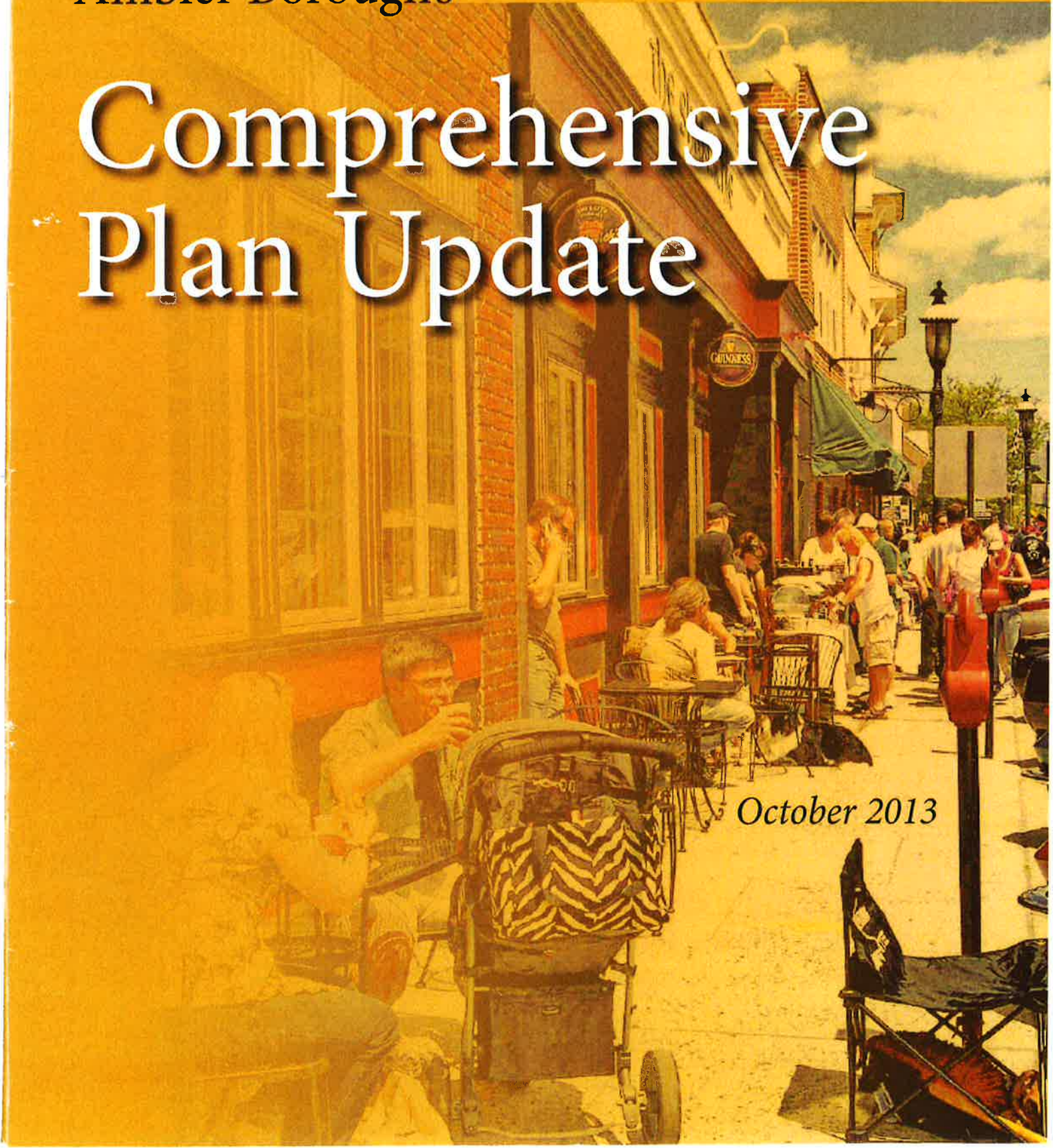


Ambler Borough's

Comprehensive Plan Update

October 2013



Ambler Borough Municipal Officials

Mayor		Bud Wahl
Manager		Mary Aversa
Borough Council		Tony Isabella, PRESIDENT Peter A. Amento, VICE PRESIDENT Ed Curtis Fran Tomlinson George Pasceri Claudio Zaccone Patricia Strus Sal Pasceri Tom Kenney
Planning Commission		Steven Ware, CHAIRMAN Robert Lagreca, VICE CHAIRMAN William Mulroy Carol Ann DiPietro, SECRETARY Salvatore A. Boccuti Joshua Kanaplue Peter A. Amento Margaret Andrews Daniel P. McCormick



Crest presented by Maida, Ambler's sister city in Italy.

Table of Contents

Introduction		1
Comprehensive Plan		1
Revitalization and TRID Efforts		2
Achievements		3
Historic Preservation, Open Space, Parks, and Sustainability		5
Transportation		8
Zoning		11
Community Profile		16
The Vision		22

Introduction

Nestled along the Wissahickon Creek, the Borough of Ambler offers several amenities for visitors, business owners, and residents. The past decade has seen this idyllic small town become an attractive enclave not only for Montgomery County but the entire Philadelphia region in numerous ways. Ambler's charming downtown contains eclectic dining options, upscale bars and pubs, galleries, studios, the Act II Playhouse, and the Ambler Theater; all of which make Ambler a destination for arts, culture, and nightlife. The abundant office, retail, warehouse, and manufacturing spaces throughout Ambler are a viable economic asset for business owners to maintain existing and establish new firms, companies, industries, and small businesses. The plentiful and diverse housing stock along with excellent water and sewer services, proximity to rail transportation taking riders to and from Philadelphia, a great school district, always prepared emergency services, community parks, a senior center and library make Ambler a perfect place for young families, already rooted families, empty nesters, and retirees to live, work, and play.

Ambler's recent success could not have happened without the commitment of the community's elected officials, volunteer committees, civic organizations, and stakeholders. The people forming these various groups work together to ensure Ambler continues to flourish as a small town with an abundance of wonderful benefits. Much of their hard work relies heavily on planning. For that reason, Ambler has decided to provide an update to their 2001 Comprehensive Plan.

Comprehensive Plan

A comprehensive plan is an invaluable guidance tool for a community. It is to be used as a resource addressing issues concerning future land use and development policies and priorities. In 2001, Ambler Borough adopted a comprehensive plan containing a large host of goals and objectives related to land use, housing, economic development, open space, and transportation. The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code recommends a comprehensive plan be updated every ten years. Since the 2001 comprehensive plan is a thoroughly informed document that included a significant amount of time and effort to create, this comprehensive plan update will maintain the integrity of the 2001 plan by keeping that plan's vision and goals. Also, since over the past decade Ambler has adopted a wide array of community driven plans and special studies, this comprehensive plan update will include the overall objectives stated in these plans and studies to guarantee Ambler has considered all approaches in meeting housing needs, providing local shopping and employment opportunities, preserving open space for natural resource protection and active recreation needs, and coordinating with all public infrastructure capacities.

Ways this comprehensive plan update will benefit Ambler:

- It is a useful framework for various municipal decisions.
- It can direct how potential community needs and challenges are addressed.
- The planning process facilitates a community vision.
- Capital improvement investments are better coordinated (i.e., sewers, roads, parks)
- Projects relying on grant funding are prioritized.
- The plan promotes a community image and informs surrounding municipalities.



