What is the Value of Open Space to You?

It is no surprise that Friends of Worcester’s mission is to preserve open space, protect our natural resources, and preserve Worcester’s historic and agricultural heritage. We repeat this over and over because the message is so important. Looking back at Worcester’s last 20 years, we can see how much our township has changed. In 1996, Worcester’s population was 5681. Today it is over 10,000 – almost double in just 20 years. Over 1150 homes were built in the past 20 years, consuming around 1100 acres in our township. Worcester continues to be under a huge amount of development pressure. Time and time again, people tell us that they moved to Worcester because of our open spaces and rural atmosphere. The very qualities that make our township so desirable are increasingly threatened as we continue to grow. Without sensible, well-considered land planning and leadership, there is no guarantee that our future will continue to include the things that make Worcester the special place it is.

Today we have a conservation subdivision zoning ordinance and creative techniques like transferrable development rights (TDRs) to help manage growth during the land development process. We cannot stop development, nor are we trying. However, we do want to protect Worcester’s rural character as we grow. Let’s think about the next 20 years and beyond in Worcester. How will Worcester look then? Look around you – will the view that you enjoy when driving down Valley Forge Road, the golf course where you play on weekends, or the corn field behind your home be another housing or commercial development? Now is the time to set the wheels in motion so that as Worcester continues to grow, the places we cherish are forever protected and preserved.

(continued on page 2)
Does open space really save taxpayers money?

Many people do not appreciate the value of saving land as open space. They see their tax bill and think that preserving land and building trails are costing them money. They think their taxes might be lower without “open space.”

Overall Tax Benefits of Worcester’s Preserved Farmland and Open Space

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Permanently Preserved Farmland</th>
<th>Privately Owned Preserved Open Space</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acres</td>
<td>388.12</td>
<td>413.15</td>
<td>801.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Township’s acquisition cost</td>
<td>$2,539,147</td>
<td>$514,003</td>
<td>$3,053,150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of property tax paid</td>
<td>$117,036</td>
<td>$174,261</td>
<td>$291,297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual cost of all community services for preserved properties</td>
<td>$10,533</td>
<td>$15,683</td>
<td>$26,216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual net tax revenue from preserved properties</td>
<td>$106,503</td>
<td>$158,578</td>
<td>$265,081</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 2015-16, from Board of Assessment records.
2 COCS ratio = 1:0.09 for farmland and open space (for each $1 of tax revenue, the municipality and school district together spend 9 cents to provide services needed by these properties), averaged over eight communities in PA, from a study by Penn State, 2006-2007.

You can see from the table above that every year, preserved properties cost the township only a fraction of the taxes they pay. The township contributed a significant amount of funding to preserve these properties, but at current tax rates, the payback period is less than 12 years. After that, the annual tax revenue (the bottom line of the table) is just that—additional revenue.

School Tax Benefits of Worcester’s Preserved Farmland and Open Space

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acres</td>
<td>388.12</td>
<td>413.15</td>
<td>801.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of new homes not built</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of school-age children from those new homes</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost to educate those children, per year</td>
<td>$2,399,200</td>
<td>$2,702,986</td>
<td>$5,102,186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School taxes that would be paid by new homes</td>
<td>$2,188,912</td>
<td>$2,283,495</td>
<td>$4,472,407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School tax savings, per year</td>
<td>$210,288</td>
<td>$419,491</td>
<td>$629,779</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Calculated by taking 90% of the total acreage, dividing by 2 (for 2-acre lots), subtracting the number of homes already on the property, and rounding down.
2 Calculated by multiplying # of homes not built by 0.93, the average number of school-age children per new single-family detached home in Montgomery County, from Characteristics of the Population in New and Existing Housing Units, Montgomery County Planning Commission, 2012.
3 Calculated by taking 90% of the total acreage, dividing by 2 (for 2-acre lots), subtracting the number of homes already on the property, and rounding down.
4 Assuming an assessment of $484,294, the average assessment of all new single-family homes in Worcester sold from 2013 to 2016, and school tax millage 27.9.

Looking just at school taxes, we can see that each year, preserved properties save the district’s taxpayers over $600,000 (the bottom line of the above table). These savings will increase each year due to the rising cost of educating students.

