

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

ROCKLEDGE BOROUGH



Montgomery County, Pennsylvania
Adopted 2007

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MONTGOMERY COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

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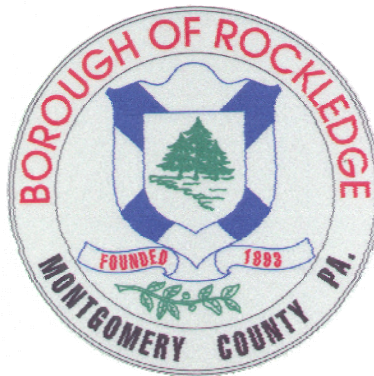
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Cover Photograph: Aerial View of Huntingdon Pike and
Surroundings in Rockledge Borough

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
ROCKLEDGE BOROUGH

2007

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Chapter 2

Socioeconomic Background

Demographics

Population

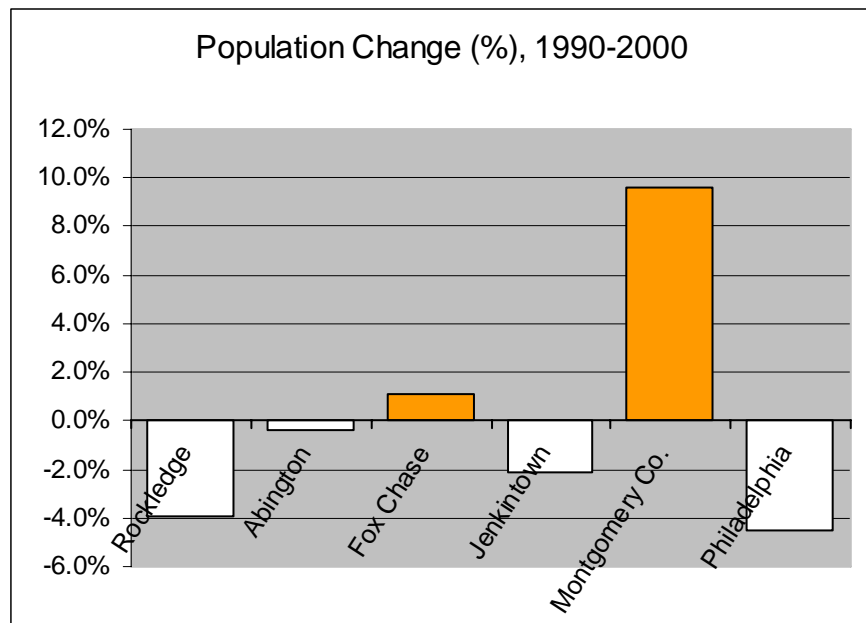
The population of Rockledge was 2,577 in 2000, a decrease of four percent from 1990. The rate of decline was the fifth largest for municipalities in Montgomery County. Rockledge's decline in population from 1990 to 2000 was in sharp contrast to Montgomery County's increase of 9.6 percent over the decade. As a result of the borough's recent population decline the population by 2000 had returned to virtually the same level as in 1970 and 1980. Thus, the net population change in the Borough from 1970 to 2000 was vir-

Figure 2.1
Population

	Rockledge	Abington	Fox Chase	Jenkintown	Montgomery County
1970	2,564	62,899	6,614	5,990	623,799
1980	2,538	59,084	5,775	4,942	643,621
1990	2,679	56,322	5,567	4,574	678,111
2000	2,577	56,103	5,627	4,478	750,097
% Change, '90-'00	-4.0%	-0.4%	1.1%	-2.1%	9.6%

Sources: U.S. Census, 2000, 1990, 1980; Comprehensive Plan Report for Rockledge Borough, 1973

Figure 2.2
Population Change, 1990-2000



tually none. The Borough's low net change in population since 1980 contrasted with neighboring Jenkintown's 9.4 percent decline, Abington's 5.0 percent decline and Fox Chase's 2.6 percent decline.

Population Forecasts

The population decline in Rockledge during the 1990s is forecast to continue into the future, but at a smaller rate. During the period 2000 to 2010 the Borough is forecast to lose 47 people, or 1.8% of its 2000 population. From 2000 to 2025 the Borough is forecast to lose 97 people, or 3.8% of its 2000 population. Unlike the Borough, the County is expected to increase its population from 2000 to 2025. The County's forecast increase is 6.4% from 2000 to 2010, and 14.3% from 2000 to 2025.

Figure 2.3
Population Projection Table

	Rockledge	% Change from 2000	Montgomery County	% Change from 2000
2000	2,577	--	750,097	--
2005	2,580	0.1%	776,340	3.5%
2010	2,530	-1.8%	797,990	6.4%
2015	2,530	-1.8%	818,210	9.1%
2020	2,480	-3.8%	838,700	11.8%
2025	2,480	-3.8%	857,030	14.3%

Source: Population Projections by Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)

Figure 2.4
Population Projection Chart

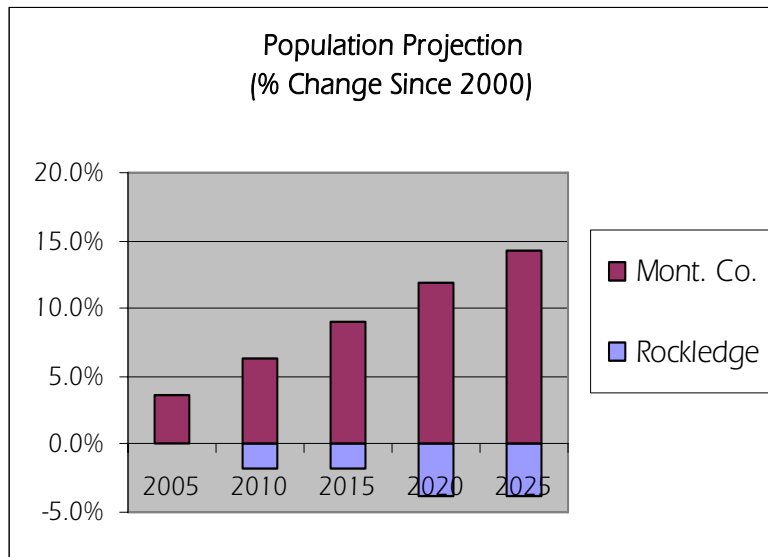


Figure 2.5
Population Density (People per Square Mile)

	Rockledge	Abington	Fox Chase	Jenkintown	Montgomery County
2000	7,363	3,631	10,821	7,856	1,553
1990	7,654	3,645	10,706	8,025	1,404
% Change	-4.0%	-0.4%	1.1%	-2.2%	9.6%

Sources: U.S. Census: 2000, 1990

These population forecasts were prepared by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission in conjunction with Montgomery County Planning Commission staff. They were developed based on past trends, current market demand and an analysis of the available land and infrastructure to accommodate growth.

Population Density

Since Rockledge's population declined by 4% in the decade prior to 2000, the population density decreased by the same rate, to 7,363 people per mile. This is lower than Fox Chase's and Jenkintown's respective densities, but approximately double the density of Abington. In 2000 Rockledge's population density was sixth out of 62 municipalities in the County, unchanged since 1990.

Figure 2.6
Age

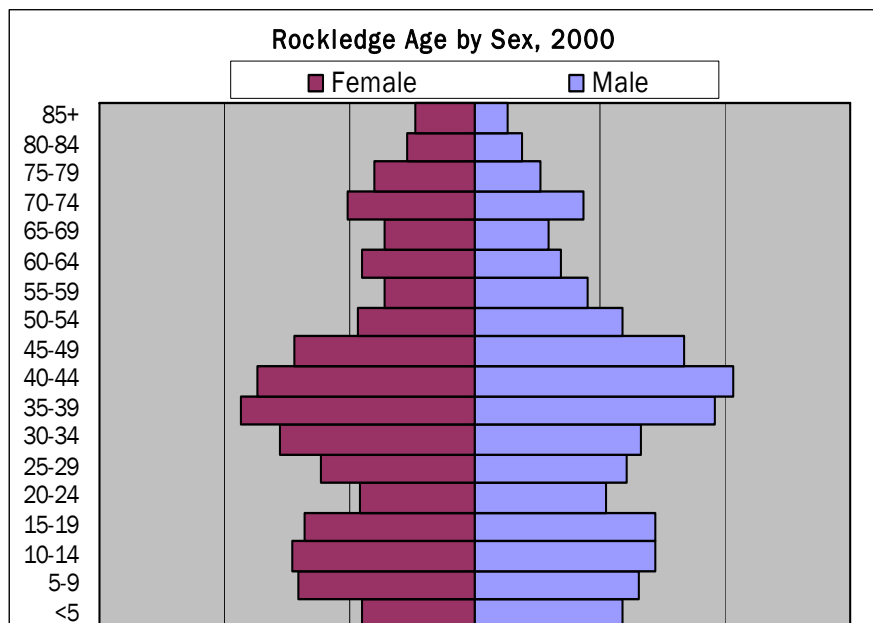
Ages	% Change, '90-'00
0 to 4	-31.1%
5 to 17	8.5%
18 to 24	-7.1%
25 to 34	-36.8%
35 to 44	30.8%
45 to 54	49.3%
55 to 64	-17.6%
65 to 74	-13.4%
75+	2.7%

Source: U.S. Census, 2000, 1990

Figure 2.7
Age Comparison Table

	Percent of Total (2000)				
Age	Rockledge	Abington	Fox Chase	Jenkintown	Montgomery County
0 to 4	5.2%	5.8%	5.6%	4.8%	6.3%
5 to 17	18.4%	17.8%	14.0%	18.2%	17.8%
18 to 24	7.6%	6.1%	7.4%	5.6%	7.1%
25 to 34	13.4%	11.5%	14.3%	11.3%	13.5%
35 to 44	18.9%	16.2%	16.5%	15.7%	17.1%
45 to 54	13.0%	14.1%	13.0%	14.7%	14.2%
55 to 64	8.0%	9.4%	8.2%	8.8%	9.1%
65 to 74	8.0%	9.0%	9.3%	9.7%	7.4%
75+	7.5%	10.0%	10.4%	11.3%	7.5%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Median	38.0	40.6	39.6	41.7	38.2

Figure 2.8
Age Comparison Chart



Source: U.S. Census: 2000

Age

From 1990 to 2000 Rockledge experienced population increases in the baby boomers' cohorts (those 35 to 54 years of age), the 5 to 17 age cohort, and the 75+ age cohort.

Rockledge was similar to the reference areas in the percentage of people in each age cohort, but had significantly less of a percentage of its population aged 55 years and up when compared to Abington, Fox Chase, and Jenkintown. Rockledge had a higher share of its population in the 5 to 17 age cohort, the 18 to 24 age cohort, and the 35 to 44 age cohort than all four reference areas (Abington, Fox Chase, Jenkintown, and Montgomery County).