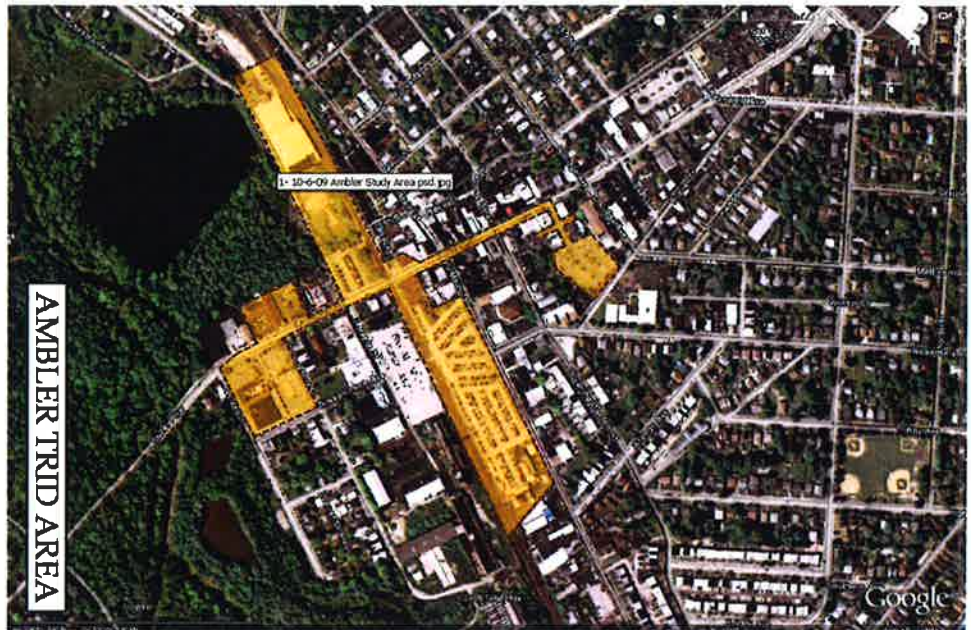
Welcome to Ambler Sign on East Butler Avenue

Revitalization and TRID Efforts

The community of Ambler has recognized their town not only contains a variety of housing types, retail shops, places to eat, and cultural attractions, but is also classified as a major regional transit center because of Ambler’s heavily used train station that is within walking distance for most people living, working, or visiting in their town. Always working on fortifying and solidifying these noted strengths, the community of Ambler has been planning intensively for all opportunities involving renewal and reinvestment.

Revitalization, Redevelopment, and Transit-Oriented Planning

Ambler adopted their Vision Plan in 2000 and updated it in 2005. With a heavy focus on enhancing Ambler’s downtown, the Vision Plan’s goals and objectives involve improving streetscapes, increasing pedestrian safety, mitigating traffic hazards, preserving historic sites, fostering heritage tourism, and assisting small businesses. In addition, there are also approaches given that center on redeveloping the rail corridor and capitalizing on the accessibility of the train station. This community revitalization plan ascertains Ambler’s compliance with various federal, state, county, and local programs offering financial assistance.



Ambler TRID – from the “Transportation Revitalization Investment District Study”

Besides the Vision Plan, the 2001 “Redevelopment Area Plan for the Ambler Borough Rail Corridor” and the yet to be adopted “Transportation Revitalization Investment District (TRID) Study” are two very specific plans tackling issues associated with redeveloping the rail corridor area to provide for transit-oriented uses. With the eventual adoption of the TRID study, Ambler will be eligible to provide financial incentives and tax relief to businesses and real estate developers seeking to invest and build their potentially equitable and innovative projects within a specific delineated area of the Borough. The general ideas found within every goal, objective, and potential implementation project listed within the Vision Plan, the Redevelopment Area Plan, and TRID Study are covered to one degree or another within Ambler’s 2001 Comprehensive Plan. Continuing the recommendations of these past plans, the Borough has set the following economic development and revitalization goals and objectives:

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Identify and promote commercial and industrial redevelopment and reuse opportunities.
- Identify and encourage a mix of uses and are diverse by compatible, that reinforce the small-town character of the Borough, and that help reduce land use conflicts.
- Develop development standards that provide a unified and attractive image.
- Encourage shared parking and similar flexible parking regulations that meet central business district parking needs.

COMMERCIAL REVITALIZATION

- Continue the Main Street program so that business retention and recruitment efforts can continue uninterrupted.
- Encourage uses that can be regional draws, particularly entertainment, restaurants, and specialty retail.
- Evaluate signage and parking standards to ensure that they are appropriate for Borough conditions.
- Identify strategic reuse/redevelopment opportunities.
- Improve the appearance and maintenance of buildings in the CBD.
- Create infill development that is compatible with the existing CBD.
- Continue streetscape improvements throughout the CBD, including shade trees, street furniture, and lights.
- Improve public parking in the Borough.
- Encourage more businesses to remain open in the evening hours during the week and consider Sunday hours so that the CBD can be more competitive with other shopping areas.

INDUSTRIAL REVITALIZATION

- Encourage a mix of uses that are employment generators.
- Create a comprehensive inventory of sites in order to promote and market reuse/redevelopment opportunities.
- Make improvements that enhance pedestrian and vehicle access and circulation.
- Increase green space to help buffer and soften the appearance of uses.
- Actively promote and market the industrial area, particularly the railroad corridor.
- Encourage larger, more intensive uses to locate or relocate to the target industrial revitalization area of South Ambler.

Achievements

Planning and nurturing a town's vision entails a great deal of foresight and a lot of cooperation amongst a community. Since Ambler has drafted a number of plans to make certain their town's aspirations become a reality, one could mistakenly interpret that all the town's goals and objectives stated in these various plans are still on the horizon and have yet to come to fruition. This is not so. Much of Ambler's planning efforts have already been implemented. A stroll around Ambler's downtown area reveals a charming vibrancy with boutiques, restaurants, theaters, and craft shops found throughout. Complimenting everything is the infrastructural work Ambler has installed like decorative streetscapes, signage, planter boxes, light poles, and benches. These design elements create a town environment with a safe and welcoming feel. In 2007, Montgomery County recognized Ambler's commitment and focus involving the town's work in renewing and enhancing Ambler's Main Street area and awarded the Borough a Revitalization Award.

Since the time the 2001 Comprehensive Plan was completed, a number of other achievements revolving around revitalization and rail corridor redevelopment have occurred. Station Square was constructed and is fully occupied. A great example of urban infill development, Station Square also fits the ideal for transit-oriented



Ambler Streetscape Improvements

design. The fifty-eight unit townhome development is within walking distance to both Ambler's train station and downtown area. Station Square is only the beginning of redevelopment flourishing around Ambler's rail corridor. Other residential developments, similar to Station Square in design and location around the rail corridor, have been approved by the borough. Additionally, old industrial sites that have been vacant and neglected for a prolonged period are being renovated into modern buildings containing a mix of uses. For instance, the community of Ambler has celebrated the full conversion of the old Ambler Boiler House factory building into a new and modern office building. The project was recognized by Montgomery County as an exceptional example of adaptive reuse and was presented with a Montgomery Award in 2013. These various redevelopment projects tie nicely with the new state-of-the-art Ambler Train Station.



Station Square Townhomes

All of the excitement involving Ambler's renewal has not only centered on the rail corridor since 2001. Ambler's downtown commercial area has been swept with a tide of rejuvenation as well. A real highlight over the last several years was the full restoration and reopening of the Ambler Movie Theater. Besides the movie theater, over the same time period, other adaptive reuse projects have occurred. Ambler's commercial and retail activity has seen a nice intermingling between the original and the contemporary.

With completion of the borough's Parking Action Plan in 2008, borough council is now considering construction of a new parking deck at Butler and Lindenwold Avenues. The proposed deck will include 200 parking spaces, with 30 of the new spaces being set aside for employees of the Ambler Savings Bank. The deck will add a total of

Ambler Theater



Boiler House After Renovations

100 new parking spaces to the borough's existing capacity.

Additionally, Ambler will benefit from the arrival of a new grocery store in 2013. The borough has been without a grocery store since 2009, when the former Acme closed and the site was redeveloped as a CVS. Centrally located at 219 East Butler Avenue, the proposed grocery store will help encourage walkability and contribute to the borough's goals for infill development—the site has been vacant since the Knopf Motors dealership closed in 2008.

In essence, Ambler's work in revitalizing their community has improved the quality of life and stimulated economic growth throughout the borough.

Historic Preservation, Open Space, Parks, and Sustainability

Historic Preservation

With a history going as far back as the late 1700s, Ambler Borough is not without its fair amount of historically significant resources. Ambler's community has identified the borough's historic resources worthy of preservation within Ambler's 1999 Historic Resource Comprehensive Survey and 2006 Open Space Plan. Besides the sites certified by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission as Eligible for the National Register, Ambler has listed approximately 912 historic resources that contribute to the strong cultural and architectural value contained within the borough. Now that this comprehensive listing is complete, Ambler is investigating various approaches on how to permanently protect these resources. Some of these significant historic sites in the borough are located on Figure 1 and include:



Ambler Borough Hall

1. Mary Ambler Homestead (1928)
2. Former Forest Avenue School
3. Whitcomb House (1840-1850)
4. Ambler Post Office/Borough Hall (1939)
5. Ambler Theater (1928)
6. Keasbey & Mattison Boiler Plant
7. Former Ambler Southbound Railroad Station (1888)
8. Keasbey & Mattison Co. Garage (1875-1880)
9. Evan Ambler House and Store (1840-1850)
10. Sunnyside Academy/Joseph Wilson's Store (1826)
11. Wyndham Hotel (1893)
12. Deck's Hardware Store (1880)
13. Jonathan Lukens Home (1840-1850)
14. Korean Presbyterian Church (1894)
15. Henry Keasbey House (1882)
16. Ambler Trust Company (1917)
17. Bell Telephone Exchange/Old Borough Hall (1906)
18. First National Bank of Ambler (1923)
19. Reiff's Mill (1731-47)
20. Northbound Ambler Railroad Station (1888)
21. Lewis Ambler House (1844)
22. Joseph Haywood House