Yes! Here are the facts:

Worcester’s preserved farms and open space produce net tax revenue (after subtracting the cost of community services, including schools) of $265,081 each year and SAVE taxpayers an additional $629,779 in avoided school taxes each year, for a net annual tax benefit of $894,850. These tax savings averaged $180 per household in 2015-16. The savings will continue to rise as school taxes increase.

Preserved properties pay for themselves.

These numbers show that in less than 12 years, the township’s cost of preserving these properties will be
Meet Tommy Ryan, Township Manager

Title: Worcester Township Manager, Zoning Officer, Right to Know Officer and Township Secretary

Previous Position: Township Manager, West Bradford Township, Chester County

Education: The American University, BA
             Villanova University, MS

Family: Wife Judy, and three beautiful daughters, Sophia, Olivia, and Nina

What are your job responsibilities as Township Manager?

I serve as the administrative manager of the Township, which includes overseeing the day-to-day operations. I serve at the pleasure of the Board of Supervisors, and work to implement their vision of the community. I do this by serving as a liaison between the Board as well as the employees, department directors, and consultants. I also work directly with residents on a variety of issues and I also implement and manage the annual budget.

What topics currently demand your attention?

Sustainability. It is a challenge to remain sustainable given the unfunded mandates received from the Federal, State, and County folks. They require local municipalities to create new programs and to follow certain procedures, but don’t provide the funds necessary to implement the mandates. So, local government has to find the money to fund these mandates. We have to be smart and efficient in our decision making and manage to do more with less.

In past years we had seven full-time employees working in the administration department, and today we have five. We have reorganized for efficiency and productivity, and it’s working very well. Looking to the future, and at an increased population living in the community and more commuters using our roadways, it may be necessary to expand our public works department to meet these demands. I pay a great deal of

How do we save more land from development?

What else can we do? Two nearby townships, Skippack and Franconia, have created dedicated open space funds by approving a referendum for an open space tax based on earned income. If Worcester adopted a similar earned income tax of just 0.125% (one eighth of one percent), the cost per $50,000 of net earned income would be just $63. A 0.125% tax would generate about $450,000 each year. An open space tax of 0.25% (one quarter of one percent) would produce $900,000 each year. Remember that this is a tax on earned income only. There is no tax on Social Security payments, retirement benefits, or any other passive income.

State law requires these funds to be used to acquire open space and parks, and develop them for the benefit of the public. The money would allow our township to preserve important properties and protect the woods, farm fields, and stream corridors that define Worcester.

Skippack Township has used its open space tax revenue to develop a comprehensive trail system that crosses the township from Evansburg State Park to the Perkiomen Trail, with a connector through Palmer Park to Skippack village. Skippack Township also purchased a working farmstead, the Cholet Farm, along that route. With a dedicated source of funding for trail easements, park land, and conservation easements, we can continue to protect our quality of life and keep taxes lower than they would be if those properties were developed. We encourage you to support an open space earned income tax by letting your Supervisors know that saving Worcester’s future is important to you.

Worcester’s rural character is at stake. It’s what attracted many of us to this township. It’s up to us to be proactive, to make sure Worcester remains the beautiful place we love. Together, We Can Make A Difference!

Once It’s Gone, It’s Gone Forever! 🌻

completely recaptured by the tax savings. If you include the school tax savings created by preserving these properties, the payback period drops to 3.5 years! These tax savings will continue each year because these properties will never be developed.

Fall harvest time in Worcester off of Valley Forge Road.
attention to the economic environment, and I am always mindful of changes that may impact our financial position. For example, while the Township’s pension plan is fully funded, the pension plans for State workers, teachers and big city employees are woefully underfunded, and this problem has the potential to impact our community in many ways.

I regularly meet with other municipal managers to collaborate and to discuss solutions for issues and challenges facing our communities.

What drew you to Worcester?

My first full-time position in local government was in Towamencin Township, about 20 years ago. Returning to this area was like coming home. This is a unique area. If you look at a map of our region you will see so much open space in and around Worcester, significantly more than most municipalities in Southeast Pennsylvania.

What is special and unique about Worcester? What are its strengths?

There is no question… everyone with whom I’ve come in contact has a strong commitment to maintaining the community’s higher quality of life. All folks value open space and the rural and historic character of Worcester. Everyone shares the same goals, even though some approach these goals with a different point of view.

How do we balance future development without compromising Worcester’s open spaces and rural landscape?

The Township’s Planning Commission plays a big role. These volunteers work hard to manage future development, preserve environmentally-sensitive areas, and require open space be protected as part of any development. The Planning Commission works with property owners to create win/win solutions for the community and the property owner.

