615), and Westtown (1,288).

The following data offer a snapshot of the ethnicity, age composition, and education levels of the Township population in 2020.

Township population, by race:	1990 (%)	2000 (%)	2010 (%)	2020 (%)
White	9,117 (97.2)	9,618 (96.1)	9,661 (92.0)	9,887 (87.7)
Black	184 (2.0)	225 (2.2)	213 (2.0)	223 (2.0)
Asian, Pacific Islander	72 (0.8)	149 (1.5)	383 (3.6)	594 (5.3)
Hispanic or Latino	*	*	159 (1.5)	288 (2.6)
Other	7 (0.1)	49 (0.4)	81 (0.8)	281(2.4)

* Note: 1990 and 2000 numbers did not reflect Hispanic or Latino as a separate category. 2010 and 2020 numbers reflect this breakout.

Table 3-6: Willistown Township Population by Race

In 2020, Chester County's population was distributed across these groups as follows: White, 77.3%; Black, 5.5%; Asian, Pacific Islander, 6.6%; Hispanic or Latino, 8.1%, Other, 3.5%.

Township population, by age group, 2019*		
Under 5 years	470	4.3%
5 to 9 years	508	4.6%
10 to 14 years	763	7.0%
15 to 19 years	771	7.0%
20 to 24 years	299	2.7%
25 to 29 years	417	3.8%
30 to 34 years	421	3.8%
35 to 39 years	665	6.1%
40-44 years	593	5.4%
45 to 49 years	713	6.5%
50 to 54 years	921	8.4%
55 to 59 years	871	8.0%
60 to 64 years	936	8.6%
65 to 69 years	871	8.0%
70 to 74 years	677	6.2%
75 to 79 years	413	3.8%
80 to 84 years	281	2.6%
85 years and over	357	3.3%

Note: 2019 Census estimates. 2020 Census breakout by 5-year increments not available.

Table 3-7: Willistown Township Population By Age Group

Township population under 18 and 18 and over				
	2010	2010 %	2020	2020 %
Under 18	2,133	20.3	2,135	18.9
18 and over	8,364	79.7	9,138	81.1

Table 3.8: 2010 and 2020 population under 18, 18 and over - 2020 Census

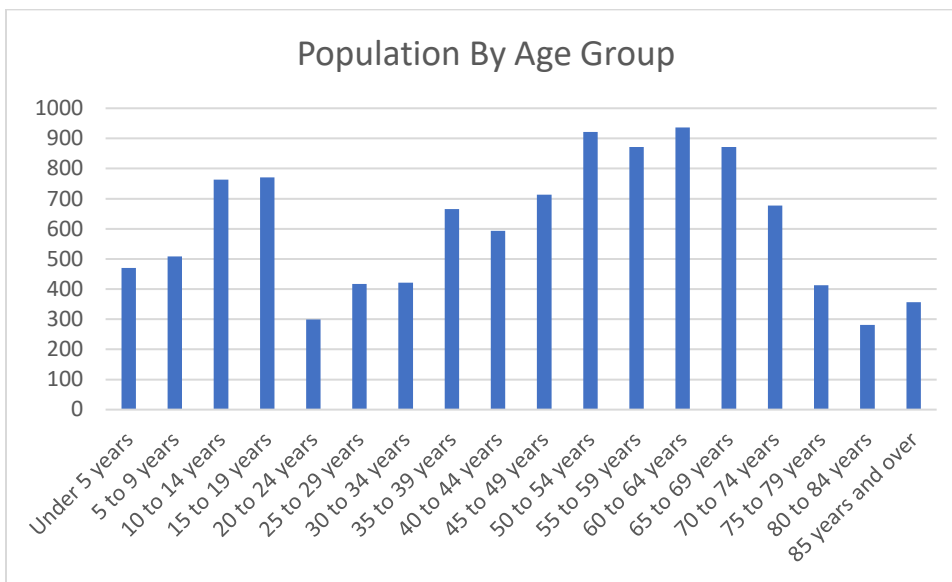


Figure 3-2: Willistown Township Population, by age group, 2019

Median age:	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Willistown Township	34.7 years	39.4 years	42.8 years	48.2 years	49.1 years
Chester County	30.5 years	33.8 years	37.0 years	39.3 years	40.4 years

Table 3-9: Median Age for Chester County and Willistown Township

Census data make clear that, since 1980, the Township's population not only has a median age that is older than Chester County's, but the difference between the two figures has been widening, with the exception of the year 2000. This is further borne out when comparing the County's cohorts of 18-and-over (%), and 65-and-over (%) with those of the Township. While the Township percentages seem to correlate with, and quite likely are attributable to, the cost of housing in Willistown, increased housing diversity may eventually impact this trend.