As first established in the 2006 Open Space Plan, the borough recommends the following objectives for preserving and enhancing its historic resources:

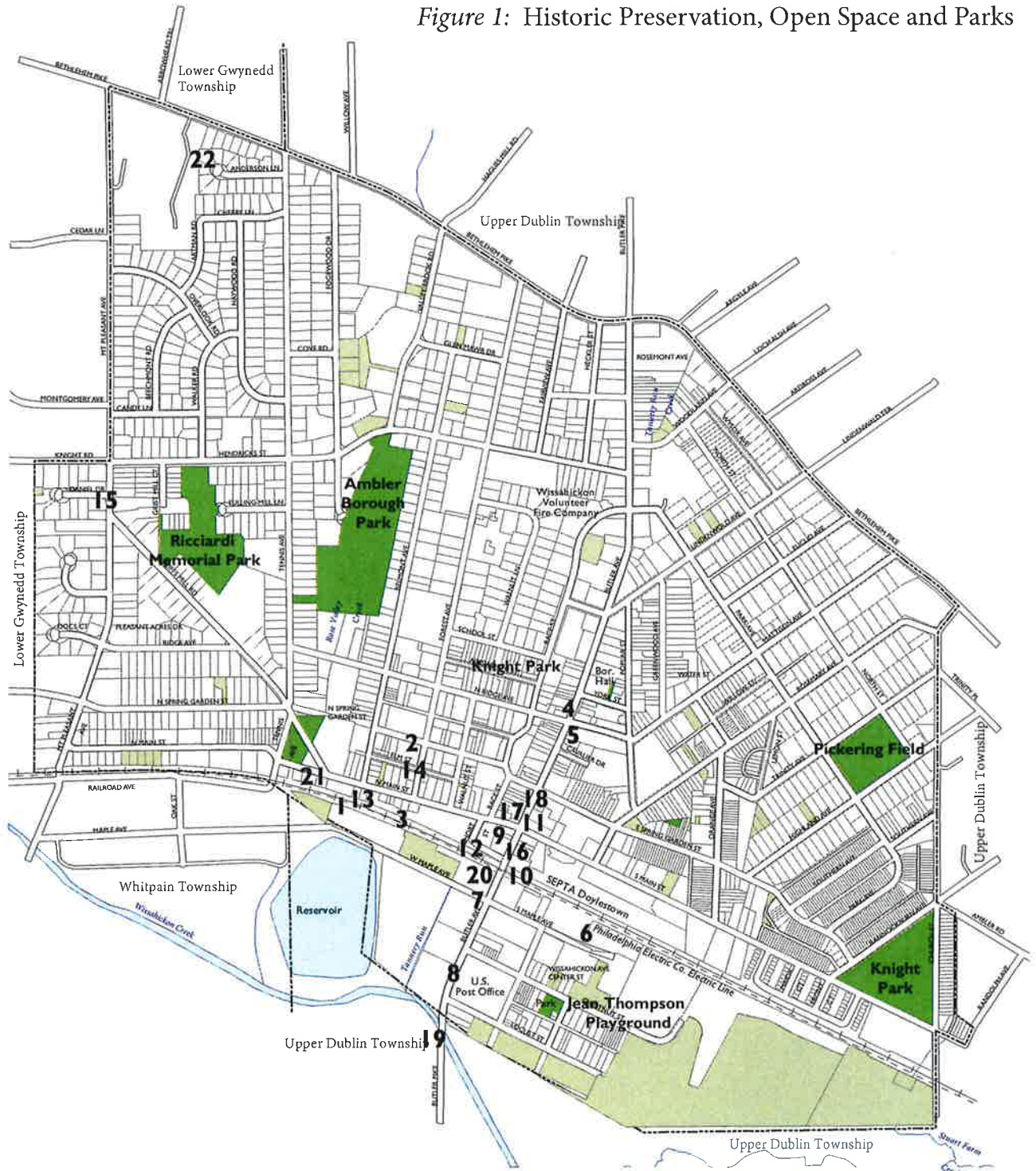
- Use historic markers to identify historic sites and tell their stories
- Establish a fund for the restoration of historic building facades.
- Promote heritage tourism in Ambler through the use of maps, literature, and trail connections.

Open Space

Ambler is a traditional town that has developed to the point of being considered built-out. This level of development density has placed the little remaining undeveloped land at a premium. Similar to the emphasis placed in preserving its unique built environment, the borough has taken great steps in protecting what remains of Ambler's natural environment. A primary purpose of the borough's efforts to protect its natural features is to reduce hazardous flooding. Because Ambler borders the Wissahickon Creek and is situated downstream from other largely developed communities, the situation has resulted in severe flooding during extreme rainfalls.


Several goals and objectives within Ambler's 2006 Open Space Plan concern how to protect sensitive natural features and reduce flooding. Since 2006, many measures have already been taken through the enforcement of land development ordinances that reduce impervious coverage, mitigate stormwater runoff, and establish setbacks from environmentally sensitive areas.

Figure 1: Historic Preservation, Open Space and Parks



MCPC Montgomery County Planning Commission
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 600 Blue Bell - Norristown PA 19004-0311
 (412) 610-2778 ext 2222 • (610) 278-3941
www.mcpcpa.org/planning
This map is based on 2010 orthophotography and official sources. Property lines were compiled from individual block maps from the Montgomery County Board of Assessment Appeals, with no verification from the field. This map is not meant to be used as a legal definition of properties or for engineering purposes.

0 400 800 1,600 Feet
 Base map prepared January 2010



Parks and Recreation

Parks and recreational opportunities are at their greatest need within very urbanized areas like Ambler Borough. Besides natural resource protection, the other main focus of the 2006 Open Space Plan is improving Ambler's park system. Ambler contains several parks dispersed throughout the borough which all differ in amenities like playgrounds, ballfields, tennis courts, basketball courts, and walking trails. Since the community recognizes its population density justifies the need for more parkland than what is available within the borough's borders, Ambler has partnered with neighboring municipalities and jointly purchased parks containing a large amount of acreage outside the borough's borders but always available to borough residents. All of Ambler's parks are accessible by walking due to the town's fully connected sidewalk system.

A recent park project highlighting Ambler's commitment to providing safe, accessible, well-equipped, and attractive parks to its residents is the improvements done to Knight Park. Knight Park is an essential park for the residents living within the southeastern area of Ambler. In 2009, Ambler was awarded a Green Fields/Green Towns Open Space Program Grant from Montgomery County for improvements to Knight Park that included new landscaping, pathways, pedestrian gateways, and a community center.

Building upon the 2001 Comprehensive Plan, Ambler's objectives for protecting and expanding the borough's open space and recreation resources include the following:

- Expand public open space along Rose Valley Creek.
- Provide public open space along Tannery Run Creek.
- Maintain shade trees in public areas and encourage private landscaping and beautification efforts.
- Establish links between borough open space areas and to regional resources such as the Wissahickon Creek Greenway.
- Acquire new open space suitable for creation of another ballfield.
- Implement site improvements to existing parks as recommended by the borough planning commission.

Figure 2: Open Space Area Inventory

NAME	TYPE	ACREAGE	FACILITIES/AMENITIES
Loch Alsh Reservoir	Community	21.0	Reservoir (Fishing, Hiking)
PenAmbler Park	Community	18.7	Baseball field, walking trail, 2 basketball courts, play equipment, amphitheater, picnic area
Borough Park	Community	9.0	Rose Valley Creek corridor, informal trails, woods, creek access
Ricciardi Park	Community	5.1	Walking trail, multi-use court, play equipment
Knight Park	Community	3.7	Play equipment, benches, picnic tables, 2 basketball courts, 1 baseball field, 1 multi-use court, 2 bocce courts, skateboard arena
Pickering Field	Community	2.8	3 baseball fields, 1 basketball court, play equipment, concession
Locust Street Playground	Neighborhood	0.8	Basketball court, benches, lawn
Reiff's Mill O.S.	Neighborhood	0.5	Rose Valley Creek (channelized)
Jean Thompson Playground	Neighborhood	0.4	Benches, play equipment



Ambler Borough Park (L) and Wissahickon Trail (R)

Sustainability

Ambler also places a high priority on sustainability. A recent building construction integrating green infrastructure is the Ambler Boiler House. Having sat vacant for about 40 years, the Boiler House has seen a second life with its redevelopment into a state-of-the-art LEED certified office building. The whole overall urban design of Ambler should be considered as environmentally sustainable. Ambler is a town densely built with existing infrastructure for sewer, water, and electrical utilities; as well as, pedestrian-friendly streets and mass transit services that lessen the need for private automobile use. Due to Ambler's urban design and access to transit, its residents use less energy than those living in more disconnected suburban communities.

