

THE FRIENDS OF WORCESTER

P.O. Box 545, Worcester, PA 19490
www.friendsofworcester.org
email: info@friendsofworcester.org

Fall 2006



The Future of Fairview Village

Fairview Village is one of Worcester's three main villages, and its future as a distinctive locality may be in jeopardy. It has an interesting past and a distinctive topography. Sadly, the historic nature of the intersection of Germantown Pike and Valley Forge Road has been lost over the last half-century, punctuated by the demolition of the 1773 Bunner House in the summer of 2004.

However, Fairview Village has remained free of the large-scale "big box" and strip commercial development that continues to plague villages in nearby townships. The crossing of two main roads seems to be the perfect excuse to put up retail chains, banks, fast-food restaurants, mega-gas stations, and pharmacies. The result is traffic congestion, road widening, light pollution, aggravated stormwater runoff, and the disappearance of farmland and natural habitats.

We all know the visual and cultural impact of commercial sprawl. Drive across the country and you will see the identical discount stores, pharmacies, and banks forming a blend of transcontinental anonymity and suburban blight. This is not what we want for Fairview Village. Worcester has a unique local identity—so too should our villages.

Although we no longer have some of the most significant landmarks in Fairview Village, we can still preserve the historic and cultural resources that do remain. There are a significant number of old houses and barns dating from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries along Germantown Pike, and a few on Valley Forge Road. These structures are the backbone of Fairview, for without them, there would be no village.

We may have the opportunity to redevelop some of the existing commercial sites in the village. This can allow for the creation of new landmarks that will properly enhance the character and integrity of Fairview Village. These new buildings should be sustainable and reusable, so that they can survive changes in economy and culture and will not need to be torn down in 15 years. They should be beautiful and attractive landmarks that fit the scale and vernacular context of Fairview and Worcester.

A rural village such as Fairview also needs green spaces, such as neighborhood parks, gateway gardens, and town

greens, to provide residents with attractive places to walk, meet friends, and play.

To achieve these goals, we should think about Fairview Village as a distinct community within a broader geographic, cultural, and historic context, not just one property at a time. As residents of Worcester Township, we must ensure that Fairview Village remains a true village—a small, vital, and attractive locality with a strong sense of purpose and place. The decisions we make today, good or bad, will have a lasting effect on our landscape and on future generations who will call Fairview Village and Worcester their home. 🌳

Historic Structures... Here To Stay?

The building boom of the past 10 to 15 years has changed the face of Worcester. Along with many more new houses, we are also seeing fewer of our historic homes. The steady, progressive loss of Worcester's historic structures, which are the basis of our heritage, recently prompted our supervisors to appoint a Historic Structures Preservation Committee to examine this trend and make recommendations. The committee consists of township residents, including members of the Worcester Historical Society and the township Planning Commission.

An important initial role of the committee was to develop a Historic Resources Inventory. This is a listing of buildings and sites in the township that are worthy of designation as historic resources. This list will be maintained at the township office and can be reviewed and updated as needed.

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The Historic Structures Preservation Committee has also recommended an ordinance to effectively protect the integrity of our township's historic resources. It will be submitted to the Planning Commission and the supervisors. This ordinance follows the provisions of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, which requires townships to promote, protect, facilitate, and preserve the natural, scenic, and historic values in the environment.

Currently, our ordinances have no provisions to prevent a historic structure from being demolished. The recommended ordinance will include the steps by which an applicant must proceed with a demolition request. There are also incentives for continued use of the historic resource, and provisions by which the resource can be appropriately or adaptively reused and preserved. This ordinance will not affect the interior or exterior features of individual historic properties.



The circa-1885 Insull family farmhouse on Trooper Road (above) and the early-20th-century barn (below) prior to demolition in 2005.



This brick farmhouse on Berks Road, one of only a few left in Worcester, was demolished earlier this year.

Nothing can replace a historic building. Once it is torn down, the stories it represents are gone along with it. Our historic buildings remind us of the individuals and families who founded and built this community in the 1700s and 1800s. Their architecture chronicles the changes brought by the Victorian era and the austerities of the Depression. They evoke community stories in ways that newer structures cannot. They form our connection with the past. Without them, Worcester would resemble any other collection of suburban housing developments, distinguishable only by our zip code. It is the duty and responsibility of the township to protect our historically significant resources. FOW strongly supports the efforts of the Historic Structures Preservation Committee and the supervisors' role in protecting our historic resources. 🌱



"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." Margaret Mead

Open Space Update

In June, the Worcester Township Open Space Plan was approved by the Montgomery County Open Space Board. One of the Board members stated: "This is the best plan we have seen yet." It is our first update of the plan since 1994 and will give us the direction we need to identify and fund future open space projects. The county has allocated approximately \$871,000 to the township for the acquisition of open space over the next few years. The Worcester Open Space Committee is meeting this fall to make recommendations to our supervisors as to how we may wish to use those funds.

