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**MONTGOMERY COUNTY
PLANNING COMMISSION**

MONTGOMERY COUNTY COURTHOUSE • PO Box 311
NORRISTOWN, PA 19404-0311
610-278-3722
FAX: 610-278-3941 • TDD: 610-631-1211
WWW.MONTCOPA.ORG

SCOTT FRANCE, AICP, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Draft Chapter 8: Infrastructure & Municipal Services, Part 3 of 4

TO: Comp Plan Development Team

FROM: Mike Narcowich, AICP, Assistant Section Chief: Community Planning and Abington Township Planning Consultant

8.5 Stormwater Management

8.5.1 Past Stormwater Management Improvements

There was major flooding in Abington in 1996. Since that time, the township has undertaken significant flood mitigation actions by making investments in floodplain restoration and stormwater control projects. These include but are not limited to:



Stormwater Outfall Behind Lion's Gate Apartments

- Purchasing and demolishing 38 flood-prone homes at a cost of \$7.5 million. These homes were located on:
 - Wanamaker Road (17)
 - Madison Avenue (13 homes demolished; two homes elevated)
 - Baeder Road (6)

- Irvin Road (1)
- Hamel Avenue (1)
- Creating detention basins, including four in Ardsley Wildlife Sanctuary. The Hamel Avenue infiltration basin controls runoff for 54 acres.
- Installing stormwater pipes throughout the township.
- Making stream improvements along the Sandy Run, Pennypack Creek and Baeder (Tookany) Creek. These included the riparian buffer replacement in Roslyn Park (2009) which controls runoff from 24 acres.
- Creating rain gardens—including those at Roslyn Park which controls runoff from the one-acre parking lot, and at Briar Bush Nature Center.
- Working in partnership with Tookany, Tocany, Frankford (TTF) Watershed Partnership and the Wissahickon Trails (formally Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association) to implement green infrastructure in Township parks including Roychester and Alverthorpe Parks.
- Coordinating with the U. S. Army Corps of Engineer (USACE) on its stormwater restoration project, Abington Environmental Infrastructure Project, in Grove and Roychester Parks

8.5.2 Initiatives Recommended by Past Plans

The **Walk-Park Train Abington Plan** noted that regional rail stations could be improved with stormwater best management practices, and showed them on conceptual future plans for Roslyn, Crestmont, and Meadowbrook stations. It also noted that an Official Map, authorized by the Municipalities Planning Code (PA Act 247) can delineate locations for stormwater management improvements and drainage easements. *See Chapter 11: Transportation (subsections on “Adopted Transportation Plans” and “Recommendations”) for more on the Official Map.*

The **Briar Bush Nature Center Master Site Development Plan** recommends:

- A complete redesign of the stormwater basin to account for street, adjacent neighborhood, and Briar Bush Nature Center runoff utilizing best management practices (BMPs).
- A complete stormwater management improvement at the bird observatory

Abington's institutional properties, including schools, parks and open space, and cemeteries serve an important role in stormwater management. These include large areas, many of which include relatively low percentages of impervious surface area. The parks and open space and schools are areas that represent future opportunities for new or additional implementation of stormwater best management practices.

8.5.3 Current Planning

In April 2019, the Abington Board of Commissioners awarded the contract to prepare the Township's Comprehensive Stormwater Management Plan to Wood Environment and Infrastructure Solutions, Inc. of Blue Bell, PA. The purpose of the storm water management master plan is to identify storm water responsibilities and gaps, identify areas of focus, prioritize planning and improvements, evaluate funding and implementation options, including storm water user fees. This work also helps address stormwater challenges from the requirements of Pennsylvania water quality regulations such as compliance with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's (PADEP) Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Permit (renewed in March 2018) and the Wissahickon Creek Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) from the unfunded Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) National Pollutant Discharge Elimination Systems (NPDES) protocol. The study is expected to be complete in Fall 2022 and should be referenced when reviewing this section. The study will be available on the Township's website at www.abingtonpa.gov.