Transportation

Ambler Borough's urban design benefits all forms of transportation. The interconnections amongst the pedestrian-oriented sidewalks and the fully circulated roadways allow safe and suitable access for those choosing to either walk or drive. With the availability of mass transit options like SEPTA's Lansdale/Doylestown regional rail line and the 94 and 98 bus routes, those either choosing or having to rely less on privately owned automobile transportation can still travel easily and conveniently throughout the Philadelphia Metropolitan region. It is Ambler Borough's overall transportation goal to maintain and improve upon all of the community's transportation assets listed below.

Sidewalks

Sidewalks exist on the majority of all streets within Ambler and those connections are an integral part to the borough's pedestrian-oriented small town environment. All of Ambler's sidewalks are constructed with an appropriate width and contain features like grass strips that promote pedestrian activity. By taking advantage of grant opportunities available by federal, state, county, and local entities, Ambler has created a walkable town with safe streetscapes that include decorative crosswalks, handicap ramps, yield to pedestrian signs, and curb bump outs. Ambler's 2001 Comprehensive Plan, 2005 Vision Plan, and Transportation Revitalization Investment District (TRID) Study, all contain planning objectives involving the borough extending sidewalks to streets where they don't currently exist and improving sidewalks along streets targeted in need for repair.

Bicycles

Bicycle movement is possible throughout Ambler since all the streets contain safe enough widths and travel speeds. Since Ambler is completely built-out, finding streets for bike lanes is difficult. However, within the last several years, Ambler has focused some of the community's planning efforts towards finding streets to designate road space for bicycles. Also, many locations within Ambler, such as the train station and Boiler House, promote bicycle mobility by containing bike racks.

Public Transportation

As already noted, Ambler Borough is served by both train and bus forms of public transportation. Ambler Borough's commuter rail station forms a midpoint between trains running north-south between Doylestown, Bucks County and Philadelphia. The train station relocation project also included a newly constructed train station equipped with elevated ramps to make it easier and faster for those getting on or off a train. Two SEPTA bus routes serve Ambler Borough. The 94 bus runs north-south between Chestnut Hill in Philadelphia and Lansdale Borough. The 98 bus runs east-west between the Willow Grove area of Upper Moreland Township and the Oaks area of Upper Providence Township. Both bus lines connect with Ambler Borough's commuter rail station.

Roads

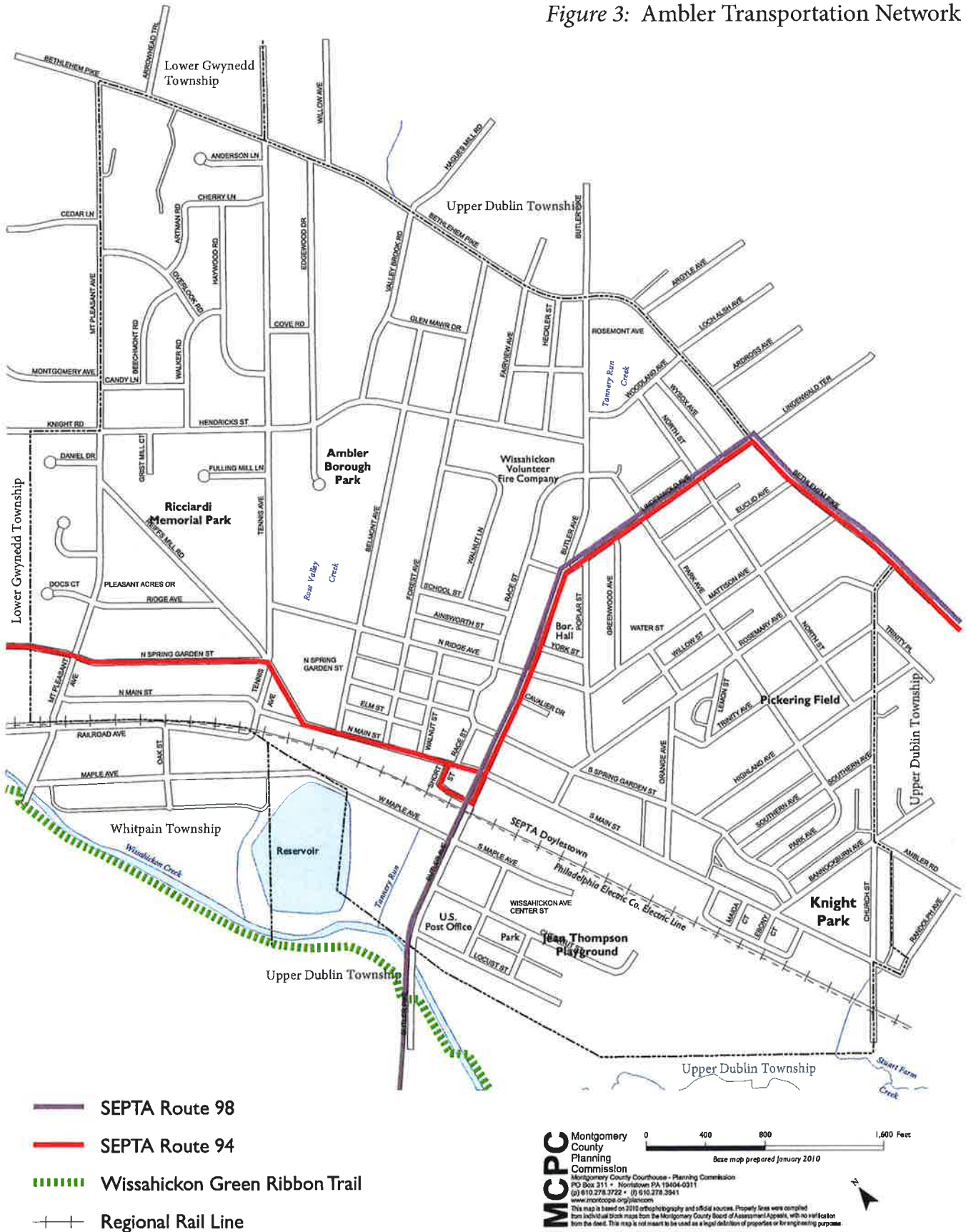
A road functional classification system groups roads into a hierarchy by the service that they provide. Ambler's 2001 Comprehensive Plan fully details the borough's road hierarchy. In short, Ambler's road hierarchy is summarized as:

Principle Arterials:	Butler Avenue and Bethlehem Pike fall within this road hierarchy classification.
Major Collectors:	The roads falling within this road hierarchy are Tennis Avenue, North Spring Garden Street, Reiff's Mill Road (between North Main Street and Tennis Avenue), Main Street, and Bannockburn Avenue, and Lindenwold Road.
Minor Collectors:	Mount Pleasant Avenue, Hendricks Street, Forest Avenue, North Ridge Avenue, and Church Street are all categorized by this road hierarchy.
Local Roads:	All remaining roads not listed in any of the above mentioned road hierarchies are considered local roads.

Note: Ambler does not contain any roads that fall into either the Expressway or Minor Arterial road hierarchies.

The 2001 Comprehensive Plan also gives the conditions and traffic volumes of Ambler's roads. The traffic counts provided were based off of data collected in the 1980s. Newer traffic counts reflecting more current traffic volumes are needed. Despite the old data, any new counts collected would most likely be similar to the previous counts and reflect how Butler Avenue contains the borough's highest traffic counts due to it being Ambler's main thoroughfare. As for road conditions, the borough's public works department is always working hard in upgrading Ambler's streets, especially along Butler Avenue. Road improvement areas are identified with the assistance of the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT), Ambler Borough's Police Department, and Ambler Borough's Planning Commission. Having the best road conditions for vehicular traffic is always a high planning priority for Ambler Borough.

Figure 3: Ambler Transportation Network



An equal priority in roadway planning is Ambler's efforts in improving traffic circulation so traffic congestion is avoided. The borough's grid pattern of roads supports optimal traffic circulation throughout the community. Easy and efficient traffic movements are further supported by measures that direct and control traffic when Ambler established a series of one-way streets and signalized key intersections.