In August, the Montgomery County Farm Board approved the purchase of the development rights on 104 acres of Willow Creek Farm (formerly the Heebner Farm). This means that those acres will no longer be eligible for development and must remain in farming. Worcester Township has six other farms currently under consideration for this program. 🌱

Once it's gone, it's gone forever!

What Do You Think?

Friends of Worcester would like to hear from you! Please take a minute to fill out our survey. Mail your completed survey to Friends of Worcester, P.O. Box 545, Worcester PA 19490, or fill out the survey on our website, friendsof-worcester.org.

1. Do you support FOW's mission to preserve open space and conserve our rural agricultural heritage? Yes No
2. How effective has FOW been in bringing positive change to the township? Very effective Somewhat effective Not effective
3. Where should FOW focus our efforts in the future?
 Continue to support open space initiatives
 Work to preserve the township's historic heritage
 Other (please fill in) _____
4. What kind of outreach efforts do you want FOW to conduct? _____
5. What is your major personal concern for the township?

6. Are you involved in other groups in the township?
 Church WHS Home & School Other

When It Rains....

"When it rains, things get wet!" That's how Crystal Gilchrist, Executive Director of the Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy, opened the recent stormwater workshop presented by Friends of Worcester. The problems start when those wet things include your basement and your lawn. This fall, Friends of Worcester teamed up with Friends of Lower Providence to give homeowners some hands-on ideas for dealing with stormwater on their property. The Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy, the Department of Forestry of the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and Worcester Township's engineer all contributed to our program.

FOW and FLP focused the workshop on things that homeowners can do to solve stormwater problems on their property and improve the quality of the water we all drink. Stormwater is a valuable resource. Instead of trying to get rid of it, we should try to use it where we can. Rain barrels are a great way to collect rainwater for future use in the garden or house. Rain gardens can make good use of water from downspouts and rain barrel overflows, and they are a natural solution for any wet area in a lawn. Water that would otherwise run down a driveway or along a property line can be captured in underground cisterns or infiltration trenches

and allowed to percolate into the ground and replenish the water table.


Watershed groups are getting involved by bringing stormwater education programs to local schools. Ask your children or grandchildren what they've learned about water quality or creek erosion, and you might be surprised at their answer. Townships are doing their part with storm drain decal programs, stormwater outfall monitoring, and stepped-up construction site inspections.

In the past several years, both the federal and state governments have developed programs to deal with stormwater in more effective ways. Municipalities are now required to test for pollutants in the stormwater that comes from municipal outfalls (pipes that carry stormwater away from an area and into a creek). There are permit requirements for new construction, to ensure that rain does not wash the soil from construction sites into nearby streams. Education is a big part of this effort – educating residents not to dispose of chemicals, oil, or trash in storm drains; educating builders to prevent erosion and stream contamination during construction; and educating developers and planners to design and use more effective techniques for handling stormwater in new developments.

Townships and homeowners' associations that own stormwater detention basins now have the opportunity to retrofit these areas as "naturalized" basins. Traditional basins, which are planted with grass and mowed short, provide very little opportunity for pollutants to be filtered out before the stormwater is discharged to a stream. Naturalized basins are planted with native grasses and shrubs whose root systems are able to filter out pollutants and absorb some of the stormwater, so that less water and fewer pollutants are discharged at the outfall.

There are many places for a homeowner to find information and assistance on creative ways to handle stormwater. Here are a few good resources:

- Montgomery County Conservation District
143 Level Rd, Collegeville, 610-489-4506
www.montgomeryconservation.org
- Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy
1 Skippack Pike, Schwenksville, 610-287-9383
www.pwc.org
- *A Homeowner's Guide to Stormwater Management*, prepared by the Philadelphia Water Department. Available on line at <http://www.delawareestuary.org/pdf/HomeownersGuideSWMgmt.pdf>

For a list of local organizations and businesses that have installed some of these innovative stormwater management techniques, visit the Local Stormwater Projects Resource List on FOW's website, friendsof-worcester.org. 

Natural Landscapes: Beauty + Benefit

Tired of mowing all that grass, or paying to have it mowed? Converting part of your lawn into gardens will mean less grass to mow and significantly reduced stormwater runoff. Surprisingly, lawns do little to control runoff. Lawn grass is referred to as “functionally impervious,” meaning that it is too shallow-rooted, and the soil is often too compacted, to allow rainwater to seep into the ground. Instead, lawns shed water quickly, allowing it to run off onto sidewalks, driveways, and roads.

When undeveloped land is converted to lawn, up to 80 percent of its infiltration capacity can be destroyed. If the majority of a home site is covered with buildings, paved surfaces (driveway, patio, pool), and lawns, the infiltration capacity of the entire property is essentially destroyed, and nearly all the rain that falls on these surfaces becomes stormwater runoff.