How can Friends of Worcester help promote open space preservation in the Township?

It’s important to keep partnering with the Township to obtain grant funding on projects such as Tree Vitalize grants and DCNR grants for park and trail development. The Township and Friends of Worcester have the same goal of trying to preserve open space when possible.

Is there anything else you wish to say about your role as Township Manager?

I believe in providing good customer service, and being responsive to our residents. A good way to keep up-to-date on what’s happening in Worcester is to visit our website at worcestertwp.com.

And don’t forget to sign up to receive E-News about a variety of Township events (e.g. meeting agendas, general information, parks and recreation, and others).

We’ve recently created an e-mail account for folks who encounter a problem at a Township-owned property, such as a Township park or Community Hall, after business hours. Residents can contact us after business hours at afterhours@worcestertwp.com. During normal business hours, we’re available at the Township Building at (610) 584-1410. And if you need to contact me directly you may call my cell number at (484) 885-8775, or reach me by e-mail at tryan@worcestertwp.com.

Friends of Worcester’s 20th Anniversary Photo Contest

Please join Friends of Worcester in celebrating 20 years of open space preservation by sending us your photos!

We welcome all of your favorite nature photos that you have taken around Worcester! Please send your photos to our website at: info@friendsofworcester.org. Also, please no photos of people, otherwise all other nature, historic buildings, farms, and farm/nature animals are fine. Looking forward to seeing all the awesome Worcester photos! By submitting your photos, you are giving us permission to display them on our website, newsletter, and promotional items.

You could see your photo here or on our newly revised website or newsletter.

Visit www.friendsofworcester.org and click on the Donate link to make your donation via PayPal. Thank you!
A Trek Through The Woods

In an earlier Friends of Worcester newsletter, we talked about the state of walking trails in Worcester Township…what we have, where they are, and thinking about how our trail system could be improved and expanded.

First a quick review. Our most developed trail is the beautiful Zacharias Trail. This trail starts at the backside of Heebner Park and traverses approx. 1.2 miles along the winding Zacharias Creek (2.4 miles round trip)…coming to an end at the southwest side of Evansburg Park. If you have never walked this trail, it is a visual delight with a combination of paved and packed gravel surfaces.

Then there is the Moran Trail, which goes through the woods between Grange Avenue and Kriebel Mill Road. Although it is short in terms of a trail (approx. 1 mile round trip), the trail does have a soft pine mulch bed, and it is great for horses as well as people. There is a parking lot at the north end of the trail right on Grange Avenue.

Finally, there is also a small short trail that traverses behind Heyser Field, in back of Community Hall.

What do these trails have in common? They are very nice for a short walk in the woods, but they stand alone…they are not connected in any way, and they are relatively short in terms of distance.

Now imagine this. Worcester becomes connected to a system of trails from each of our surrounding townships…Skippack, Lower Providence, Collegeville and Towamencin…all coming together with a hub in Evansburg Park. The potential for miles of wooded trails offering hours of recreation for walkers, hikers, cyclists and even equestrian riders is possible. That’s the vision of Friends of Worcester, and also the goal of a project being positioned by Michael Stokes, Assistant Director of the Montgomery County Planning Commission. There is interest by several of the surrounding townships, but right now, there is resistance to the plan by officials of Evansburg State Park.

FOW stands behind this promising initiative, and we will communicate more about how to help promote the development of a comprehensive trail system in our part of Montgomery County.

So perhaps you’d like to see what a full-feature trail could look like…then look no further than neighboring Upper Gwynedd / Whitpain townships. The Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association (WVWA) has established the awesome Green Ribbon Trail. Beginning at Parkside in Upper Gwynedd Township and ending at Stenton Avenue in Whitemarsh, the Green Ribbon Trail is a passive recreational trail that shadows the Wissahickon Creek. This 12.6-mile trail is well marked, and connects a variety of parks and protected natural areas such as Parkside Place, Penllyn Woods, Four Mills Nature Reserve and Fort Washington State Park.

For more than 50 years, the WVWA has either acquired or received permission to allow trail access over more than 40 properties and 200 acres to complete the Green Ribbon Trail. The trail includes bridges, boardwalks and even stepping stone crosswalks across several parts of the creek. You can now walk the entire trail without getting your feet wet while seeing diverse wetlands, woodlands and meadows!