The median age in Rockledge was 38.0 years, an increase from the 34.2 median age in 1990. This was lower than all four reference areas. Jenkintown's median age was 41.7 years, Abington's was 40.6, and Fox Chase's was 39.6.

Thirty-year trends show the greatest changes occurred in the Borough's 35 to 44 age group (increased from 10.7 to 18.9 percent), the 55 to 64 age group (declined from 14 to 8 percent), the 20 to 24 age group (declined from 7.7 to 4.9 percent share), and the 25 to 34 age group (increased from 10.8 percent to 13.4 percent).

Figure 2.9
Education

2000	Less than 9th Grade	9th-12th Grade, No Diploma	High School Grad or Equivalent	Some College or Associates Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Graduate Or Professional Degree
Rockledge	1.9%	14.1%	36.0%	29.2%	14.5%	4.2%
Abington	2.6%	7.4%	27.8%	24.3%	22.1%	15.8%
Fox Chase	3.4%	16.4%	32.8%	25.3%	13.1%	8.9%
Jenkintown	1.4%	5.7%	21.0%	25.0%	25.9%	21.1%
Montgomery County	3.0%	8.5%	27.3%	22.5%	23.1%	15.7%
1990	Less than 9th Grade	9th-12th Grade, No Diploma	High School Grad or Equivalent	Some College or Associates Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Graduate Or Professional Degree
Rockledge	3.4%	17.4%	36.1%	22.6%	11.9%	8.7%
Abington	4.4%	11.3%	29.9%	21.7%	18.9%	13.8%
Fox Chase	8.5%	18.2%	33.6%	18.4%	13.5%	7.8%
Jenkintown	2.0%	5.0%	24.1%	25.8%	25.8%	17.4%
Montgomery County	5.2%	11.0%	30.1%	21.7%	19.4%	12.6%

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census: 1990, 2000

The age by sex pyramid for Rockledge's population in 2000 illustrates the 35 to 44 cohorts being the widest (containing the most population). The largest age cohort differentials by gender are the 40 to 44 years of age cohort (10.3% of males vs. 8.7% females) and the 75+ cohorts (9.1% of females vs. 5.8% of males).

Education

Eighty-four percent of Rockledge's residents aged 25 years and older now have a high school diploma (or equivalent). This is an increase from the 79.3 percent rate from the 1990 Census. The high school graduation rate is higher than that of Fox Chase but lower than the other three reference areas. This was also true in 1990.

Forty-eight percent of Rockledge residents aged 25 years and older now have some form of postsecondary education. This is an increase over the 43.8 percent rate recorded in the Borough in 1990. Rockledge thus has a higher level of residents with some form of postsecondary education than Fox Chase; however the level is lower than the other reference areas. This was also true in 1990.

Figure 2.10
Household Size

Year	Rockledge	Abington	Fox Chase	Jenkintown	Montgomery County
2000	2.43	2.54	2.21	2.19	2.54
1990	2.45	2.58	2.24	2.34	2.58
% Change	-0.8%	-1.6%	-1.4%	-6.8%	-1.6%

Sources: U.S. Census, 2000, 1990

Household Size

Average household size in Rockledge was 2.43 persons in 2000, which was virtually unchanged from 1990. Fox Chase and Jenkintown, the more urban of the reference areas, have lower average household sizes of approximately 2.2 persons. Larger areas with lower population densities such as Abington and Montgomery County, however, had higher average household sizes.

Demographic Summary

The population of Rockledge declined by four percent from 1990 to 2000, but viewed over the thirty-year period from 1970 to 2000 it was virtually unchanged and stable (as was population density). Thus, although municipalities in the region are dealing with problems related to population growth and land development, this has not been an issue in Rockledge. From 1990 to 2000 Rockledge experienced a large expansion of the 35 to

Figure 2.11
Median Household Income

Year	Rockledge	Abington	Fox Chase	Jenkintown	Montgomery County
1999	\$47,958	\$59,921	\$37,236	\$47,743	\$60,829
1989	\$32,824	\$44,090	\$29,318	\$40,270	\$43,720
% Change	31.6%	26.4%	21.3%	15.7%	28.1%

Sources: U.S. Census: 2000, 1990

54 year old cohort as the baby boom generation aged. In the last 30 years, however, Rockledge has gone from having a large proportion of its population in older age groups to one that is distributed similar to the nearby reference areas. Household size remained virtually the same, indicating more stability than the reference areas.

Economic Characteristics

Income

Median Household Income (MHI) in Rockledge was \$47,958 in 1999. This was higher than that of Fox Chase and Jenkintown, whereas Rockledge's MHI had been much lower than Jenkintown's in 1989. Rockledge's MHI increased by 31.6% from its \$32,824 figure recorded in 1989. Rockledge's median household income increased at a greater rate than any of the reference areas, which increased at rates ranging from 15.7% to 28.1%. Rockledge's median household income still lagged behind that of Abington and Montgomery County by more than \$10,000.

Figure 2.12
Employment by Industry

(Civilians 16 years of age and older)	Rockledge	Abington	Fox Chase	Jenkintown	Montgomery County
Management, Professional, & Related	35.9%	44.0%	38.1%	51.1%	44.5%
Service	8.2%	10.0%	17.1%	8.8%	10.5%
Sales and Office	32.7%	29.7%	29.5%	26.3%	28.2%
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
Construction, Extraction, and Maintenance	11.3%	7.4%	7.5%	6.5%	6.9%
Production, Transportation, Material Moving	11.9%	8.8%	7.7%	7.3%	9.9%
Percent Employed in Selected Industries					
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%
Manufacturing	12.5%	10.1%	8.4%	10.6%	15.0%
Percent Government Workers (Local, State, or Federal)	9.4%	9.2%	17.7%	6.3%	8.1%

Source: U.S. Census: 2000

Employment by Industry

The plurality (largest single group) of Rockledge's citizens work in the job category described as "management, professional, and related fields". However, a smaller proportion of Rockledge residents work in these fields (35.9%) than in the reference areas (38.1% to 51.1%). Sales and office occupations employ the second largest group of Rockledge's workers (32.7%). This is larger than all the reference areas, which have 26.3% to 29.7% of their residents employed in this category. Production and transportation also employs a higher proportion (11.9%) than the reference areas, which have only 7.3% to 9.9% employed in this category. In construction, extraction, and maintenance too, Rockledge has a higher proportion employed than in the reference areas. Rockledge has a smaller proportion employed in service occupations than in any of the reference areas (8.2% compared to the reference area range of 8.8% to 17.1%).

The national trend for some time has been for the services sector to expand while the manufacturing (production) sector has declined.

Economic Summary

Rockledge's median household income growth was strong in the 1990s. Whereas it had been significantly lower than that of nearby reference area Jenkintown's in 1990, it had surpassed it by 2000. Rockledge's employment by industry picture appears mixed. It has a lower percentage than the reference areas employed in services, which is a growth sector. It also has a relatively low percentage employed in higher paying management and professional jobs.



Chapter 3

Community Facilities

Introduction

Rockledge's community facilities include buildings, services, and parks. Their quality and management directly influence the Borough's perceived quality of life and image. This chapter will analyze the Borough's community facilities and discuss their status and any possible improvements.

Community Facilities and Services – Existing Conditions

Rockledge's community facilities and services include facilities located within the Borough itself, such as:

- Municipal Hall, including Borough administration and meeting rooms
- Police services
- Fire protection services
- Solid waste pickup
- Road maintenance, snow removal, and Borough garage
- Sewage facilities
- Water service
- Storm sewers
- Street lights
- Parks

Municipal Hall

The Borough Manager and administrative staff are housed in Municipal Hall, which is located in the basement of the former Rockledge Elementary School at Robbins Avenue and Huntingdon Pike. The newly-renovated Municipal offices are located in the basement, house the Borough staff and are the meeting places for Borough Council, the Planning Commission, Zoning Hearing Board, and other important Borough committees. The Manager and administrative staff's work involves the day-to-day operations of the Borough, including administration, budget, and personnel matters. The building also houses the daycare center. The building has three levels of usable space (two floors at or above-grade and a basement). The basement also has a gymnasium. The upper levels of the building are leased to Rockledge Community Services, Inc. by the Abington School District. This enables the Borough of Rockledge to have full use of the basement. Rockledge Community Services, Inc., in turn, sub-leases the ground and second floors to "Creative Beginnings Day Care", operated by Fox Chase Cancer Center for its employees' children.

Police Services

The Borough police department occupies a recently renovated building at 1 Park Avenue. Rockledge employs 5 full-time police officers (including the police chief), 5 part-time officers, and one administrative staffer. Although various factors are considered, a general guide is a community should have one officer per 1,000 population; this indicates Rockledge has a sufficient number of officers in its police department.

The Borough police department has three vehicles. The police department's radio accesses both the police frequency and the 800Mhz band. The Borough's police radio provides direct communication with Cheltenham Township Police Department and Montgomery County. Emergency calls from Abington and Cheltenham are responded to on a reciprocal basis by Rockledge's police through informal agreements among the respective police forces. Full-time police personnel have cell phones to facilitate communications.

Fire Protection Services

Rockledge Volunteer Fire Company No. 1 provides fire protection from its station that is centrally located at 505 Huntingdon Pike. The company provides firefighting and vehicle rescue (extrication) services. The company's membership is approximately 120, with 35-40 active personnel. The company has reciprocal agreements with neighboring townships for the area's fire companies to respond to fires in other municipalities when necessary. The Borough has a contract with Second Alarmers Association and Rescue Squad of Montgomery County, Inc. for Ambulance Service.

Solid Waste and Recycling

Residential garbage pickup service is provided to Borough residents, businesses, and organizations for a fee. Garbage is picked up once per week by a contractor and is dumped at the Conshohocken trash-to-steam plant. Rockledge is a member of the Waste System Authority of Montgomery County. Rockledge has a municipal curbside recycling contract. Newspapers, mail materials, aluminum, plastic, and glass are recycled through this program.

Road Maintenance, Snow Removal, and Borough Garage

Rockledge employs ten people on a part-time basis for both snow removal and road maintenance. The Borough has two trucks, both of which are equipped with snowplows. The trucks and equipment are stored in the Borough maintenance garage near South Sylvania Avenue, adjacent to Cegielski Park.

Rockledge has a cooperative agreement with Abington Township for road maintenance on Shady Lane and Fox Chase Road. Since Fox Chase Road and Huntingdon Pike are state roads, PENNDOT contracts with Abington Township for their maintenance.



Borough Garage, South Sylvania Avenue

Currently the Borough's maintenance staffing level and equipment are adequate. The primary maintenance operations goal for the future is maintenance and replacement, when necessary, of equipment.