Township population by gender, 2020		
Male	5,422	48.1%
Female	5,851	51.9%

Table 3-10: Willistown Township Population By Gender

This distribution of the Township's population in 2020 was only slightly at variance with Chester County's, in which males comprised 49.2% and females 50.8%.

Township population, educational attainment, 2020	
High school graduate or higher	97.1%
Bachelor's degree or higher	62.9%
Graduate or professional degree	27.8%

Table 3-11: Educational Attainment in Willistown Township, 2020

Not unexpectedly, educational levels attained by Willistown residents exceeded those of Chester County in 2020. For the County's population, 93.6% were high school graduates or higher, 53% had a bachelor's degree or higher, and 21.5% had a graduate or professional degree.

Population Forecasts

Forecasts of municipal population are prepared periodically by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission in collaboration with the Chester County Planning Commission. The most current forecasts are based on the 2010 U.S. Census data, and take account of birth, death, and migration rates, as well as land use regulations and anticipated future development. The DVRPC/CCPC forecasts to the year 2050 for Willistown and its neighboring municipalities, and for the County as a whole, are as follows:

Location	2030	2040	2050	Change (#, %) 2030-2050
Willistown	11,336	11,526	11,684	348 (3.0%)
East Goshen	18,534	19,119	19,496	962 (5.2%)
Easttown	11,676	11,874	12,041	365 (3.1%)
East Whiteland	16,524	16,671	16,808	284 (1.7%)
Malvern	3,607	3,951	4,165	558 (15.5%)
Tredyffrin	31,009	31,570	31,949	940 (3.0%)
Westtown	12,231	12,692	13,007	776 (6.3%)
Chester County	586,300	620,391	645,673	59,373 (10.0%)

Table 3-12: Population Forecasts for Chester County, Willistown and Neighboring Communities

Consistent with the differences in current populations, the rate of growth in Willistown's population to 2050 is expected to lag behind that of East Goshen, Malvern, Westtown and Chester County as a whole, but to remain generally compatible with rates in Easttown, East Whiteland and Tredyffrin. These forecasts serve as one benchmark in the

development of future land use policies in Chapter 5, where they can be examined in comparison to the results of a build-out analysis. One note of interest is Malvern’s rate of growth, which among other reasons, could be attributable to the general trend among Americans to move back to “small towns.”

Average household size (persons per household)			
Location	2000	2010	2020
Willistown Township	2.55	2.43	2.64
Chester County	2.7	2.65	2.65

Table 3-13: Average Household Size in Willistown Township

The notable decline in average household size in Willistown until 2010 is not unlike the modest declines seen throughout the region and the County. What is interesting to note is that the decline reversed itself in Willistown (yet remained stable in the County). While it is unclear why this occurred, a lack of affordable housing, coupled with other factors such as the high cost of land and a tight labor market, could be contributed to this rise.

3.4.2 Housing Analysis

The following information relates to housing growth, mix of units, ownership and value.

Township population and housing unit growth, 2000-2020				
	2000	2010	2020	% change
Population	10,011	10,497	11,273	12.6%
Housing Units	3,932	4,500	4,719	20.0%

Table 3-14: Willistown Township Population and Housing Unit Growth

Although the present change in housing units compared to populations looks promising over the twenty-year period from 2000 to 2020, the proportion from 2010 to 2020 alone is not so positive; during this period the percent change in housing units was only 4.8%, as contrasted with a change of population of 7.4%.

The figures below offer another look at Willistown’s housing composition, which shows a diverse mix of single-family detached and attached dwelling types, but little variation otherwise, since 2000. As noted in past planning efforts, diversification from the traditional makeup of families led to greater demand for townhouse (single family attached) dwellings. The diversity of single family detached and attached dwellings, although inconsistent on a yearly basis, continues when viewed over time. The lack of housing beyond single-family detached and attached dwellings is likely due to a number of factors, including: the slowdown in housing growth during the Great Recession – 2007-2009+, the high cost of land in Willistown (making it difficult to build and sell/rent multi-family housing), and the higher-than-average age and income levels of Willistown residents (possibly reducing demand).