Parking

Both on-street and off-street parking is available in the borough. Within Ambler's downtown area, metered on-street parking, private lots and three municipal lots provide spaces for business owners, employees, and visitors. Because the retail shops, places to eat, and cultural attractions found throughout the town have made Ambler a destination point, Ambler is facing a great deal of constraints due to its lack of available public parking. The large influx of activity within the borough's downtown has set the amount of available public parking at a premium on numerous days or nights. To avoid any hindrance to the momentum Ambler has gained through all of its revitalization efforts, Ambler recognized its parking availability issues and devised ways of alleviating these issues within Ambler Borough's 2008 Parking Action Plan.

With the overall goal of utilizing existing parking and identify possibilities for new parking, the Parking Action Plan contains several strategies identifying different ways in alleviating Ambler's public parking availability issues.

To summarize, Ambler Borough has established the following transportation objectives:

- Create new and improve existing sidewalks.
- Continue to improve bicycling infrastructure to encourage bicycling as an alternative method of transportation.
- Coordinate with SEPTA to ensure transit service throughout the borough is always maintained and improved upon when needed.
- Pursue the road-related transportation objectives highlighted in the 2001 comprehensive plan, including evaluating the extension of Maple Avenue and South Chestnut Street and improving traffic circulation along Butler Avenue.
- Engage in several tactics, including improved signage, marketing, enforcement, shared parking agreements, changes in price and time structure of parking meters, and land acquisition to improve parking availability and efficiency in the borough.

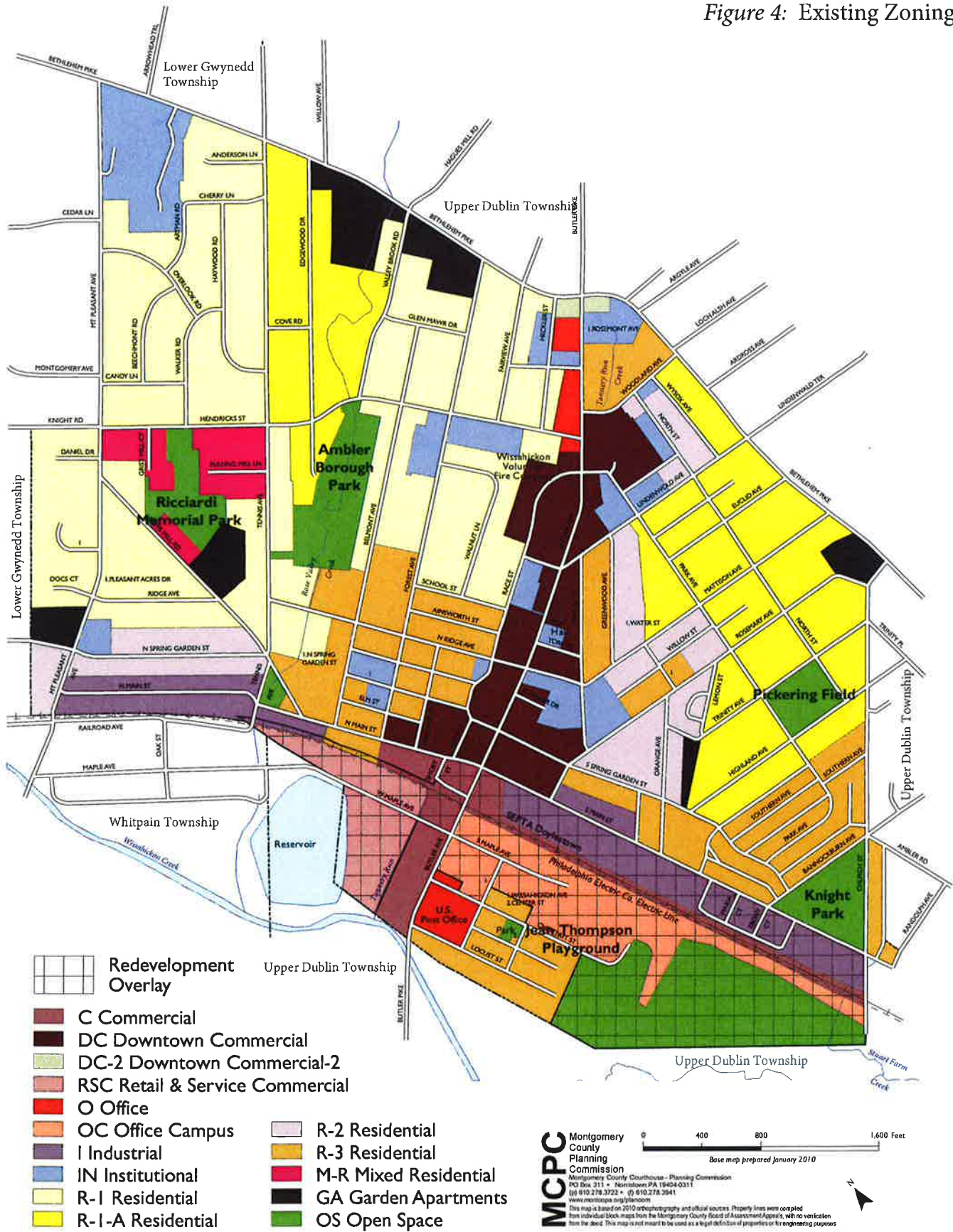
Zoning

Besides protecting the community's health, safety, and welfare, Ambler's zoning code of ordinances is the most effective tool the community has in guiding how the borough develops. It is an enforcement measure containing a host of standards and regulations that are applied to Ambler's land use activities, so the environmental, transportation, housing, design, and economic impacts on the borough are not detrimental to Ambler as it continues to establish itself as a charming and traditional small town offering numerous amenities for visitors, business owners, and residents.

Ambler Borough is divided amongst 15 zoning districts: C Commercial, DC Downtown Commercial, DC-2 Downtown Commercial-2, RSC Retail Service Commercial, O Office, OC Office Campus, I Industrial, IN Institutional, R-1 Residential, R-1-A Residential, R-2 Residential, R-3 Residential, M-R Mixed Residential, GA Garden Apartments, and OS Open Space. In addition, Ambler has a Redevelopment Overlay district that covers a variety of commercial, retail, office, industrial, and environmental zoned properties.

Since the time Ambler's Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2001, the notable amendments to Ambler's zoning have been:

Figure 4: Existing Zoning



- Adding the RO Redevelopment Overlay District: This overlay is located around Ambler's SEPTA regional rail train station and areas along the rail corridor. The intent of this district is to permit Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) that is compact, mixed-use, and pedestrian-friendly while encouraging mass-transit ridership. The regulations of the Redevelopment Overlay district supersede the zoning regulations for any underlying district.
- Creation of the DC-2 Downtown Commercial-2 Zoning District: This newer zoning district affects properties on the north end of Amber Borough at the intersection of Butler Avenue and Bethlehem Pike. Since this area of the borough serves as the northern entrance into town, the district was created so uses allowed and their associative dimensional and design standards are best suited to form an inviting and attractive gateway for Ambler.
- Elimination of the MA-Midrise Apartment Zoning District: A strategy found in Ambler's 2001 Comprehensive Plan is ensuring an orderly pattern amongst zoning districts that meets the needs of the borough. After careful evaluation, Ambler choose to eliminate the MA-Midrise Apartment district by rezoning the few properties located within this zoning district to either the C-Commercial, DC-Downtown Commercial, or R-1 Residential zoning districts.
- Update to Sign Regulations: In 2007, Ambler found the sign regulations within their zoning code to be dated. A thorough amendment process to their zoning's signage chapter was completed. The updates addressed incorporating more current types of signs, sign technologies, dimensional sizes, and design criteria.
- Adding New Design Standards to Nonresidential Properties: To clarify the nature and appearance of structures built in the nonresidential zoning districts, design standards were added to the General Provision chapter of Ambler's Zoning Code. The types of design standards included: building orientation, walls and windows, architectural rhythm, and massing.

Land Use

Ambler's zoning allows for the large host of land uses as needed for a municipality to be in compliance with Pennsylvania's Municipalities Planning Code (MPC). Figure 5 shows how Ambler's variety of land uses is distributed within the Borough.