Sewage Facilities

Rockledge is served by public sewers that were completed in 1960. Following the repayment of the Borough's outstanding debt for the sewer construction in 1970, the Borough's appointed municipal authority was deactivated.

Most sewage is conveyed using gravity, since it is less costly than pumping. Drainage in Rockledge flows into two watersheds. The Pennypack watershed drains the northern half of Rockledge (approximately), while the Tookany Creek watershed (Jenkintown sub-basin) drains the southern half. The sewer lines follow the topography of these watersheds. Therefore, sewers in the Pennypack watershed section of Rockledge drain to the north into Abington, before being conveyed to the Northeast Treatment Plant in the Port Richmond section of Philadelphia. Sewers in the Tookany Creek watershed section of Rockledge drain south into Abington and then Cheltenham, before being conveyed to the same treatment plant.

Intergovernmental cooperation agreements have been made to address the challenges of regional sewage systems. Rockledge cooperates with Abington Township, while Abington, in turn, cooperates with Cheltenham Township and Philadelphia for conveyance and treatment of sewage from southeastern Abington Township and Rockledge.

Water Service

Rockledge is serviced by public water mains provided by Aqua Pennsylvania, which are regulated by the Public Utilities Commission (PUC). This private company maintains the water mains in the Borough, while billing Borough residents according to the amount of water that they use. Water service in Rockledge should continue to be adequate in the future.

Storm Sewers

Storm sewers in Rockledge are adequate to handle capacity. Since the Borough is built-out, there is not likely to be an increase in storm water runoff resulting from development in the Borough itself. Most likely, continued maintenance of the storm water sewer system to ensure it continues operating efficiently will be the primary challenge for the Borough.

Street Lights

The Borough owns the street lights on Rockledge roads. Abington maintains the lights on Huntingdon Pike pursuant to its contract with PennDOT. The lights and their maintenance are paid for from the Borough's General Fund. The Rockledge Revitalization Plan proposes new pedestrian-scale street lights for Huntingdon Pike. This should enhance the attractiveness of Huntingdon Pike and make it easier for pedestrians to walk along Huntingdon Pike after dark.

Parks, Recreation, Open Space

The Borough owns six park or open space areas. One of these is a small accessway to the proposed Pennypack Trail. The larger areas include:

- Cegielkowski Park, 4.0 acres
- Jarrett Avenue Playground, 1.9 acres
- Mill Park, 27 Jarrett Avenue (the former Infanta Mill site), 0.8 acres
- Rockledge Park (201 Rockledge Avenue), 1.5 acres
- 29 Robbins Avenue, .5 acres

Cegielkowski Park and Jarrett Avenue Playground are active recreation sites, while Mill Park (27 Jarrett Avenue), Rockledge Park, and the Robbins Avenue property are passive recreation areas. The Borough has use of a small gym in

Figure 3.1
Borough Parks and Public Open Space Areas

Name	Acreage	Active/Passive	Amenities
Cegielkowski Park	4.0 Acres	Active	Baseball field, basketball court, playground, tennis court, benches, parking lot
Jarrett Avenue Playground	1.3 Acres	Active	Play equipment, picnic tables
Mill Park, 27 Jarrett Ave. (Former Infanta Mill Site)	0.8 Acres	Passive	—
Rockledge Park	1.5 Acres	Passive	Walking Trail
29 Robbins Avenue	0.5 Acres	Passive	—

Municipal Hall. These parks, open space, and recreation areas total 8.1 acres. Based on National Recreation Park Association Guidelines, Rockledge should have at least approximately 16 acres of parks/open space (the guidelines recommend 6.25 to 10.5 acres per 1,000 population). Thus, Rockledge has approximately 50% of the minimum recommended acreage for parks and open space. This deficit has been reduced in the last decade by the Borough's acquisition of the former Infanta Mill Site (Mill Park), Rockledge Park, and the Robbins Avenue property, which total 2.8 acres.

Parks outside the Borough boundary are also accessible to Rockledge residents. Lorimer Park (a county park) in Abington, lies just across Shady Lane from Rockledge. This park is 235 acres. Pennypack Valley Park in Philadelphia abuts Lorimer Park. Both parks lie northeast of Rockledge. Although these parks do not lie within Rockledge's boundaries they are amenities that Rockledge residents can use.

For more information on Rockledge Parks, Recreation, and Open Space, see Chapter 6.

Community Facilities Near Rockledge

Some community facilities serve Rockledge residents but are not located within the Borough. These include:

- Schools
- Hospitals
- Libraries

Schools

There are no schools in Rockledge, but Rockledge residents attend school in the Abington School District (which serves Abington Township and Rockledge Borough). Rockledge school students attend

McKinley Elementary School, Abington Junior High School, and Abington High School. Numerous private and parochial schools are also located nearby.

Library Facilities

There is no library in Rockledge. However, Rockledge residents have free access to Pennsylvania libraries, including the following located in the local area:

- Fox Chase Library, 501 Rhawn Street (less than a mile from the Borough)
- Elkins Park Library, 563 Church Road (2 miles from the Borough)
- Abington Free Library, 1030 York Road, (3 miles from the Borough) and
- Roslyn Branch Library, 2412 Avondale Avenue in Roslyn, (4 miles from the Borough)

Hospitals

There are no hospitals in Rockledge, but Jeanes Hospital and Fox Chase Cancer Center in Philadelphia and Holy Redeemer Hospital in Abington are located within close proximity to the Borough.

Community Facilities and Services Plan

The Borough plans to continue its efforts to fund and construct street lights that are more attractive and pedestrian-oriented than the existing street lights. Recent revitalization grants received by the Borough and the Rockledge-Fox Chase Business Association in 2003 and 2004 should make this more feasible.

In February 2006 the Borough adopted its new Open Space Plan. This plan analyzed the Borough's existing open space system and developed recommendations for improving and expanding the system using the Borough's allocation of County Open Space funds (\$649,806). Major recommendations of the Open Space Plan include:

- Improving and expanding Rockledge parks & open space areas. Among other things, improvements proposed include landscaping, lighting, the addition of paths, benches, and a playset; and drainage and recreational facility improvements. Expansion of open space areas involves acquisition or other protection of pocket parks, Borough Trail corridors, and passive open space.
- Establish a Borough Trail linking parks and open space within the Borough, which also establishes a connection to Abington and Philadelphia

- Establish a trail linkage to Lorimer Park. The Borough supports rapid development of the County's planned Pennypack Trail which would establish this connection. The Borough also will investigate short-term options of establishing a linkage to Lorimer Park.
- Protect and plant shade trees in the Borough
- Protect cemetery land in Rockledge from development
- Create open space endowment or gift giving campaign

Conclusion

Community facilities located in Rockledge and adjacent municipalities generally serve the Borough's residents well.

The Borough's utilities, community services and other infrastructure are adequate to serve residents' needs. The need for more pedestrian-oriented, attractive street lighting was recognized by the Borough. Recently acquired revitalization and transportation enhancement funding may help implement such recommendation.

The Borough's park system offers active and passive recreation opportunities on sites ranging from 0.5 to 4.0 acres. The parks and open space offer sports fields and courts, play equipment, and open grassy and wooded land. There is room to improve the system further by improving connections to the regional park and open space network, enhancing existing parks, and acquiring new parks or open space.



Chapter 4 Housing

Existing Conditions

Housing Tenure

The homeownership rate in Rockledge increased from 66.1 to 69.4 percent from 1990 to 2000. This reversed a trend of the past few decades: the rate had dropped from 70.8% to 66.1% from 1970 to 1990, before climbing back up to 69.4% in 2000. Rockledge's homeownership rate was significantly higher than the adjacent Fox Chase neighborhood (which has a homeownership rate of 56.4%). It was also higher than that of Jenkintown (64.9%), but lower than that of Abington (79.3%) and Montgomery County (73.5%). It is typical for suburban areas to have higher homeownership rates than urban areas (as seen in Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1
Tenure, Occupied Housing Units

Municipality	2000 % Owner Occupied	1990 % Owner Occupied	1990 to 2000 Change, % Owner-Occupied	1980 % Owner Occupied
Rockledge	69.4%	66.1%	3.3%	66.4%
Abington	79.3%	78.5%	0.8%	80.5%
Fox Chase	56.4%	56.3%	0.1%	54.5%
Jenkintown	64.9%	66.2%	-1.3%	50.2%
Montgomery County	73.5%	72.3%	1.2%	70.5%

Sources: U.S. Census: 1990, 2000

Housing Vacancy

Housing vacancy in Rockledge is low (1.6% of available units) and changed little since the last Census. The rate is lower than all of the reference areas but Jenkintown, which had a 1.3% vacancy rate. The other reference areas had higher, but still relatively low vacancy rates ranging from 1.8% (Abington) to 2.6 % (Fox Chase). The available vacancy rate for the nation as a whole was 3.4% in 2000. Generally, an available vacancy rate between 3% and 5% is considered desirable because it allows mobility for households moving to transfer jobs, move into a home of higher value, or other reasons.

Figure 4.2
Housing Vacancy

Municipality	2000	1990	Change, 1990 to 2000
	% Available Vacant		
Rockledge	1.6%	1.4%	0.2%
Abington	1.8%	1.8%	0.0%
Fox Chase	2.6%	3.1%	-0.4%
Jenkintown	1.3%	3.2%	-1.9%
Montgomery County	2.3%	2.7%	-0.4%

Source: U.S. Census: 1990, 2000

Housing Value

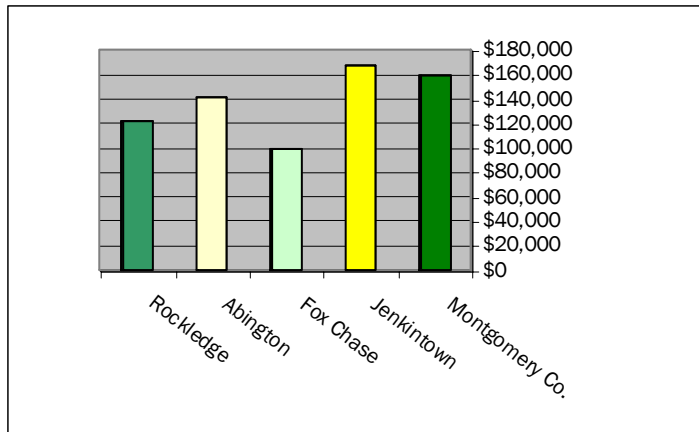
The median value of owner-occupied housing units in 2000 in Rockledge was \$122,300. This was \$23,000 higher than the median value for the adjacent Fox Chase neighborhood in Philadelphia, but lower than the other reference areas. The range between the lower and upper quartiles in Rockledge in 2000 was \$108,100 to \$151,100. The median value of homes in Rockledge (not adjusted for inflation) increased 10.3% from 1990 to 2000. The rates of increase in the reference areas ranged from 5.4% in Fox Chase to 18.5% in Jenkintown.