Over the years, Willistown has sought to increase housing opportunities in several ways, most notable being its effort with Tredyffrin Township to provide increased housing and commercial opportunities in the area surrounding the Paoli Rail Yard. Residential opportunities in two zoning districts, the Transportation District (TD) and the Town Center District (TCD), provide for a variety of townhouse, duplex, and multi-family housing. However, development in and around the rail yard has been slow to unfold.

Willistown has also reviewed its fair share of uses in the context of recent development proposals. Although construction activity of diverse housing is slow, the Township believes it provides a varied mix of uses and opportunities for development.

Township housing stock, by % mix of dwelling unit types, 2000-2020					
	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
Single-family detached	75	20	100	15	68
Single-family attached (townhouses)	21	80	-	85	32
Multi-family (apartments)	4	-	-	-	-

Table 3-15: Willistown Township Housing Stock by Mix of Dwelling Units

Township housing stock, rate of home ownership		
2000	2010	2020
89.1%	87.9%	87.5%

Table 3-16: Willistown Township Rate of Home Ownership

The Willistown community remains firmly based in the owner-occupancy of its dwelling units. Recently, this continuing upward trend appears attributable to the addition of townhouse units, and not apartments, to the housing stock. County-wide, in data updated through 2020, the home ownership rate stood at 75%. Among Willistown's neighbors, none have a higher rate of home ownership.

Township housing stock, median price of owner-occupied units	
2020	\$459,950

Table 3-17: Willistown Township Median Value of Owner-Occupied Units

For Chester County as a whole, the median price of owner-occupied dwelling units in 2020 was \$375,064. Data provided in the Township's 2011 *Guidelines for Growth* show that, in 2000, the median sale price of a home in Willistown was \$211,800, as compared to the County's median of \$188,000. The 2011 plan makes the point that, to the extent residences in the Township are affordable, it is attributable to the income levels of current residents. "Affordability," as a vehicle to attract greater diversity among future Township residents, continues to lag.

Among all housing units in the Township in 2020, 94% were occupied, leaving a vacancy rate of 6%. The overall vacancy rate of 6% constitutes an increase from the 3.26% of 2000.

3.4.3 Economic Profile

Data from the 2020 U.S. Census also provide indicators of certain economic characteristics of Willistown Township residents. These include types and locations of occupations, the means by which employed residents travel to their place of employment, and selected data on income levels.

Among the Townships 9,012 residents aged 16 years and older 5,593 (62.1%) were in the civilian labor force. Of these, 5,385 were employed while 208 individuals (2.3% of the civilian labor force) were unemployed. This total work force was comprised of the following occupations:

Management, professional, and related occupations	3,152	58.5%
Sales and office occupations	1,119	20.8%
Service occupations	640	11.9%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	250	4.6%
Construction, extraction, and maintenance occupations	224	4.2%

Table 3-18: Willistown Township Workforce Occupations

Census data reported 5,321 workers who described their commute to work according to the following options:

Car/truck/van, drove alone	4,112	77.3%
Car/truck/van, carpooled	178	3.3%
Public transportation	262	4.9%
Walked	175	3.3%
Other means	54	1.0%
Worked at home	541	10.2%

Table 3-19: Willistown Township Workforce Commuting Options

The mean travel time to work was 26.1 minutes.

Household income, accessed 2020				
	<\$50,000	\$50,000- \$99,999	\$100,000 and greater	Median
Chester County	23.5%	26.3%	50.1%	\$100,214
Willistown Township	20.1%	23.3%	56.6%	\$114,116

Table 3-20: Willistown Township Household Income

Of data accessed in 2020, a total of 567 individuals (approximately equivalent to 215 families at a household size of 2.64 persons per household) were reported to be below the poverty level. It is important to note that although the Township’s median household income is higher than the County’s, and has been for a number of years, some interesting variations now exist: the 2011 plan indicated that more than 60% of the Township’s population had household income of under \$100,000, today that number is just over 40%; and, today more than 56% have income of \$100,000 or greater.

3.5 Demographic Implications for Planning

The Township’s 2011 *Guidelines for Growth* described past Township planning effort’s identification of the "globalization" of the national economy and the uncertainty instilled in many workers regarding job security and long-term earning potential. The financial crisis (and its reverberations around the world) that immediately preceded the 2011 plan attest to the fragility of global markets. Nevertheless, financial uncertainty today, partially related to COVID-19 and other impacts on the global economy, continues to leave many workers unsure of their job stability. The 1997 *Guidelines for Growth* identified the first wave of "baby boomers" turning 50; in the 25 years since, successive baby boomers have retired, although many have had to do so under unanticipated and disquieting conditions.