We would encourage all Worcester residents to go out and walk this wonderful trail so that you can see for yourself what a well-planned and connected trail system can look like.

For more information on the Green Ribbon Trail please visit this website http://www.wvwa.org/greenribbontrail/.

This Fall, the Friends of Worcester will be completing a map that will highlight all of the trails available in Worcester Township. This includes walking, horseback riding, hiking, and biking trails. This map will be available in an artistic rendering, with distance annotations, a legend showing trail surfaces, parking areas, etc. Also, a web-based interactive version will be developed with links to actual Google Earth pictures and videos. The map will be available on the FOW website before the end of the year.

So stay tuned for more information on how you can get involved with making our trail system bigger and better…and for now, get out and take a brisk Fall walk on our beautiful trails. ☀️
The Meadowood Nature Preserve is an environmental initiative of Meadowood and the Worcester community to promote awareness, appreciation, and improvement of our local natural resources. Meadowood will achieve its goal of planting 500 trees in 5 years this fall. Friends of Worcester was proud to assist Meadowood in their search for volunteers who planted both the larger caliper native trees and the smaller tube saplings.

The tree plantings were funded through Tree Vitalize grants in 2012, 2013, and 2016, along with contributions from Meadowood residents and staff, and proceeds from a Worcester Elementary School Environmental Club quilt raffle.

Meadowood also received a $58,000 grant in 2012 to retrofit an existing stormwater basin and install a series of demonstration rain gardens to reduce the volume and velocity of storm water entering the wetland area. This project has been funded in part by Exelon Corporation through the Schuylkill River Restoration Fund and the Delaware River Basin Commission. Both projects were completed in 2014.

Based on these projects, Meadowood was recently awarded “Wise Land Use” by the Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy (PWC). They were honored on October 13 at PWC’s benefit dinner, “A Night for Conservation: To Benefit the Perkiomen Watershed.”

Meadowood’s Nature Preserve provides great value to our Worcester Community in many ways, providing many great new trees, a learning environment and enjoyment for both Meadowood folks as well as Worcester residents, including the children and staff at Worcester Elementary.

To learn more about the Meadowood Nature Preserve please contact Jody LaVerdure at jlaverdure@mwood.org or 484-991-1025.

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SUPPORT FRIENDS OF WORCESTER

FRIENDS OF WORCESTER is a non-profit organization made up of new and long-time residents of the Township. All involved residents share an appreciation for the rural quality of Worcester and a common concern for its future. FOW seeks to influence that future. All funds received are used to support our efforts to preserve open space, maintain the rural lifestyle of the community and keep our neighbors informed through our minutes and newsletters.

☐ Friend - $35 ☐ Family - $60 ☐ Benefactor - $100 ☐ Advocate - $250 ☐ Lifetime- $1,000 ☐ Other

NAME: ____________________________

ADDRESS: ____________________________

PHONE: ____________________________

E-MAIL: ____________________________

All residents, contributing or not, are always welcome at FOW monthly meetings. Check www.friendsofworcester.org for dates.

Please send your tax-deductible contributions to:

FRIENDS OF WORCESTER
P.O. Box 545
WORCESTER, PA 19490

(or use the PayPal donation button on our website)

The official registration and financial information of The Friends of Worcester may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll-free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.
Friends of Worcester Officers

Kim David - President (610-584-1805)
Rob Hayes - Vice President (610-584-0371)
Barbara McMonagle—Treasurer (215-257-1436)
Jim Phelan—Secretary (610-584-9220)
Wini Hayes - Board Member (610-584-0371)
Stuart Land—Board Member (610-584-5749)
Paula Wiley—Board Member (610-724-1633)

Join us for an upcoming meeting
2nd Wednesdays, 7:30 pm,
September through May

Check friendsofworcester.org for details.

Experience the best in everyday living.
Explore our naturally beautiful 131 acre campus, tour our community center and see why our residents call Meadowood home.

Call 610-584-3998 or visit www.meadowood.net to learn more!

Worcester Township Public Meetings
Community Hall, 1031 Valley Forge Rd, Fairview Village

Board of Supervisors
3rd Wednesday of the month - work session
6:00 pm and business meeting 7:30 pm

Planning Commission
2nd & 4th Thursday, 7:30 pm

Zoning Hearing Board
4th Tuesday, 6:30 pm

Check worcestertwp.com for meeting updates.