Figure 4.3
Median Housing Value

Owner-Occupied Units: 2000			
	Median Value	Lower Value Quartile	Upper Value Quartile
Rockledge	\$122,300	\$108,100	\$151,100
Abington	\$142,100	\$117,400	\$180,900
Fox Chase	\$99,300	\$88,100	\$123,700
Jenkintown	\$168,200	\$129,900	\$207,600
Montgomery Co.	\$160,700	\$122,900	\$225,000

Source: U.S. Census: 2000

Figure 4.3 (continued)
Median Housing Value (2000)



Source: U.S. Census: 2000

Figure 4.4
Change in Housing Value

1990 to 2000	% Change Median Value
Rockledge	10.3%
Abington	9.4%
Fox Chase	5.4%
Jenkintown	18.5%
Montgomery County	12.1%

The median sales price of homes in Rockledge in 2004 was \$198,000 (based on 35 home sales). This was comparable to the median sales price in Jenkintown (\$195,000), but lower than that of Abington (\$220,000) and the Montgomery County median (\$237,000). It should be noted that this data includes sales for multifamily units, where Rockledge had no sales in that category. Single-family detached homes in Rockledge sold for a median sales price of \$204,700, which was lower than Abington, Jenkintown, and Montgomery County's median (\$232,500, \$300,000, and \$294,000, respectively).

Rent

Gross rent is defined as contract rent plus utilities. Rockledge's gross rent in 2000 was \$568, which was higher than Fox Chase's gross rent of \$516 but lower than the other reference areas', which ranged from \$710 to \$757. The five areas examined showed rent increases (unadjusted for inflation) ranging from 18.3% to 27.7%. Rockledge's rate of increase fell in the lower part of this range but was higher than that of Fox Chase and Abington (although Abington's rent increased by a greater dollar figure).

Figure 4.5
Median Rents (Gross)

Municipality	2000	1990	% Increase, 1990 to 2000
Rockledge	\$568	\$470	20.9%
Abington	\$749	\$626	19.6%
Fox Chase	\$516	\$436	18.3%
Jenkintown	\$710	\$579	22.6%
Montgomery County	\$757	\$593	27.7%

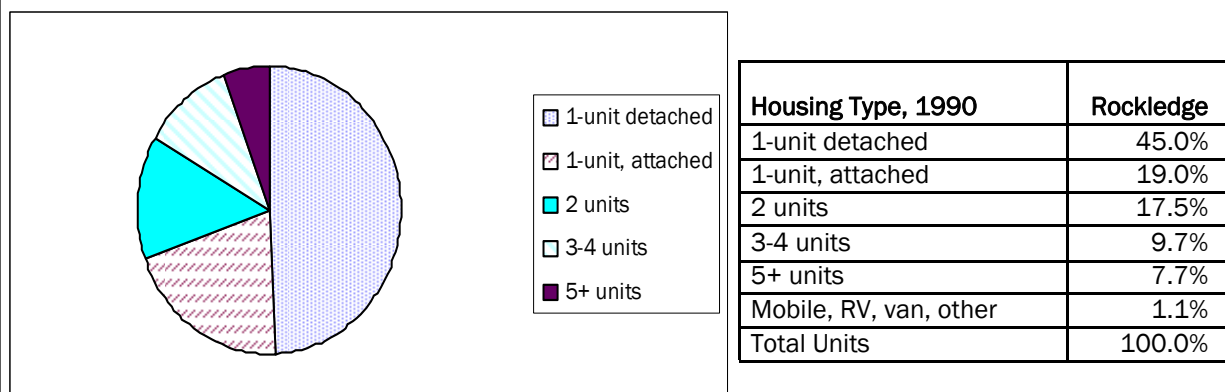
Source: U.S. Census: 1990, 2000

Housing Type

One-unit detached structures make up the largest single category of housing unit types in Rockledge when grouped in the categories in the table below. Approximately half of all units (49.1%) fall into this category. Two-to-four unit structures comprise the second-largest category of units (25.1%); this is the highest proportion of any municipality in Montgomery County. However, the two-to-four unit structures in Rockledge declined as a proportion of all housing units from 27.2% in 1990. Single-family attached units, (including twins) are third most plentiful, at 20.3 % of housing units. There is a very small proportion of units that are part of a structure with five or more units (5.5%). The following chart and table include a further breakdown of “two-to-four unit” dwellings into “two units” and “three-to-four units” for a more detailed analysis.

Since the 1990 Census there have been changes in the proportions of housing types in Rockledge. The proportion of single-family detached units has increased from 45% to 49.1%. The proportion of two-unit dwellings (including duplexes) has dropped from 17.5% to 14%, the proportion of single-family attached units (including twins) has increased from 19.0% to 20.3%, and the proportion of units in structures with 5 or more units has dropped from 7.7% to 5.5%.

Figure 4.6
Housing Type, Rockledge (2000)



Housing Type, 2000	Rockledge	Abington	Fox Chase	Jenkintown	Montgomery Co.
1-unit detached	49.1%	71.0%	17.9%	29.8%	56.0%
1-unit, attached	20.3%	7.9%	34.0%	19.9%	18.7%
2 units	14.0%	3.6%	18.4%	6.6%	3.6%
3-4 units	11.1%	2.7%	5.6%	6.6%	4.2%
5+ units	5.5%	14.7%	24.1%	36.7%	16.5%
Mobile, RV, van, other	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.4%	0.9%
Total Units	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	99.9%

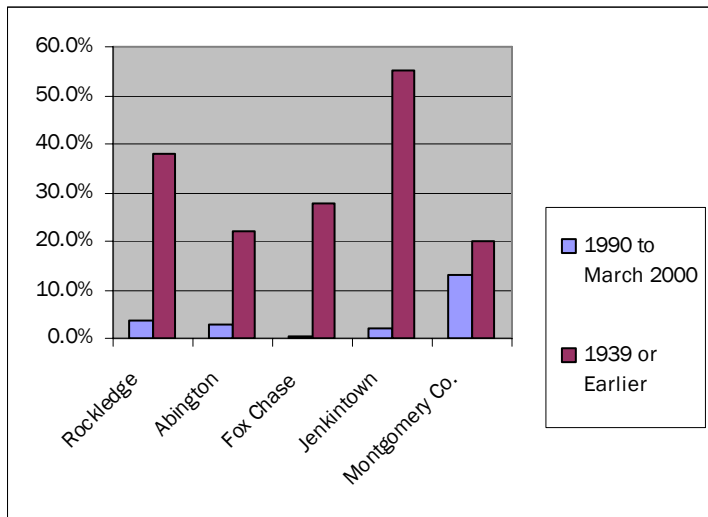
Source: U.S. Census: 1990 and 2000

Year Structure Built

Rockledge had a larger share of older dwellings than most of the reference areas. Nearly thirty-eight percent of the dwellings in Rockledge were built prior to 1940. This was exceeded by Jenkintown's proportion of older buildings (55%), but was greater than the 20% to 28% range of older housing in Montgomery County, Abington, and Fox Chase.

Figure 4.7
Year Structure Built

	1990 to March 2000	1939 or Earlier
Rockledge	3.5%	37.9%
Abington	2.8%	21.9%
Fox Chase	0.6%	27.6%
Jenkintown	2.2%	55.0%
Montgomery Co.	13.0%	20.2%



Source: U.S. Census: 2000

Housing Conditions Summary

Some positive housing trends occurred in the Borough during the time period 1990 to 2000. For example, the proportion of owner-occupied units increased by 3.3 percentiles.

From 1990 to 2000 the proportion of single-family detached units increased by 4.1 percentiles to 49.0 percent, while two-unit structures (including duplexes) decreased by 3.5 percentiles to 14.0 percent. These trends are positive for the Borough and its goal of increasing homeownership. Also positive is the vacancy rate at Borough residen-

tial rental properties, which was a very low 1.6 % in 2000, indicating a high demand for rental housing in the Borough.

The median home value in Rockledge was \$122,300 in 2000, which was higher than only Fox Chase's median home value among the reference areas. The reason for this may be partly that Rockledge's homes are smaller than many suburban parts of the reference areas. In contrast, Rockledge's median homes sales price for 2002 for single-family attached housing (including twins), was higher than all the reference areas. This could reflect the relatively high proportion of single-family attached units in Rockledge that are twins (which may have larger yards and living space than other forms of single-family attached housing).

Rent, like home value, was lower than all reference areas except Fox Chase. Thus, overall Rockledge has more affordable rental and for-sale units than the county reference areas. Considering the relatively small difference in rent between Rockledge and Fox Chase, for renters working outside Philadelphia Rockledge's rental units are likely more affordable than Fox Chase's when the differential tax rates are considered.

Rockledge's relatively high proportion of older housing may be viewed both positively and negatively. The Borough's housing might require more maintenance than in other municipalities, and some functional obsolescence may exist. However, older housing may also be indicative of more varied housing designs, sturdier construction, and housing with historic significance to the Borough.

Housing Issues, Objectives, and Policies



As required by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code in Section 301 (2.1), the Borough's comprehensive plan should include "a plan to meet the housing needs of present residents and of those individuals and families anticipated to reside in the municipality, which may include conservation of presently sound housing, rehabilitation of housing in declining neighborhoods and the accommodation of expected new housing in different dwelling types and at appropriate densities for households of all income levels."

Rockledge is a built-out borough consisting predominantly of single-family homes. The major housing goals of the Rockledge Comprehensive Plan therefore are to promote homeownership and neighborhood conservation. The plan also seeks to retain adequate housing type choices for current and future residents.

Homeownership

Homeownership is associated with greater neighborhood stability. A 2002 Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia Business Review article observed homeownership may encourage “greater maintenance and neighborhood conditions, better-raised children, and better civic behavior.” Some rental units are desirable, however, since a combination of owner-occupied and renter-occupied units provides a greater range of housing choices for potential residents.

Past Borough Homeownership Initiatives

The 1973 Rockledge Comprehensive Plan recommended the borough pass an amended zoning ordinance to place limits on the conversions of single-family and two-family structures to multi-family units. The Plan stated:

...conversions should be controlled in an amended borough zoning ordinance so that the existing single-family and two-family character of the borough's residential neighborhoods will be preserved. (p.IV-10)

The Plan also recommended that Borough Council adopt a policy limiting future conversions of single-family detached structures to no more than three apartment units (p.VIII-7).

By the 1990s concern had focused on the conversion of single-family detached units to two-family units. As a result, Ordinance 512, passed in 1995, repealed the authorization of the Zoning Hearing Board to grant special exceptions to convert single-family detached units to two-family residences.