We have seen and will continue to see rapid changes in technology that promise to change the way we work, play, and relate to the world. In addition, the high cost of fossil fuels and their impact on air quality and contributions to climate change will surely influence our use of the automobile and affect land use in the coming years. As discussed below, COVID-19 has seen an enormous increase in the use of “remote work” and such options will likely influence land use decisions and housing opportunities in the years to come.

Willistown Township remains a vibrant and healthy community. The potential to expand employment opportunities is directly related to a well-educated population and while the Township’s population is certainly aging, the historic trend towards valuing education continues. Other advantages exist as well, including: proximity to Philadelphia with its social and business opportunities and regional transportation systems (which have seen and will continue to see improvements in the coming years); modest yet still significant additions to the Township’s housing stock, particularly those units geared to the aging population and young professionals; and a large population of adults (generally a stable, responsible, committed, and involved population group).

Prior Township planning efforts addressed areas in which Willistown's then-current and projected demographic trends could have potential implications for the Township's future. Each of these has taken a distinct course over the intervening 11 years and forms the basis for future trends.

3.5.1 Growth in Population

The slowdown in Willistown's rate of growth, its aging population, and its increase in median salary data in recent years speak to a prosperity not experienced in many of Willistown's neighboring communities. Curiously, the Township's household size seems to have bottomed out recently and even started to rise again. There could be many reasons for this, but some experts point to COVID-19, an unstable and sometimes weak employment market, and other economic uncertainties as reasons for young people to remain home longer than they would in past generations. Modest housing growth, the majority of which has remained in single family detached residential (although some attached units have been built), should facilitate modest population growth into the future (although large jumps of any kind are not anticipated) If anything, the Township's rate of population growth is slowing, quite possibly because the Township is reaching buildout capacity, and partly because much of its land has been successfully preserved over many years. This is not to say future development is not possible, as the Township has been experiencing in recent years greater rates of infill development and land development proposals on parcels that were not preserved in past years. Regardless, the issues of resource protection, future land use (including such issues as redevelopment), and the provision of services and facilities with which this plan deals should retain much of their relevance.

3.5.2 Affordable Housing

Since the late 1990's, the fit between housing demand and supply improved somewhat and continues today. However, the cost of land in Willistown is an impediment to the provision of a broader mix of unit types and affordability. With the vast majority of recent dwelling units being single-family detached and attached units, land valuation provides little opportunity for alternatives, regardless of the fact that the Township has increased opportunities for townhouse, duplex, and multi-family housing through zoning district creation. While the expanded opportunity for varied housing choices is certainly welcome, and should better meet the needs of downsizing older adults, first-time homebuyers, and other housing consumers, land valuation threatens to jeopardize the Township's efforts and make housing unaffordable for many. Over time the Township will monitor this issue and continue to look for opportunities to address changing housing needs.

3.5.3 Digital Revolution

While past planning efforts in this regard were rather prescient in terms of this change, the pace of that change was perhaps less accelerated than anticipated until recently. COVID-19 has seen an enormous increase in the use of "remote work" as an alternative for many workers accustomed to commuting to office buildings. Computer

communications platforms such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams, among others, have changed the way many people do business. Whether a significant return the office environment will occur in the years ahead is difficult to determine but recent trends suggest things will not go back to the way they were. For example, many companies permit and even encourage staff to work remotely from anywhere and even employ people remotely. Others now offer staff options to work remotely different days of the week (anywhere from 2-4 days). This is a trend that will likely continue, although the full ramifications to employment, commuting and land use may be years away. The pursuit of home occupations undoubtedly will expand among Willistown's residents as well, and regulatory language permitting such uses is likely to require periodic review. Cell phone and other wireless device technology are undergoing rapid change and, here, too, the Township will likely need to continually examine its accommodation.

3.5.4 Increasingly Health-Conscious Population

As discussed in the 2011 *Guidelines for Growth*, the aging population of baby-boomers, as well as health-conscious younger generations is to maintain energy, vitality, and mobility. Clearly some of these needs are being met through private and non-profit fitness facilities; however, the Township's provision of, and continued planning for, trails and other forms of passive recreation will remain essential. As the Township's population becomes more diverse over time, the need for more varied recreation opportunities, including active sports options, may present themselves. These issues are examined in greater detail in Section 6.13.