When working to prevent rain water from rushing off your property, consider some attractive alternatives to traditional lawns. Stormwater runoff can be controlled by converting some of your turf area to meadow, woodland, vegetated swales, or rain gardens. Natural landscapes can have many positive impacts, including water conservation, wildlife habitats, reduced maintenance requirements, and increase plant diversity. A more natural landscape enables water to seep slowly into the ground and replenish the aquifer, rather than washing away quickly and taking pollutants (such as fertilizers and pesticides) with it.

As you work to prevent stormwater from running off your property, design so that water runs off impervious surfaces and lawn areas into the natural-landscape areas, which will

allow for maximum infiltration. As much as possible, try to create natural environments on the edges of your property, so that rain water is held and absorbed, instead of running off-site and causing erosion and flooding in other parts of the community.

The Annual Hydrologic Cycle

1 Acre of Developed Land



Evapotranspiration (12") + Infiltration (5")
+ Runoff (28") = Annual rainfall (45")

The infiltration capacity of one acre of land is reduced by as much as 80 percent when the land is developed.

Mowed lawns will always have a useful place in the landscape, but because they are a man-made monoculture, they require using excessive water, fertilizer, herbicides, and fossil fuels to maintain them. Woodlands, meadows, and gardens can be attractive, low-maintenance alternatives that are very effective in reducing stormwater runoff that can cause flooding. 🌱

**Even if we are on the right track,
if we just stand still, we will be run over.**

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. All contributors receive our monthly agenda and minutes as well as notification of important township events.

Friend - \$30

Partner - \$50

Benefactor - \$100

Other

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____

**All residents, contributing or not, are always
welcome at FOW monthly meetings.**

**Please send your tax-deductible contributions to:
FRIENDS OF WORCESTER
P.O. BOX 545
WORCESTER, PA 19490**

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.

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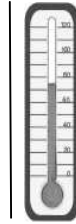
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Country Flea Market & Craft Sale!

**Two Saturdays! November 11
December 9**

9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

**Worcester Township Community Hall
1031 Valley Forge Road, Fairview Village**

Spaces \$10 — call Marty at 610-584-5348

Sponsored by the Farmers Union Horse Company

You've heard about the "Worcester book" — now you can own it!

A History of Worcester Township, 1976

Over 300 pages of historic information on Worcester's schools, mills, farming, and villages, plus 200 pages of residential listings!

Hardback, with index of homes — only \$45

Available from the Worcester Historical Society
P.O. Box 112, Worcester, PA 19490

FOW Wish List

Friends of Worcester needs the following items in order to facilitate our programs and outreach efforts. You can contact us at friendsofworcester.org or 610-584-5619. Thank you!

- Powerpoint projector
- Projection screen
- Folding table (for workshops & events)
- Large coffeepot (30 to 40 cups)
- Saw horses

Donations are tax-deductible as provided by law.

Bean Road Nursery

Native Plants

Design Build Gardens
And Native Landscapes

Bean and Whitehall Roads
Worcester, PA

610-584-1550



New! Methacton Oak Photo Note Cards

**Four
Distinctive
Color
Photographs!**

Spring
Summer
Fall
Snowstorm



Package of
four photo
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\$10

Order now for
holiday gifts
at friendsofworcester.org

The **Methacton Oak**, also known as the Charter Oak, is estimated to be over 375 years old, based on a reference to the burial of Revolutionary War soldiers "under a huge oak tree" after the Battle of Germantown in 1777.

FRIENDS OF WORCESTER
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ENTER NOW!
Friends of Worcester
2007 PHOTO CONTEST

Theme: ***Water in Worcester***

Open to adult residents of Worcester Township
(amateurs only) and all Methacton High School
students

**Cash prizes for 1st, 2nd & 3rd place in
Adult and Student divisions**

*Two categories: Traditional
Digital or digitally enhanced
Black & White or Color*

Winning entries will be on display at the
Farmers' Union Horse Show
Heyser Field, Fairview Village
Saturday, June 2, 2007

Details and entry form at friendsofworcester.org

FRIENDS OF WORCESTER OFFICERS

Kim David - President (610-584-1805)
Rob Hayes - Vice President (610-584-0371)
Wini Hayes - Treasurer (610-584-0371)
Barbara McMonagle - Secretary (215-257-1436)

Join us at these upcoming meetings and events

Holiday Potluck: Thursday, Dec. 28, 6-9 p.m., adults only
RSVP: 610-584-0371

Meetings: Wednesdays: Jan. 10, Feb. 14, Mar. 14
7:30 p.m., Bean Road Nursery (corner of
Bean & Whitehall Rds.)

Worcester Township Public Meetings

Community Hall, 1031 Valley Forge Rd, Fairview Village

Board of Supervisors

Monday 8 am: Dec. 4
Wednesday 7:30 pm: Nov. 15, Dec. 20

Planning Commission

Thursday 7:30 pm: Nov. 2, Nov. 16, Dec. 14

Zoning Hearing Board

Tuesday 6:30 pm: Nov. 28, Dec. 19

Joint Meeting

Monday 9:30 am: Dec. 4