Affordability of Borough Homes

The 1973 Comprehensive Plan recognized that the borough's affordable home prices could enhance its desirability as a residential community, especially for younger families (IV-13). This is still true today. As indicated by median value of owner-occupied units, Rockledge's homes are approximately \$20,000 less expensive than those in Abington Township and approximately \$46,000 less expensive than those in Jenkintown, although they are \$23,000 more expensive than homes in Fox Chase. However, people purchasing homes in Fox Chase need to consider additional costs associated with living in Philadelphia (e.g., a higher wage tax).

Programs Promoting Homeownership

The Borough should investigate the various county programs designed to expand homeownership. Montgomery County offers a variety of programs designed to expand homeownership. These programs assist first-time homebuyers, homebuyers with incomes insufficient to purchase a home, and homebuyers with physical disabilities that require special facilities.

The federal government also has a variety of programs to promote homeownership; these are administered at the state or county level. Following are homeownership programs which might benefit Rockledge:

Keystone Home Loan Program (Pennsylvania Housing Finance Association-PHFA)—provides residential mortgage loans to qualifying homebuyers who meet certain income and purchase price guidelines. Features below-market interest rates and origination fees. Loans are made through participating institutions across the Commonwealth and can be used to purchase both new or existing homes. Available in conjunction with conventional, FHA, VA, and RHS loan types.

Keystone Home Loan PLUS Program (PHFA)—Families with children or having persons with disabilities, with incomes no greater than 80 percent of the area median income, who are buying their first home are offered an even lower interest rate with no origination fee. Available with conventional, FHA, VA, and RHS loan types.

Closing Cost Assistance (PHFA)— Homebuyers using the Keystone Home Loan PLUS Program also may qualify for a deferred payment non-interest bearing closing cost assistance loan of up to \$2,000. Repayment is required only upon payoff of the first mortgage, sale, refinancing, transfer, or non-owner occupancy of the property.

Keystone Access Home Modification Program (PHFA)—Offers persons with disabilities, or who have a person with disabilities as a family member living in the household, no-interest accessibility modification loans of between \$1,000 and \$10,000 in conjunction with PHFA first mortgage financing. Repayment is not required as long as the borrower occupies the home.

Keystone Purchase-Improvement Program (PHFA)—Allows borrowers to make up to \$15,000 in home improvements in conjunction with the purchase of a home with an Agency first mortgage loan. This can include repairs, alterations, or modifications to improve the basic livability, energy efficiency, or safety of the property.

Employer-Assisted Housing Initiative-(PHFA)- Homebuyers working for an employer who offers an Employer Assisted Housing (EAH) benefit receive the following additional advantages through PHFA: (1) The lowest Keystone Home Loan PLUS Program rate, with a one percent plus \$300 fee, to any employee who meets the requirements of the Keystone Home Loan Program, (2) The “family” or disability requirement for the PLUS program is waived, allowing households with no children to partici-

The Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA) offers home purchase loans with low interest rates and fees. The Keystone Home Loan has the fewest eligibility requirements and the highest income and purchase price limits. Buyers who meet a few additional requirements may be eligible for a Keystone Home Loan PLUS, which offers the lowest interest rate available and the possibility of up to \$2,000 in additional assistance. Buyers under either program may be eligible for up to \$15,000 in down payment and closing cost assistance through the HOMEstead program, if they and the home they are buying meets certain conditions.

—Source: Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency

pate, (3) All EAH applicants may apply for up to \$2,000 for closing cost and/or down-payment assistance through our keystone PLUS Assistance Loan, K-PAL. This program is traditionally reserved for only PLUS applicants.

Federal Income Tax Mortgage Interest Deduction

Another possibility is for Rockledge to create a homeownership program in cooperation with a local community-development corporation. In Norristown, for example, the Genesis Housing Corporation's Norristown Neighborhood Project offers families the opportunity to purchase homes renovated by Genesis Housing Corporation for a reduced sales price. Two homes renovated and sold in 2000, for instance, underwent renovations that installed new kitchens, roofs, electrical systems and carpeting; and removed lead paint.

Housing Conversion Programs

One of the Borough's main priorities is to encourage the conversion of two- and three-unit dwellings to single-family homes. This would increase homeownership as well as alleviate the parking situation by reducing densities on Borough side streets. The following funding program could be used to facilitate this:



Multi-Family Residential Dwelling, Rockledge

Keystone Renovate & Repair Program (PHFA)—It may be used to convert multi-unit properties back into the kinds of single-family dwellings for which they were originally constructed. Qualifying households can borrow up to \$35,000 for as long as 20 years to make repairs and improve-

In Pottstown, a housing conversion program allocates up to \$15,000 in a forgivable loan for the removal of one unit from a two- or three-unit building, and up to an additional \$10,000 in a forgivable loan for the removal of two units from a three unit building for the conversion to a single-family home. The loan covers costs associated with repairs and conversion, such as the removal of extra kitchens, stairwells, and changes to room configurations.

ments to their homes. The program will bolster local community development efforts and will help prevent predatory lending practices. It will allow families to improve their homes' basic livability, make safety and accessibility modifications, and let them take care of municipal code violations, without refinancing their existing mortgage loans. PHFA will work in partnership with local public and private organizations, which handle the actual application process, to provide the funding to consumers.

The Borough should also consider creating a forgivable, interest-free loan program to encourage conversion of two- and three- unit dwellings to single-family homes. The Borough, County, or some of the larger businesses in the area could contribute funds to such a program. The loan could pay for conversion or repair costs associated with the conversion. The loan would be disbursed if certain conditions are met:

- Minimum property standards are attained.
- The contractor and scope of work are approved by Borough officials who verify the renovation meets code requirements.

Neighborhood Conservation

As shown earlier in this chapter, the housing stock in Rockledge is relatively old. As it has aged, housing maintenance issues have grown in importance. The table below shows that 38 percent of the Borough's housing was constructed prior to 1939, second only to Jenkintown among the reference areas.

The 1973 Comprehensive Plan cited neighborhood conservation as the top priority, saying the Land Use Plan's #1 goal was "Preservation, protection and stabilization of existing residential neighborhoods by discouraging incompatible land uses and maintaining housing quality through private rehabilitation efforts." The plan encouraged the borough to adopt a housing code and begin an enforcement program to maintain high quality of the housing stock. (p.IV-11).

The Rockledge Borough Zoning Ordinance of 1973 established such a housing code, limited residential use types by zoning district, applied dimensional standards (i.e., setbacks, minimum yard sizes, impervious surface limits) regulated parking, signs, and accessory structures, and required sewer and utilities to serve each unit.

Code Enforcement

Code enforcement is vital to maintaining housing quality in a community. The Borough should ensure ordinances regarding housing and property maintenance are strongly enforced and accurate and thorough records of violations are kept. Residential areas should be monitored to ensure existing uses are permitted and housing and properties are properly maintained. Facades, porches, and trees have created a large number of code enforcement problems in the Borough;

code enforcement of these areas should not be neglected.

Many code violations in the Borough involve automobiles or trucks in a state of disrepair. These neglected vehicles can have a negative visual effect on adjacent homes and the neighborhood, and reduce property values. Therefore, attention to code enforcement in residential areas should focus on these vehicles in addition to homes and properties.

In addition to inspecting properties when homes are resold as it does now, the Borough should inspect rental properties on a regular basis. This should occur whether a change in occupancy has occurred or not. Upper Dublin, for example, inspects most rental properties every two years. Pottstown has an apartment licensing program that includes inspections.



Rehabilitated Home, Rockledge

Housing Rehabilitation

Borough residents should be encouraged to rehabilitate their homes if they are deteriorated. This would clearly be the most desirable method of achieving home rehabilitation from the Borough's perspective, since the owner would bear the rehabilitation cost.

Montgomery County offers three housing rehabilitation programs and participates in a regional program. Many County municipalities have created their own rehabilitation programs. For example, Cheltenham Township applied to HUD for a home improvement program for its Lamont neighborhood. The Montgomery County Housing Authority provided funding through the Community Development Block Grant program.

If Rockledge Borough or a nonprofit organization (NPO) wants to create its own housing rehabilitation program (or the Borough and an NPO want to create a program together), the Montgomery County Housing Authority would work with them to facilitate that. But the program has to be sizable for HUD funds to be used. The Borough may choose to utilize a consultant for the application for funding process. The Montgomery County Housing Authority also provides technical assistance for the funding application process.

State and local housing rehabilitation programs of interest to the Borough might include:

Community Revitalization Program—(DCED) The Pennsylvania Community Revitalization Program distributes county funds to local municipalities for a wide range of projects, including housing rehabilitation.

Montgomery County Community Revitalization Program—The Montgomery County Community Revitalization Program provides funding for homeownership, home improvement, and rehabilitation programs.

Targeted Homeowner Rehabilitation Program (MCDHCD) - This program targets owner-occupied homes located within community revitalization areas, as designated by the County Community Revitalization Board. Extensive rehabilitation work is performed to building code standards, and lead reduction or abatement activities are also performed on pre-1978 properties where necessary. Exterior improvements of properties are also performed. Grants are available up to a maximum of \$25,000, and may be increased to cover additional repairs on an individual basis.

This program is being used in Pottstown's Washington Street corridor in affiliation with the nonprofit Genesis Housing Corporation. Residents need to be income qualified; funding is provided by HUD. Currently this program is only being utilized in Pottstown. However, if another municipality and nonprofit organization would work together to create their own Targeted Homeowner Rehabilitation Program it would be possible.



Deteriorated housing can lower property values and damage a community's image. Source: Cleveland State University urban.csuohio.edu



Recently-Refurbished Rockledge House

Emergency Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation Program (MCDHCD)– This program addresses emergency repairs necessary to safeguard against imminent danger to human life, health or safety. Emergency repairs include heating systems, deficiencies in roofs, floors, ceilings, stairs and/or framing, plumbing systems, electrical systems, exterior doors and windows, lateral connections to water and sanitary sewer extensions. Grants are available up to a maximum of \$25,000.

Keystone Renovate & Repair Program (PHFA)—Qualifying households can borrow up to \$35,000 for as long as 20 years to make repairs and improvements to their homes. The program will bolster local community development efforts and will help prevent predatory lending practices. It will allow families to improve their homes' basic livability, make safety and accessibility modifications, and let them take care of municipal code violations, without refinancing their existing mortgage loans. It may also be used to convert multi-unit properties back into the kinds of single-family dwellings for which they were originally constructed. PHFA will work in partnership with local public and private organizations, which handle the actual application process, to provide the funding to consumers.

Pennsylvania Accessible Housing Program-PAHP (DCED) - Provides grants to local entities to carry out home modification programs that will enable low-and moderate-income persons with physical disabilities of all ages to make their home more accessible.