HOUSING AND RESIDENTIAL TRENDS

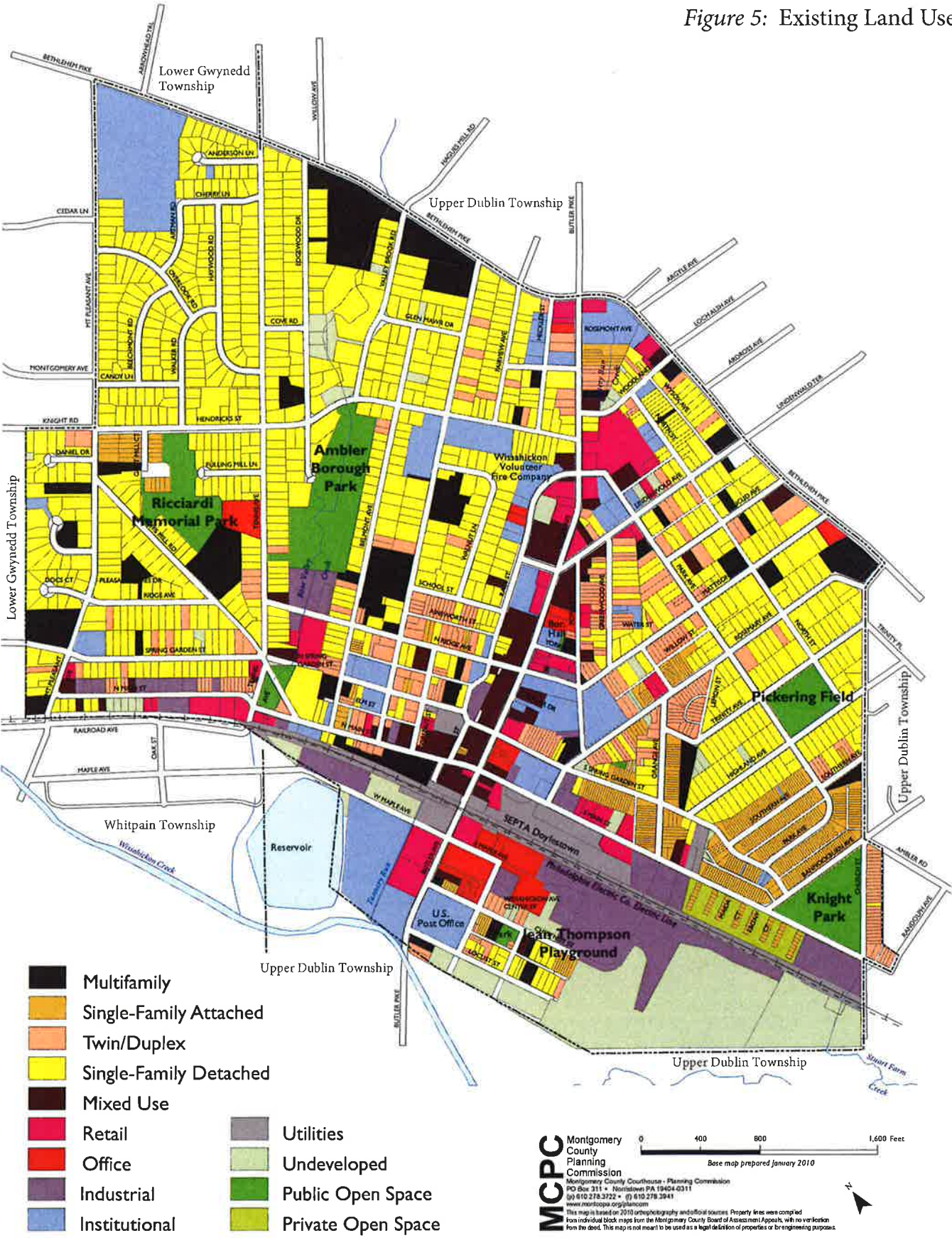
The type of new residential housing built within Ambler Borough over the last 5 to 10 years has predominantly come in the form of small lot infill development. Typically, one or two lots are subdivided for the construction of a one to two housing units at the most. A notable exception is Station Square. Station Square added 58 new housing units to Ambler. The townhome development also fully meets the intent of Ambler's RO Residential Overlay district by being an ideal form of Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) with its location within walking distance to both Ambler's train station and downtown area.

With the success of Station Square, Ambler Borough will continue to seek out housing opportunities for residential infill development, especially within the RO Redevelopment Overlay district. The overlay allows for a great deal of potential residential redevelopment within this area of Ambler.

The borough's continued housing goals and objectives are to:

- Provide appropriate controls for conversions of single-family dwellings into multi-family units.
- Reduce land use conflicts.
- Provide for compatible infill development.
- Promote a sound housing stock.
- Meet fair share requirements.

Figure 5: Existing Land Use



NONRESIDENTIAL TRENDS

Many significant nonresidential developments have occurred in Ambler since their 2001 Comprehensive Plan was adopted. Larger scale retail developments have included a CVS Pharmacy moving into the old Acme site and a grocery store moving into a site along Butler Pike that has been targeted for redevelopment for many years. Fulfilling the intent of the DC-2 Downtown Commercial-2 zoning district as an alluring gateway property into Ambler, the northeastern property within this zoning district was redeveloped from an abandoned gas station into a mixed-use property that includes Ambler Donuts, Subway, three residential units, and a “Welcome to Ambler” sign surrounded by attractive landscaping. Noteworthy nonresidential developments around the borough’s downtown area include projects such as the restoration of the Ambler Movie Theater, as well as the introduction of specialty shops and many new places to eat. Nonresidential redevelopment within the RO Redevelopment Overlay district has included the full conversion of the old Ambler Boiler House factory building into a new and modern office building, as well as the development of the new Ambler Train Station. These projects have been consistent with Ambler’s vision for redeveloping the areas along the rail corridor.

Figure 6: Land Use Distribution

LAND USE TYPE	ACREAGE	% TOTAL
Residential:		
Single-Family Detached	185	42%
Single-Family Attached	21	5%
Twin/Duplex	32	7%
Multifamily	30	7%
Mixed Use	14	3%
Retail	18	4%
Office	7	2%
Industrial	24	5%
Institutional	41	9%
Utilities	8	2%
Undeveloped	35	8%
Public Open Space	23	5%
Private Open Space	4	1%
Total	442	100%

Sources: Montgomery County Board of Assessment, April, 2012.



Station Square Townhomes



Ambler Train Station

Community Profile

Population Characteristics

TOTAL POPULATION

Over the ten-year period between 2000 and 2010, Ambler's population decreased 0.1%. This is a very minor decrease in population and does not pose as a significant measure in the magnitude of change to the population characteristics of Ambler Borough.

POPULATION FORECAST

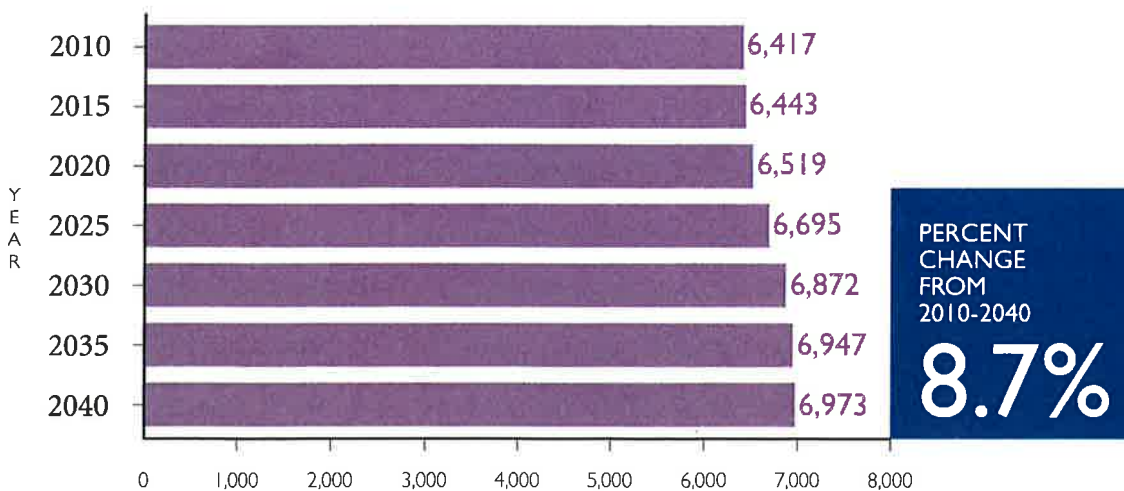
A population forecast for Ambler was done by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC). Ambler is forecasted to experience an 8.7% increase of population between 2010 and 2040 (Figure 7). This forecast is based on several factors, including past and recently proposed levels of development, zoning, the availability of land and public utilities, and proximity to employment centers.