8.6 Schools

8.6.1 Grade Schools

Abington School District includes Abington Township and Rockledge Borough, and has a total enrollment of over 8,300. It includes a high school, junior high school, and seven elementary schools. It is a separate, independent entity from Abington Township's government.

Schools in Abington are highly valued by residents, as expressed by participants of the goals and vision public workshops for this comprehensive plan. The high quality of the public school system has a strong impact on property values and the township's favorable image. School facilities also serve an important role in sports, recreation, and performing arts; and as community meeting places. Abington School District supports environmental sustainability through measures such as the riparian buffer planting along the headwaters of Baeder Creek in 2012-2013. The planting, undertaken next to Abington Junior High on school property, has provided environmental educational opportunities for students and area residents. The school district collaborated with project leader Tookany-Tacony/Frankford Watershed Partnership, Inc., the township Environmental Advisory Council, and Briar Bush Nature Center. The project won awards from



Willow Hill Elementary School in Crestmont is one of seven elementary schools serving the Abington School District

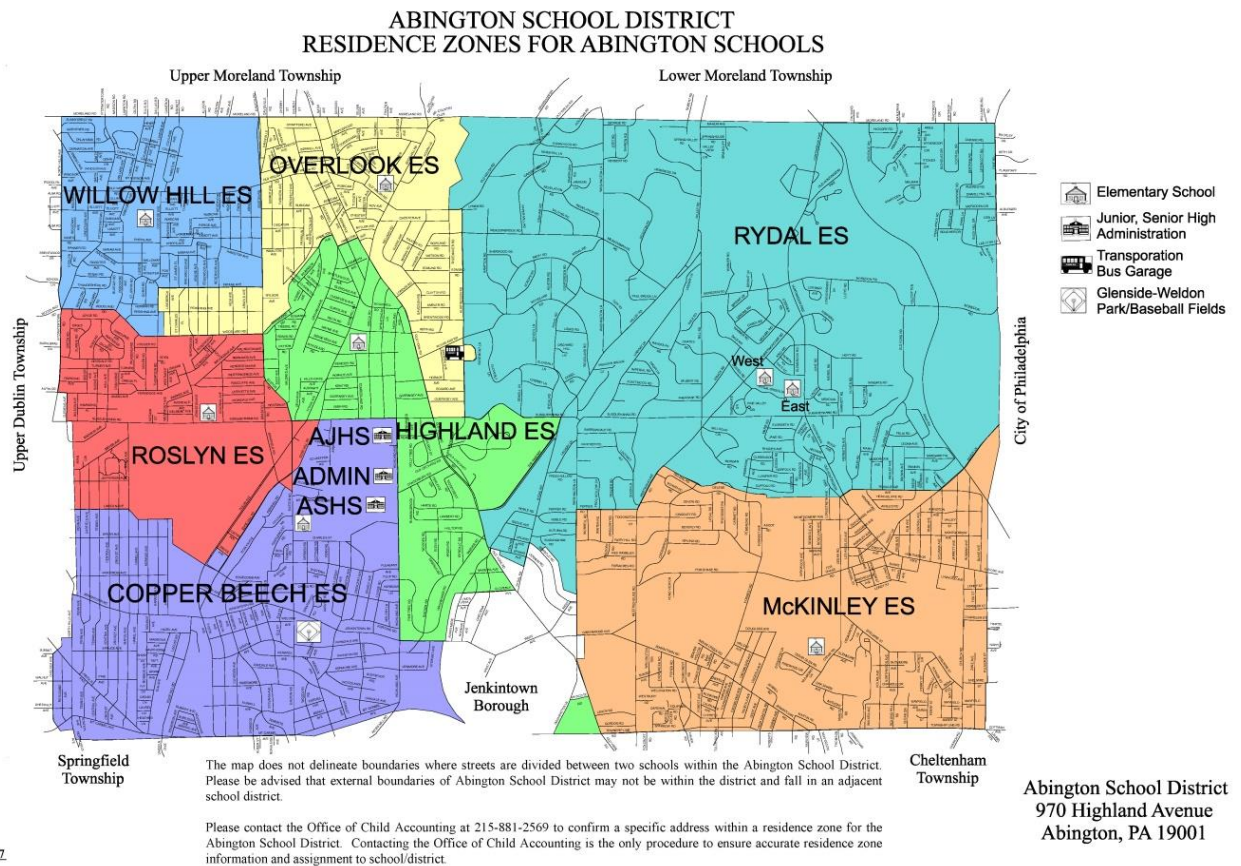


Copper Beech Elementary, Easton Road

the National Wildlife Federation as a Certified Wildlife Rehabilitation, from the National Audubon Society as a Certified Bird Habitat, and from the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society with a Community Greening Award.

The school district utilizes resource and energy conservation measures that have led to the savings of over \$2 million in utility and fuel expenses.¹

There are private schools in Abington as well. A few of these include Abington Friends, founded in 1697, which is “the oldest school in Pennsylvania to have operated continuously on the same



Elementary School Catchment Areas, Abington School District

¹ <https://www.abington.k12.pa.us/departments/office-of-the-superintendent/points-of-pride/>. Abington School District website accessed March 1, 2022.

parcel of land;”² the Meadowbrook School, an interdisciplinary school³ for students from three years old through the sixth grade; and the Nexus School in Crestmont, which serves students from kindergarten up to 21 years of age with developmental and intellectual disabilities.

Montgomery County Planning Commission prepared enrollment projections for the school district in 2016. The summary of the findings are as follows:

- The general trend in future enrollments for the Abington School District calls for an increase of about 5% over the next ten years, but that could climb as high as 8%.
- Some of this growth will be driven by new residential construction and an increase in the popularity of apartment housing to families.
- However, the growth will also be a result of an expected increase in birth activity caused by continued increases in the population of adults entering the most common child-bearing years.

8.6.2 Higher Education

Abington Township is home to two higher education facilities, Manor College and Penn State-Abington. Manor College is a private, two-year and four-year, co-ed, Catholic college founded in 1947 by the Byzantine Ukrainian Sisters of Saint Basil the Great. It has an undergraduate enrollment of 750; 10 percent of students live on-campus. It offers more than 50 programs, and is structured with four departments: allied health, arts and sciences, business and professional studies, and education.

Penn State-Abington has an enrollment of approximately 3,700. It offers 22 undergraduate majors, and 275 majors that can be started in Abington and finished at the main campus at

² <https://www.abingtonfriends.net/about-us/history/> Abington Friends website, accessed March 22, 2021.

³ According to the International Bureau of Education, part of UNESCO, an “interdisciplinary approach” generates an understanding of themes and ideas that cut across disciplines and of the connections between different disciplines and their relationship to the real world.”

University Park. With the opening of Lion’s Gate Apartments, a LEED-Gold certified building⁴ in 2017, the university now offers residential living opportunities for approximately 400 students.

The presence of these higher educational institutions presents an opportunity for “town-and-gown” collaboration, or for creation of a “university arts district,” as suggested by the Old York Road Corridor Improvement Plan (2010). In recent decades, the trend for partnerships and linkages between universities and municipal governments has increased. Collaboration could be explored in economic development; for example, an employment program targeting local hires. It could involve revitalization, such as placemaking along Old York Road in Abington Village. It could involve, environmental sustainability or stewardship partnerships, and shared cultural events. In so doing, this would enhance the quality of life for both university/college students studying in Abington and long-term township residents.



Sutherland Building, Penn State-Abington



Manor College

⁴ LEED stands for “Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design” and is a certification of the U.S. Green Building Council. <https://www.usgbc.org/help/what-leed>