In Cleveland Heights, the Home Repair Resource Center (HRRRC) was established as a nonprofit organization to maintain and strengthen the houses of Cleveland Heights. In addition to loans to homeowners up to \$10,000 offered through the HRRRC for repair projects, it offers “do-it-yourself” repair assistance and a Resource Library that provides repair guidelines and information on contractors that have done work for other Cleveland Heights homeowners. For more information, see: chuh.net/homerepairresourcecenter/

Pottstown Home Ownership Initiative Program—(example of a program Rockledge is interested in initiating) provides up to \$5,000 in a no-interest, forgivable loan to homebuyers for costs associated with repairs and upgrades.

Federal housing rehabilitation programs include:

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) - Rehabilitation of residential structures is an eligible activity funded by the CDBG Program. Rockledge's Block Group 1, northeast of Montgomery Avenue and northwest of Blake Avenue is eligible for CDBG funding. For information, contact Montgomery County's Department of Housing & Community Development (MCDHCD).

Housing Information Center

It would be useful for Rockledge to establish a Housing Information Center to promote homeownership, housing rehabilitation, and code enforcement. Homeownership and housing rehabilitation programs are subject to frequent change, and are offered by a myriad of governmental and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). The Housing Information Center could serve as a central point of contact for Borough homeowners and potential homeowners as they seek information on housing rehabilitation and homeownership programs. The Housing Information Center should set up a web site for maximum accessibility. The Housing Information Center should also remind residents of Code Enforcement issues and introduce new residents to the Borough's ordinances regarding housing and property in the interest of increasing compliance with the Code.

The Housing Information Center could be tied into a larger Borough Information Center that would serve as a central point of contact for information about a range of Borough programs and ordinances. The information center could work in conjunction with the Rockledge-Fox Chase Business Association to achieve greater efficiency and avoid duplication of services.

Fair Share

In Pennsylvania, municipalities are required to permit, through zoning, a wide variety of housing types. These types include single-family attached units, multifamily units, and mobile home parks. If a municipality does not have enough land set aside for all of these uses, it runs the risk of having its zoning successfully challenged in court for not meeting its "fair share." The courts apply two methodologies in determining whether a municipality or multimunicipal planning agency satisfies its fair share needs. The first looks at the amount of land zoned high-density uses and compares it to the total land area of the region. The amount of high-density zoning should fall some-

where between 2.7 percent and 3.5 percent of the total land area. The second measure (less commonly used) to determine fair share looks at the ratio of high-density to low-density housing to see if they are substantially unequal.

One of the most important fair share indicators in a municipality is the proportion of the housing stock that is multifamily units. In Rockledge, that proportion is 30.6%. Rockledge has a lower proportion of multifamily housing units than area boroughs Jenkintown (50.3%), Ambler (35.6%) and Hatboro (32.9%), but a higher proportion than Conshohocken (28.4%) and Bryn Athyn (20.2%).

Another of the important fair share indicators is the proportion of land in a municipality which is zoned for residential units, and that zoned for fair share residential types. In Rockledge the MDO-Medium Density Overlay district (which includes fair share residential uses) is proposed to be eliminated. However, even after excluding this district, 83 percent of Rockledge's land area lies in zoning districts permitting residential development (the SUR, SUR-A, ROR, and HB Districts), and fourteen percent of the land in Rockledge lies in zoning districts permitting fair share housing types (the ROR and HB Districts).

Conclusion

Rockledge's predominant land use is residential, and the residential uses primarily consist of single-family homes. Demographic and housing data show homeownership increased modestly from 1990 to 2000 to 69.4% of all housing units in the borough. This is a respectable proportion for an urban borough, but it can and should be increased. Greater homeownership tends to encourage better home maintenance, neighborhood stability, and civic pride. The Borough made a significant step towards increasing homeownership in 1995 by adopting an ordinance that limited the conversion of single-family detached housing into twin units. Other homeownership initiatives should be pursued. These include programs to encourage conversion of two- and three-unit structures into single-family units, programs to assist potential homebuyers with closing costs, and programs providing reduced interest rates on mortgages for first-time homebuyers.

Neighborhood conservation, particularly through effective code enforcement and increased housing rehabilitation efforts should also be encouraged. The Rockledge Borough Zoning Ordinance of 1993 made progress in this area by establishing a housing code, limiting residential use types by zoning district, applying dimensional standards, regulating features such as parking and accessory structures, and requiring sewer and utilities to serve each unit.

Code enforcement is a vital part of neighborhood conservation and maintaining housing quality in the borough. The Borough should en-

sure ordinances regarding housing and property maintenance are strongly enforced and thorough records of violations are kept. In Rockledge code violations often involve automobiles or trucks in a state of disrepair; these should be closely monitored for code violations as well since they can negatively impact the neighborhood and property values of homes nearby. The Borough should also be more assertive in its inspections of rental properties by conducting inspections at regular time intervals, whether a change in occupancy has occurred or not.

Neighborhood residents should be encouraged to rehabilitate their homes when they require repairs for structural or aesthetic reasons. The Borough should emphasize the benefits the homeowners themselves and their neighborhoods accrue by keeping their homes in a well-maintained condition, such as increased home values and a more desirable, attractive living environment. The Borough should seriously consider initiating a housing rehabilitation program. Such a program could utilize funding available from county, state, or federal sources for housing rehabilitation. Another option is for the borough to work in conjunction with a nonprofit housing organization on a local housing rehabilitation program; or a bank, hospital, or corporation with a strong local presence that is interested in community involvement.

Housing Programs Funding Sources

County/State Housing Funding Sources

Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED)

Southeast Regional Office

908 State Office Building

Broad and Spring Garden Streets

Philadelphia, PA 19130

Phone: (215) 560-2256

Fax: (215) 560-6722

Redevelopment Authority of Montgomery County (RAMC)

1880 Markley Street, Logan Square Shopping Center

Norristown, PA 19401

Phone: 610-278-3680

Montgomery County Department of Housing and Community Development (MCDHCD)

Human Services Center, 1430 DeKalb Street

Norristown, PA 19404

Phone: 610-278-3540

Montgomery County Housing Authority (MCHA)

1875 New Hope St.

Norristown, PA 19401

Phone: 610-275-5720

Fax: 610-275-0889

Federal Housing Funding Sources

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

Philadelphia Regional Office (Region III)

The Wanamaker Building

100 Penn Square, East

Philadelphia, PA 19107-3380

Phone: 215-656-0500

Fax: 215-656-3445



Huntingdon Pike as it Crosses into Rockledge (right) from Philadelphia (left)

Chapter 5 Transportation

Introduction

Transportation issues in Rockledge focus on Huntingdon Pike, the Borough's main thoroughfare and commercial spine. Other important transportation issues include the sidewalk network and potential trail linkages, and public transportation. The Borough's development pattern has led to a clear and useful separation between Huntingdon Pike and its commercial and mixed uses; and the local, residential-serving street network.

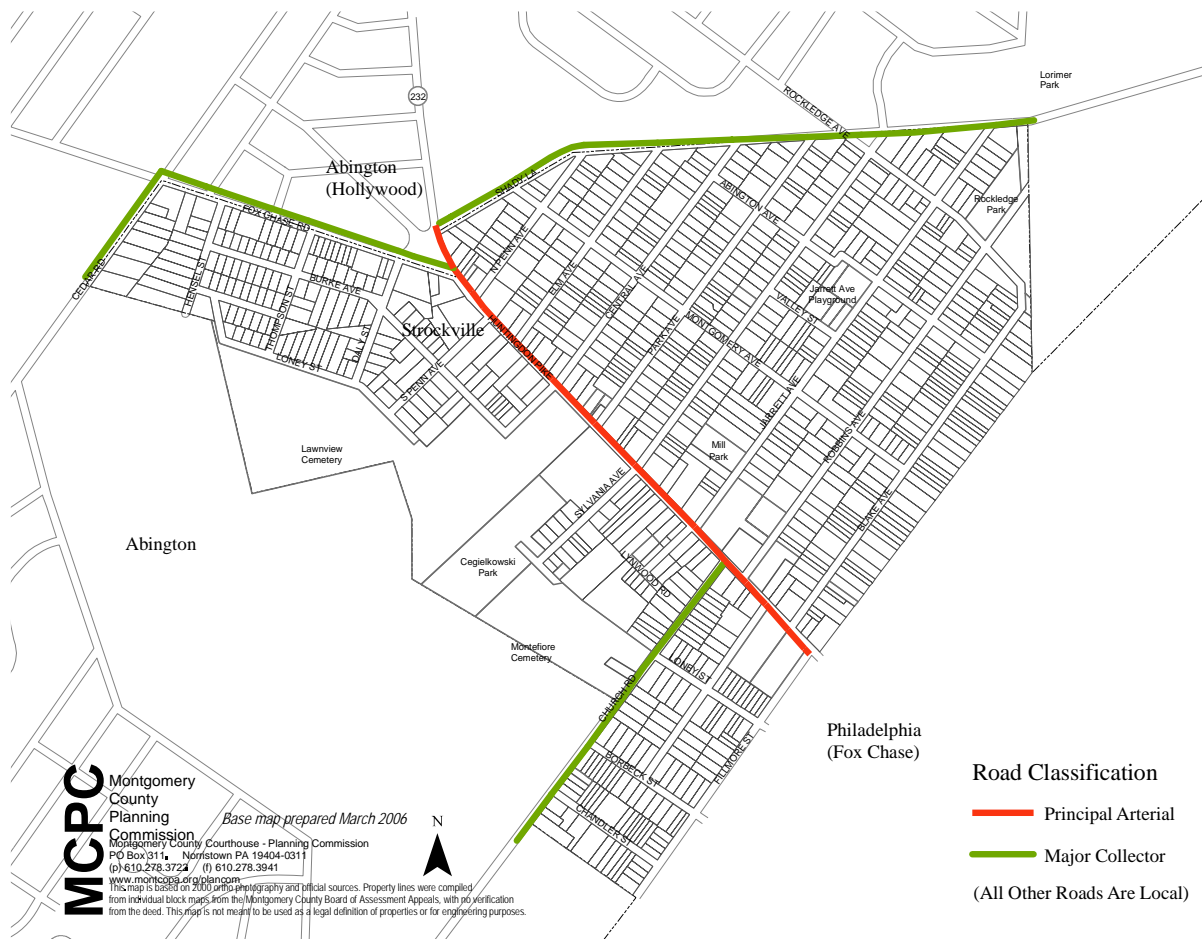
Some of the primary challenges confronting the transportation system in Rockledge include how to manage traffic congestion on Huntingdon Pike; and how to provide safe, appealing pedestrian sidewalks and crosswalks along and across the Pike. Another challenge is how to provide pedestrian or bike linkages to regional trails in or near the Borough. A third challenge is to maximize the utility of public transportation in and near the Borough.