The Covid-19 pandemic's impact on individual health consciousness is yet to be fully understood. As research continues and data is analyzed over time, there is one trend that Willistown also witnessed: park use increased dramatically during the pandemic. The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) reported that state park attendance increased from 37 million in 2019 to more than 46.9 million in 2020, a 26.6 percent increase. DCNR conducted a poll in fall of 2020 of 1,001 Pennsylvanian's and found:

- Eighty-six percent of those who visited parks, trails or open spaces agree time spent in these areas has been essential to their mental and/or physical health during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Seventy-five percent agree that funding outdoor recreation facilities, such as parks, trails, and open spaces, should be considered a top priority by state and local governments.
- Thirty-seven percent of respondents said their interest in learning new outdoor recreation hobbies/skills increased since the coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic began.

3.5.5 Comprehensive Plan Update 2020 Survey Implications for Planning

Willistown Township conducted a Comprehensive Plan Update survey from May 22 through July 10, 2020, as a component of this plan update (see Appendix ___ for additional survey information). The survey was sent to each tax parcel (property) owner and was also available online to residents and non-residents. An extensive outreach

campaign was conducted encouraging participation.

The responses received represented the opinions of entire household or businesses. Chester County identifies 4,571 total tax parcels in Willistown, from which 2,216 surveys were submitted, 92.8% of which were Willistown residents. Of this response, 45% of total Willistown parcels were represented, including 48% of residential parcels in the Township (these percentages indicate a significant response as compared with “good” sample sizes of 10-15%). Based on a 3rd party statistical review *“the Township can be confident that the survey responses not only reflect every resident in Willistown but also represent the sentiment of each individual Planning Area.”*

Willistown’s exceptionally high response rate has produced a confidence level of 99% and a very small margin of error or +/- 2%. The data collected was utilized in this plan and will help the Township to identify areas of improvement and expand upon areas of success.

The survey was designed to provide Township-wide sentiment as well as five identified Planning Area perspectives. Planning Areas identified by number and location: Area 1: Northwest; Area 2: Northeast; Area 3: Northcentral; Area 4: Central; and Area 5: Southwest. The Planning Areas were taken from historical Willistown Parks and Recreation surveys and were drawn based on land use/zoning, geography, neighborhood planning, and the sectioning of the Township by roadways.

A survey Top Line Report provides overarching Township sentiment and findings and can be found in Appendix _____. This Report addresses the statistical success of the survey, discusses the survey approach, supplies baseline land use demographics, and provides a 30,000-foot view of overall Township survey responses. In addition, the Report provides the percentage and number of respondents for each Planning Area by survey question and provides responses to open-ended questions. What will likely be helpful in the future is the ability to drill down into the data, customize reports based on specific inquiries, and gain further insights.

3.5.6 Other Potential Implications for Township Policy

- As noted, the prospects for increased diversity in race and family structures among the Township's future population is favorable. On the other hand, the Township’s population is aging and its income levels, land values and housing prices are rising. In the short term, diversity may be impacted by a challenging housing market and lack of housing availability at affordable prices. Over time the Township may wish to examine how affirmatively it desires to address such issues.
- Improvements in and around the Paoli rail station have and will likely contribute to the diversification of Willistown's population and an increase in rail use. This, in turn, should yield benefits in reduced auto commutation and the vibrancy of a pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use environment.

- Economic and employment uncertainties can become an issue at any time, although it is likely that current revenue sources important to the Township, such as the earned income tax and federal/state funding for road improvements and maintenance, will remain intact. Federal funding, in the form of the American Rescue Plan Act and proposed infrastructure funding, among other sources, will also remain viable sources of revenue over the next several years.
- COVID-19 impacted our society in new and unexpected ways. While its impact to the economy may be short-lived, the way people live and work may profoundly change over time. For example, as stated above, the use of virtual work environments has the potential to change the way we think about land use, specifically the amount and type of commercial, office, and industrial land needed in the future. Telecommuting will likely remain a significant trend for the foreseeable future. However, working from home is but one trend associated with COVID-19; others include the desire to more fully know one’s community, including recreating locally and shopping locally (if you work from home its more likely you will exercise, recreate and shop locally). During COVID, the use of local parks and trails increased dramatically; this is unlikely to change anytime soon. Furthermore, we may begin to see the need to reevaluate the concept of “rush hour.” Working from home affords the opportunity to run errands at any time of the day or night.