The expected increase in population will place a greater stress on Ambler's existing community services and facilities and demands planning measures that better prepare for this potential growth in population.

AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE AND HOUSEHOLD TYPE

Ambler's average household size declined 2% between 2000 and 2010 (Figure 8). A decline in average household size is not uncommon since the national average household size has been declining for many years. Several factors that include lower fertility rates, high divorce rates, couples delaying marriage, and increases in nonfamily households can all be attributed to the decline of average household size. In addition, Ambler's population has become more dispersed over the years with more dwelling units serving fewer people.

Figure 7: Population Forecast



Source: Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission. Actual population as reported in the 2010 U.S. Census.

AGE PROFILE

There was a loss of population amongst child age groups (the 0-4 and 5-17 age groups). However, increases in population for the 18-24 and 25-34 age groups may show the borough potentially becoming a magnet for college-aged people and young families. The age group with the largest decrease was the 35-44 age group. A possible reason for this decrease may be how this age group is characterized with growing families moving out of their "starter" homes for larger and newer homes. The next age

group, 45-55, saw the largest increase in population between 2000 and 2010. This age group can be classified as young empty nesters and may be the reason for the population increase. The older age groups, those over 65, decreased as a percentage of Ambler's total population. If the 45-55 age group continues to increase and reside in Ambler, there is a high likelihood of the borough's over 65 population growing within the next ten years (Figure 9).

Figure 8: Household Types

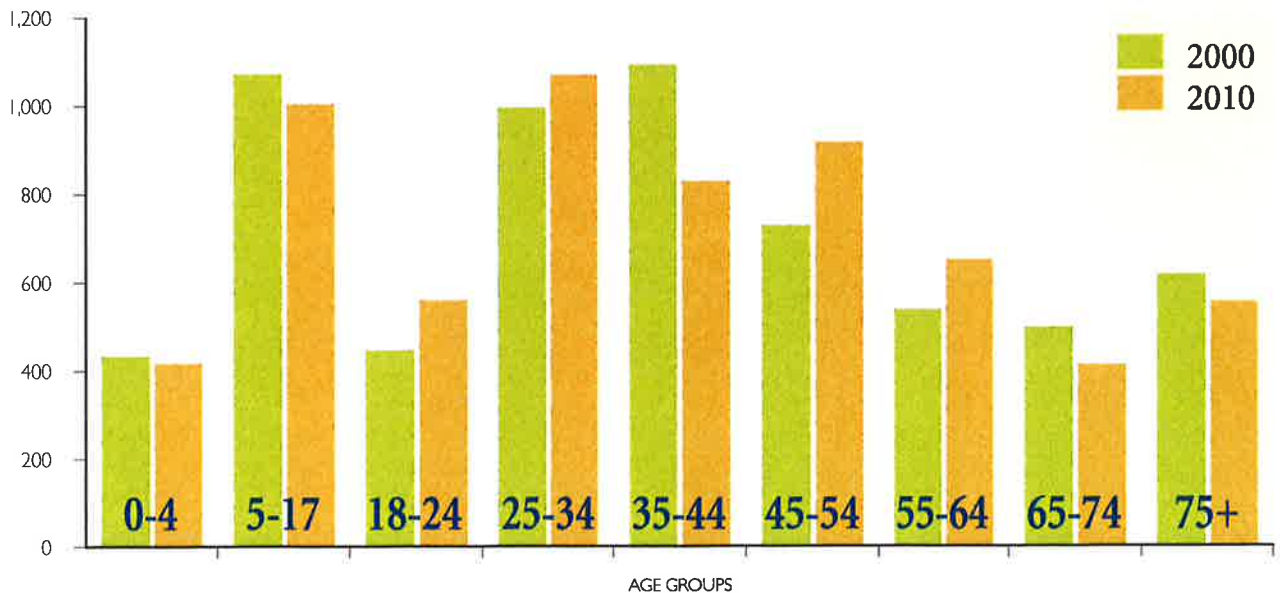
FAMILY TYPE ⁽¹⁾	NUMBER	PERCENT OF TOTAL
Married Couple with Children	461	17.7%
Married Couple No Children	573	22.0%
Single Parent	242	9.3%
Other	248	9.5%
Family Total ----- >	1,524	58.5%
NONFAMILY TYPE ⁽²⁾	NUMBER	PERCENT OF TOTAL
One-Person Household	885	34.0%
Two or more in Nonfamily Household	195	7.5%
Nonfamily Total ----- >	1,080	41.5%
Ambler's Total Households	2,604	

Source: Census 2010.

Footnotes: (1) At least two people living in a unit who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption. Same-sex partner households (married or unmarried) are included in the "family households" category only if there is at least one additional person related to the householder by birth or adoption.

(2) Either people living alone or two or more people who live together, but are not related to the other by marriage, birth, or adoption; e.g. unmarried couples or housemates.

Figure 9: Age Profile



Source: Census 2010.

EDUCATION

The 2010 census data for education attainment only applies to those aged 25 or older. Of those 4,497 borough residents, the largest group for Ambler's educated population is those who graduated high school (31.5%). The next largest educated group is those holding a bachelor's degree (19.7%). Additionally, as of 2010, 13.7% of Ambler's population had a graduate or professional degree. Nationally, the number of younger generations obtaining some form of higher education is continually growing. Ambler's educational attainment trends are consistent with the national trends and the borough will most likely see a greater number of residents with higher levels of education over the next several years.

Housing Characteristics

UNITS BUILT

For housing units built in Ambler, the 2010 Census figures are as of April 1, 2010. Between 2000 and 2010, 162 new housing units were built in Ambler.

HOUSING TENURE AND VACANCY

The 2010 census states 2,604 housing units were occupied in Ambler (Figure 10). Of those 2,604 housing units, 1,402 were owner-occupied. This was a 4% decrease of ownership since the 2000 census figure. 1,202 of the housing units in Ambler were renter-occupied. Since the 2000 census, Ambler saw a 14.5% increase in renter-occupied housing units. The remaining 163 of Ambler's 2,767 housing units were categorized as vacant in the 2010 census (Figure 11).

Figure 10: Housing Tenure

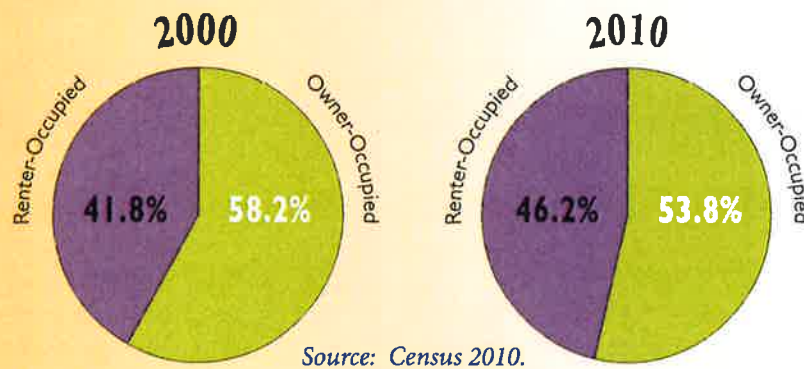


Figure 11: 2010 Vacancy



Source: Census 2010.

Footnotes: (1) Vacant year-round housing units that are either for rent or for sale only. Year-round units are those intended for occupancy at any time of the year, even though they may not be in use the year round.

(2) These are vacant units offered "for rent and vacant units offered "for rent" or "for sale".

(3) These are vacant units offered "for sale only," including units in cooperatives and condominium projects if the individual units are offered "for sale only".

- (4) Available vacant units as a percentage of year-round housing units. This number is calculated as the total of available vacant units divided by the sum of occupied units, available vacant units, and units rented or sold, but not yet occupied.
- (5) The percentage of the homeowner inventory that is vacant and for sale.
- (6) The percentage of the rental inventory that is vacant and for rent.

Economic Characteristics

EMPLOYMENT

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, there are 3,106 employed people living within Ambler Borough. Of those 3,106, 171 (5.5% of the 3,106) both live and work within Ambler Borough, with the remaining 2,935 (94.5% of the 3,106) employed outside of the borough. Figure 12 details the job type distribution of Ambler's 3,106 employed residents. The majority of Ambler's resident workers, 46%, earn more than \$3,333 per month (Figure 13).