Roadways

Highway Functional Classification

Figure 5.1 shows the highway classification system for Rockledge. Hun-

Figure 5.1
Road Classification



tingdon Pike/Oxford Avenue (PA 232) is the only principal arterial in the Borough; Church Road, Shady Lane, Fox Chase Road, and Cedar Road (all of which form part of the Rockledge boundary) are major collectors. The rest of the Borough's roads are classified as "local roads".

The primary function of **"arterial"** roads is to move traffic efficiently, with minimal level of access from lower level streets and driveways. These roads are divided into two classes: "principal arterials" and "secondary arterials". **"Principal arterials"** are major highways that are not expressways. These roads generally have two to four through-lanes, serve major centers, and carry a high proportion of cross-county traffic. They include the following roads in the region.

Huntingdon Pike, although a principal arterial, differs from the standard definition of principal arterials in Rockledge since it has frequent intersections and a high level of access. It is one of the narrower types of principal arterials in that it has only two through lanes. The relatively high number of intersections and relatively narrow width often make it difficult for

Figure 5.2
Highway Functional Classification and Design Guidelines

Functional Classification	Right-of-Way ¹	Number of Lanes ²	Travel Lane Width ³	Left Turn Width ³	Paved Shoulder Width ⁴	Parking Lane Width ⁵	Bicycle Lane Width ⁶	Border Area ⁷ Grass Strip	Sidewalk/ Paths ^{8,9}
ARTERIALS									
Principal	80'-100'								
Urban		2-5	12'-14'	11'-12'	8'-10'	8'-10'	5'-6'	5'	5'-8'
Rural		2	12'-14'	11'-12'	8'-10'	N/A	5'-6'	5'	5'-8'
COLLECTORS									
Urban	60'-80'	2-3	11'-14'	10'-12'	6'-10'	8'-10'	5'-6'	4'	5'-8'
Rural Major	60'-80'	2	11'-13'	10'-12'	6'-10'	GNA	5'	GNA	GNA
LOCAL ROADS									
Urban	50'	[Total Cartway Width 26 to 30 Feet]						4'	4'-8'
Rural		[Total Cartway Width 20 to 30 Feet]						GNA	GNA

NOTES:

- 1. Right-of-Way:** The right-of-way can be variable in order to accommodate highly urbanized and laterally restricted areas as well as unrestricted areas.
 - 2. Number of Lanes:** The number of lanes vary in order to accommodate the traffic volume, turning movements, and land capacity demand for selected level of service. This number does not include right-turn lanes where needed.
 - 3. Range of Lane Width:** Lane width is based upon minimum and desirable standards as well as other conditions such as being adjacent to a curb or the anticipation of heavy truck traffic. When feasible, a 14 foot lane should be located next to a curb.
 - 4. Shoulder:** Shoulder width is based upon minimum and desirable standards as well as other conditions such as highly urbanized and laterally restricted areas, or the anticipation of heavy truck traffic. Wide shoulders may function as bike lanes.
 - 5. Parking Lane:** Parking lane width is based upon minimum and desirable standards as well as other conditions such as lot size, intensity of development, or potential for use as a traffic lane where required by future demand. For principal arterials, parking lanes are only recommended in highly developed areas.
 - 6. Bicycle Lane:** A portion of a roadway that has been designated by striping, signing, or pavement markings for the preferential or exclusive use of bicyclists. Width specifications must be in accordance with FHWA/ AASHTO standards. Wide shoulders may function as bike lanes.
 - Border Area:** The presence of curbing, grass planter strips and sidewalks will depend upon adjacent land uses and site conditions.
 - 7. Sidewalks:** Sidewalk width is based upon minimum desirable standards for use along each particular roadway. Under certain circumstances, the location, feasibility, and other site specific conditions may require deviations from these guidelines.
 - Cartway Width:** For local roads, the total cartway width generally includes travel lanes, parking lanes, and/ or shoulders.
- Definitions:** GNA - Generally Not Applicable. N/A - Not Applicable.
Source: AASHTO, PENNDOT, and other manuals with specified design ranges.

Figure 5.3
Arterial - Principal
 (Two possible alternatives are illustrated, one on each side of the road.)

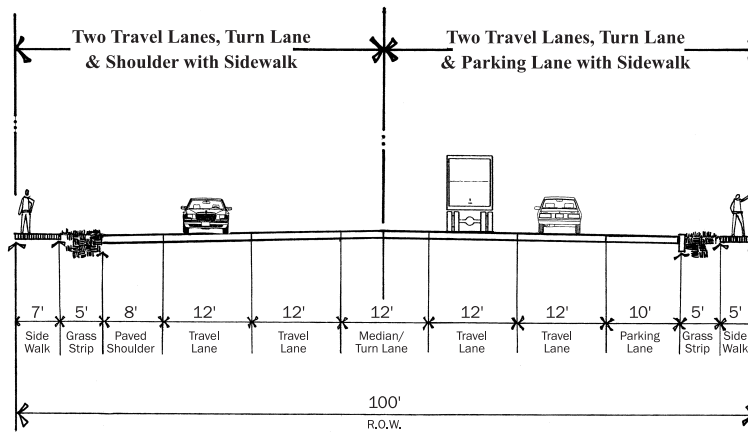
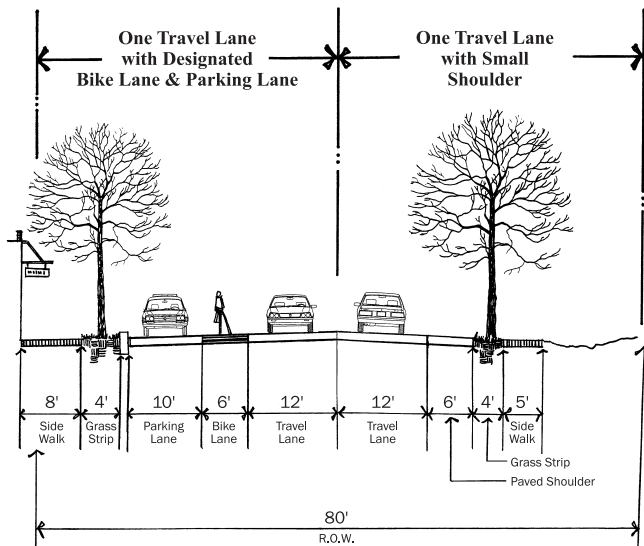


Figure 5.4
Collector - Urban (Two possible alternatives are illustrated, one on each side of the road.)



local traffic to turn onto or cross Huntingdon Pike.

The primary function of **major collectors** is to provide a mix of mobility (the ability to travel through an area quickly) and accessibility (road interconnectivity). They typically serve trips up to four miles.

Local roads' primary function is property access. These roads are generally less than a mile in length. Speeds on these roads are typically 20 to 30 miles per hour, and through traffic is discouraged.

Road Deletions

The deletions of unbuilt "paper street" sections of Loney Street and Robbins Avenue should occur. These street sections are shown on the tax map of the Borough; they include:

- The unbuilt section of Loney Street between Church Road and South Sylvania Avenue,
- The unbuilt section of Loney Street between South Sylvania Avenue and South Penn Avenue, and
- The unbuilt section of Robbins Avenue between Rockledge Avenue and Shady Lane (which would create an extremely hazardous and steeply graded intersection at a bridge abutment).

These streets are not needed. Furthermore, the portion of Loney Street between Church Road and South Sylvania Avenue is recommended for improvement as a pedestrian linkage in the Borough's recently-adopted Open Space Plan.

Road Ownership

Huntingdon Pike and Fox Chase Road are the only roads in the Borough owned by the state. PENNDOT is responsible for maintenance on Huntingdon Pike, while Abington Township undertakes maintenance on Fox Chase Road. It is important that the Borough commu-

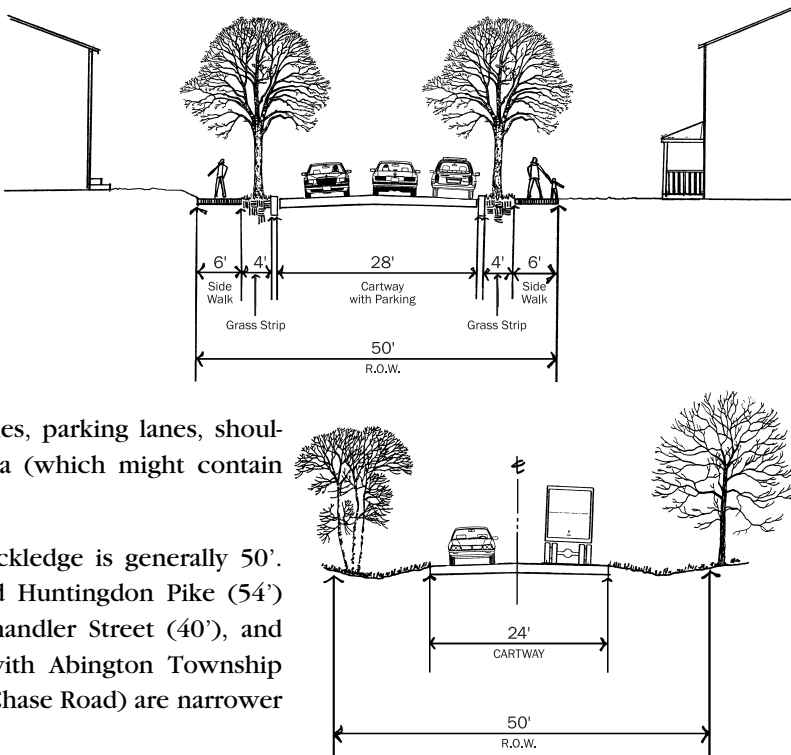
Figure 5.5
Local Roads

nicate with PENNDOT on main-tenance issues pertaining to these roads. It is also important for the Borough to maintain a high-level of communication with PENNDOT during the planning and implementation of the Huntingdon Pike Revitalization Project.

Right-of-Way Widths

Rights-of-way are the publicly-owned land containing all elements of a roadway: travel lanes, turn lanes, parking lanes, shoulders, sidewalks, and bordering area (which might contain sidewalks or grass areas).

The rights-of-way for streets in Rockledge is generally 50'. However, Fillmore Street (60') and Huntingdon Pike (54') have wider rights-of-way, while Chandler Street (40'), and three roads the Borough shares with Abington Township (Shady Lane, Cedar Road, and Fox Chase Road) are narrower than average at 33'.



Cartway Widths

There have been no major changes to Borough cartway widths since the last Comprehensive Plan was written in 1973 and cartway width changes are unlikely to occur to the built-out contextual environment of the Borough.