Figure 12: Employment Type Distribution of Resident Workers – 2010

TYPE OF RESIDENTIAL WORKERS	NUMBER	PERCENT
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	3	0.1%
Utilities	10	0.3%
Construction	99	3.2%
Manufacturing	223	7.2%
Wholesale Trade	136	4.4%
Retail Trade	372	12.0%
Transportation and Warehousing	72	2.3%
Information	80	2.6%
Finance and Insurance	228	7.3%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	32	1.0%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	318	10.2%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	71	2.3%
Administration & Support, Waste Management and Remediation	167	5.4%
Educational Services	286	9.2%
Health Care and Social Assistance	495	15.9%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	51	1.6%
Accommodation and Food Services	225	7.2%
Other Services (excluding Public Administration)	136	4.4%
Public Administration	102	3.3%
Total Resident Workers	3,106	100%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application, <http://lehdmap.ces.census.gov>.

Figure 13: Earnings Distribution of Resident Workers – 2010

RESIDENTIAL EARNINGS	NUMBER	PERCENT
\$1,250 per month or less	698	22.5%
\$1,251 to \$3,333 per month	978	31.5%
More than \$3,333 per month	1,430	46.0%
Total Resident Workers	3,106	100%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application, <http://lehdmap.ces.census.gov>.

EMPLOYERS

The 2010 U.S. Census states there are 2,188 people occupying a job available within Ambler Borough. Consistent with the numbers relating to the borough's employed residents, 171 (7.8% of the 2,188) are people who also live within the borough. Therefore, 2,017 people (92.2% of the 2,188) holding a job in the borough live outside Ambler.

The earnings distribution of people working at a job within the borough (Figure 15) differs with the employed residents numbers, with less of a percentage (41.7%) earning more than \$3,333 per month and greater percentages for those earning \$1,250 per month or less (27.1%).

Figure 14: Employment Type Distribution of Persons Occupying Jobs Available – 2010

EMPLOYMENT TYPE	NUMBER	PERCENT
Construction	202	9.2%
Manufacturing	68	3.1%
Wholesale Trade	93	4.3%
Retail Trade	102	4.7%
Information	27	1.2%
Finance and Insurance	85	3.9%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	11	0.5%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	353	16.1%
Administration & Support, Waste Management and Remediation	119	5.4%
Educational Services	87	4.0%
Health Care and Social Assistance	682	31.2%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	29	1.3%
Accommodation and Food Services	185	8.5%
Other Services (excluding Public Administration)	77	3.5%
Public Administration	68	3.1%
Total Resident Workers	2,188	100%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application, <http://lehdmap.ces.census.gov>.

Figure 15: Earnings Distribution of Persons
Occupying Jobs Available – 2010

EARNINGS	NUMBER	PERCENT
\$1,250 per month or less	595	27.1%
\$1,251 to \$3,333 per month	683	31.2%
More than \$3,333 per month	912	41.7%
Total Occupied Jobs	2,188	100%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application,
<http://lehdmapp.ces.census.gov>.

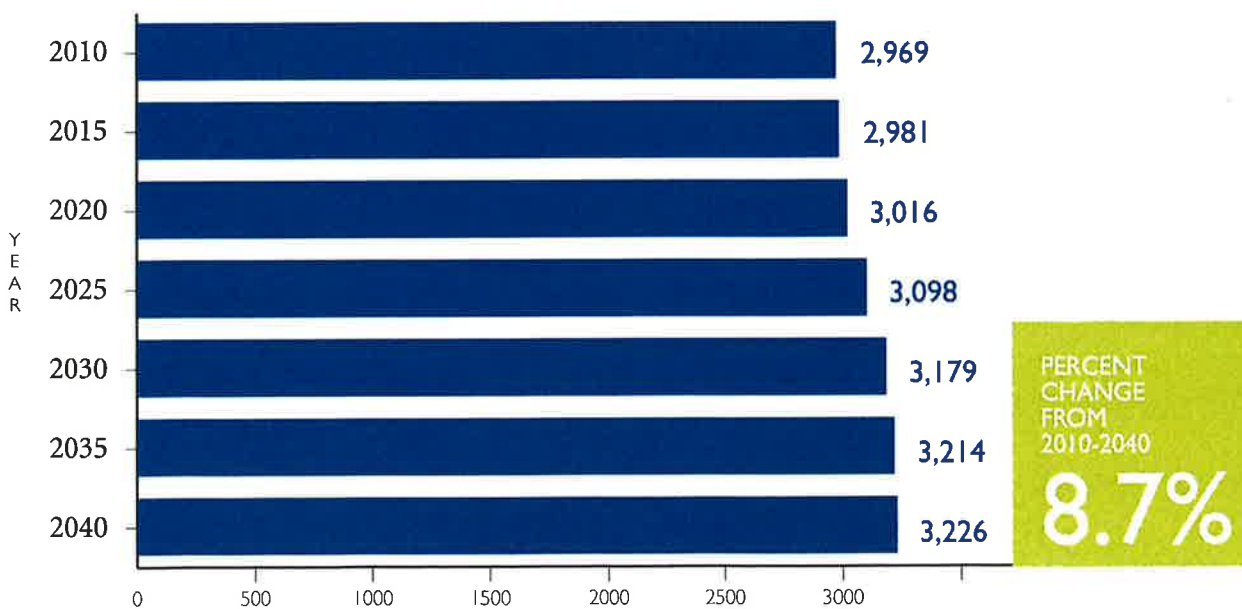
EMPLOYMENT FORECAST

The employment forecast shown in Figure 16 was derived from data generated by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC). Ambler is forecasted to grow 8.7% in employment by 2040.

PER CAPITA INCOME AND MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Income is measured by both a municipality's per capita income and median household income. The two measures cannot be compared and therefore must be examined separately. Per capita income is an average derived by dividing the total income of a given area by that same area's total population. Median household income is the midpoint level at which half the households of a given area have a higher income and half have a lower income. Ambler's per capita income increased, while the median household income level decreased for the Borough's residents from 1999 to 2010 (Figure 17).

Figure 16: Employment Forecast



Source: Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, September 2012. Base employment data from the National Establishments Time Series (NETS) database, 2010.

Figure 17: Income

PER CAPITA				
1999		2010	CHANGE IN ADJUSTED INCOME: 1999-2010	
UNADJUSTED INCOME PER PERSON ⁽²⁾	ADJUSTED INCOME PER PERSON ⁽³⁾	INCOME PER PERSON ⁽¹⁾	NUMBER CHANGE	PERCENT CHANGE
\$21,688	\$28,380	\$31,673.00	\$3,293	11.6%

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD				
1999		2010	CHANGE IN ADJUSTED INCOME: 1999-2010	
UNADJUSTED MEDIAN INCOME ⁽²⁾	ADJUSTED MEDIAN INCOME ⁽³⁾	MEDIAN INCOME ⁽¹⁾	NUMBER CHANGE	PERCENT CHANGE
\$47,014	\$61,520	\$57,340.00	(\$4,180)	-6.8%

Source: American Community Survey.

Footnotes: (1) 2010 figures are actually five-year estimates – an average of responses taken between 2006 and 2010 adjusted to 2010 dollars.

(2) 1999 figures are from the 2000 Census (Summary File 3) and summarize a sampling specific to a single year as opposed to a rolling five-year collection.

(3) Adjusted income has been derived to account for inflation and reflects the original data in 2010 dollars in order to make direct comparisons.

THE VISION

Arts and Culture



Strengthen Ambler's role as an arts and cultural destination within the Philadelphia metropolitan region by providing facilities, programs, and events for residents and visitors to gather and participate in the community.

Economic Development



Actively promote existing businesses and recruit new businesses (particularly retail, entertainment, and restaurants) to Ambler.

Community Involvement and Coordination



Photo Credit: Mahbubur Meenar

Encourage more public participation and expand coordination amongst Ambler's governmental and volunteer committees.

Environmental



Provide a long-term sustainable community.

Downtown Improvements



Increase the quality of the downtown's services and enhance the downtown's character (infrastructure and building façades) in order to boost commercial activity while maintaining the traditional "main street" aesthetic.

Historic Preservation



Protect and restore the borough's valuable heritage and places of historic character for future generations.

Housing



Preserve and enhance existing residential neighborhoods and encourage the development of new housing types.

Public Parking



Utilize existing parking and identify possibilities for new parking.

Office and Industrial Redevelopment



Replace, expand, modernize, or convert outdated or underutilized industrial and office buildings, primarily along the rail corridor.

Transit-Oriented Development



Continue to establish residential and mixed-use developments oriented around the train station and commuter rail service.

Parks and Recreation



Enhance Ambler's park facilities for residents to enjoy and seek opportunities to connect with the future Wissahickon Trail.

Transportation



Plan for safe and convenient pathways for all modes of transportation throughout the borough.

Adopted October 2013



Prepared by
Montgomery County Planning Commission

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