Traffic Volume

Traffic volumes in Rockledge were recorded by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission. Two points in the Borough were monitored in 1997, and again in 2002. Data show Huntingdon Pike is heavily traveled, recording

Figure 5.6
Traffic Volume

Road	From	To	Date	AADT	Count Direction
Huntingdon Pike	Fillmore Street Fillmore Street	Penn Avenue Sylvania Avenue	1997	21,752	Both
			2002	23,085	
Shady Lane	Abington Lane Abington Lane	Huntingdon Pike Huntingdon Pike	1997	3,371	Both
			2002	3,571	

Source: Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)

an average annual daily traffic (AADT) count of 21,752 vehicles in 1997. This figure increased to 23,085, a 6.1% increase. A similar rate of increase in traffic volume (5.9%) was recorded on Shady Lane over the same time period. By comparison, in 1972 the AADT on Huntingdon Pike between Central Avenue and Park Avenue was measured at 19,500. Thus, the trend indicates increasing traffic on Huntingdon Pike over time and worsening traffic congestion. In fact, Huntingdon Pike was listed as a “severely congested road segment” by the Montgomery County Planning Commission in its 1995 publication “Creating Transportation Choices”.

Road Improvement Projects

Revitalization of Huntingdon Pike

Rockledge and Fox Chase are currently collaborating on a project to improve and revitalize Route 232 (Huntingdon Pike in Rockledge, Oxford Avenue in Fox Chase). This project will include various improvements on and along Huntingdon Pike, including enhanced pedestrian linkages, traffic calming, and better parking management. One of the most significant proposed changes affecting the roadway of Huntingdon Pike itself is reducing the travel lanes by one foot, from 12’ to 11’. Turning radii of intersections are also recommended for reduction at targeted intersections; this would keep cars from speeding around corners and endangering pedestrians. For detailed information on planned and recommended Huntingdon Pike improvements, see **Chapter 7: Revitalization of Huntingdon Pike**.

The Montgomery County Planning Commissions (MCPC) maintains lists of proposed transportation projects that are used along with municipal suggestions to make recommendations for future highway improvements. Projects with top priority are passed onto DVRPC and PENNDOT. These agencies will include the projects in their official programs to the extent allowed by fiscal constraints. The Montgomery County Planning Commission prioritizes the list for Montgomery County into categories, from committed projects and first-priority to second-priority and third-priority.

The “TIP” (Transportation Improvement Program) is the regionally agreed upon list of priority projects, as required by federal law (ISTEA and TEA-21). The TIP document must list all projects that intend to use federal funds, along with non-federally funded projects that are regionally significant. These include projects that are in the TIP for a specified phase (preliminary design, final design, right-of-way acquisition, or construction) or have funding committed for that phase through some other source, such as private development. By definition, these projects are ranked high as they are already funded for at least one phase of the project development process. These projects are known as “committed projects”.

Montgomery County prioritizes projects not currently designated “committed projects” on the TIP but which are recommended priorities as

First-Priority Projects (the group from which the next TIP projects would be nominated), Second-Priority Projects, and Third-Priority Projects.

Currently there are no committed or recommended (federally-funded or regionally significant) transportation projects in Rockledge. The closest project to the Borough in Montgomery County is the recently-completed project for restoration and safety improvements on PA 73 (Church Road) from Washington Lane to Willow Grove Avenue, which had been designated a “committed project”. There is a second-priority recommended intersection improvement at Ashbourne Road and Central Avenue, and a third-priority recommended intersection improvement at Central Avenue and Laurel Avenue.

Another potential source for studying and making improvements to Huntingdon Pike is via a DVRPC highway corridor study. DVRPC studies, makes recommendations, and offers funding for congestion management of selected congested transportation corridors in the region. Montgomery County selected Huntingdon Pike as one of two corridors in the county it nominated for DVRPC to consider studying for congestion management.

Parking

Parking is a problem in Rockledge. Along Huntingdon Pike, this results from some individual private parking lots not having enough spaces during parts of the day when they experience peak demand. The evening rush hour is a particularly difficult time in which to park along the Huntingdon Pike corridor. Some of the perceived lack of parking may result from a lack of awareness of alternative parking locations. Some residential sections of the Borough also experience a lack of parking. At some point in the future the Borough may choose to undertake a parking survey to better assess the exact parking needs of Borough residents, employees, merchants, and shoppers.

Parking Lots and Shared Parking

As recommended in the Rockledge Revitalization Report and the Revitalization of Huntingdon Pike Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan, shared parking can increase the efficiency of Rockledge’s existing parking supply. Some businesses’ parking lots are larger than they need, and their parking can be pooled with other businesses whose lots are not large enough. Other businesses’ lots are utilized well during one part of the day but not during others. Businesses that have different peak demand hours for parking (such as an insurance office and a restaurant), could require fewer total parking spaces if they demonstrated how they shared their parking lots.

If businesses agree to allow adjacent or nearby businesses’ to utilize their lots for parking for all or part of the day, the overall Borough parking sup-

ply would be better utilized and reduce the need for constructing new lots. Shared parking requires that an operational agreement (“shared parking agreement”) be established between or among businesses. This may or may not involve monetary transactions.

Where shared parking is implemented, it is important that directional and informational signage be installed to clearly explain the parking system and guide drivers to available spaces. New curb cuts, pedestrian linkages, and parking space restriping may need to be undertaken in some cases where lots are shared. For maximum flexibility it is recommended that businesses be allowed to share parking even if they do not occupy adjacent parcels.

Parking lots should not appear to dominate Huntingdon Pike. Curb cuts should be minimized, landscaping should screen parking lots from the Pike, and parking lots should be located in back of buildings where feasible to improve the pedestrian-orientation of Huntingdon Pike.

[see Revitalization of Huntingdon Pike Chapter, Section on parking for additional information on shared parking]

Public Parking

Even with a shared parking system the Borough should consider improving its public parking facilities to better serve the central commercial district on Huntingdon Pike. In particular, the municipal parking lot at the intersection of Loney Street and South Sylvania Avenue is



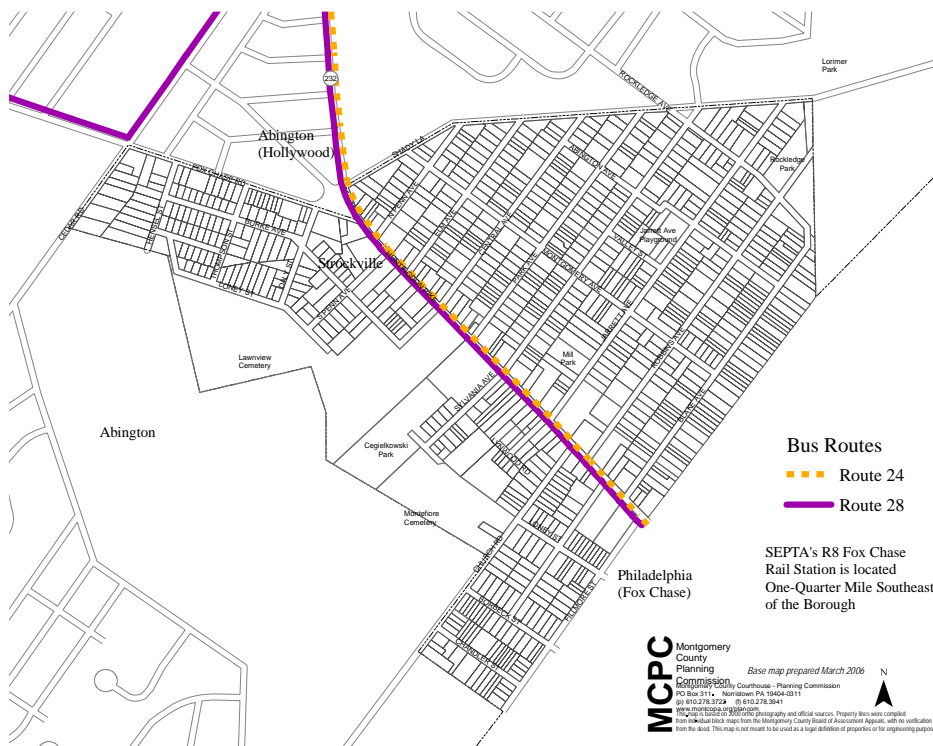
The Municipal Parking Lot in Rockledge is Often Underutilized

underutilized most of the time. It currently serves the adjacent park, but could more efficiently be used by serving other municipal uses as well. Wayfinding signage that directs drivers to the lot and pedestrians to Huntingdon Pike, along with well-maintained sidewalks, handicapped curb ramps, and the proposed establishment of a formal trail linking the parking lot and Church Road (see the Rockledge Borough Open Space Plan, 2005) would help make this lot accessible to more parts of the Borough and tie it more closely to Huntingdon Pike. The Future Land Use Chapter contains more detailed recommendations for design along Huntingdon Pike.

Public Transportation

Rockledge is served by two modes of public transportation: bus and train. Although the automobile is the primary method of transportation in Rockledge, there is a need for increased exploration of alternative transportation options. Regional factors that contribute to the need for transportation alternatives in-

Figure 5.7
Public Transit



clude increased traffic congestion, the increasing popularity of walkable, transit-oriented developments, and an aging population that includes those who cannot or do not wish to drive. Huntingdon Pike, Rockledge's main road, was listed as a "severely congested road segment" by the Montgomery County Planning Commission in its 1995 publication "Creating Transportation Choices". In

addition, those who are handicapped or are too young to drive need to have transportation alternatives.

Rail

SEPTA's R8 Regional Rail Fox Chase Rail station is a public transportation amenity for Rockledge. Residents of Rockledge may access the station by walking, SEPTA bus, or by using the park-and-ride. The R8 Fox Chase station is only a 25-minute ride from downtown Philadelphia. The Borough should use this as a marketing tool for potential new residents. Professionals working in Philadelphia for example, may be looking for an attractive residential neighborhood that offers an option of driving or riding the train to work in Center City Philadelphia; these same people may be seeking a residence outside of Philadelphia, perhaps because of the city's high taxes.



Bus Stop on Huntingdon Pike



SEPTA's Route 28 bus passing through Rockledge

There are a variety of ways in which the Fox Chase rail station (serving Rockledge) could be improved. The station is not attractive, lacks adequate access, and is not well served by wayfinding signage. However, since the station lies in Philadelphia's Fox Chase neighborhood, revitalization of the station will require significant action by SEPTA and the City of Philadelphia. The Fox Chase neighborhood has begun addressing challenges and opportunities the rail station presents by including plans for the station in a new Fox Chase revitalization plan.

Bus

Rockledge is served by SEPTA bus (24, 28) and the Abington Link bus. The buses provides direct service to destinations including:

Philadelphia

- Regional Rail Stations (Fox Chase, Ryers, Cheltenham)
- Fox Chase Cancer Center and Jeanes Hospital
- Orleans Technical Institute, Rhawnhurst
- Fern Rock Transportation Center (Broad Street Line, R1, R2, R3, R5)
- Frankford Transportation Center (Market-Frankford Line)
- Nazareth Hospital
- Pennypack Creek and Trail
- Roosevelt Boulevard (U.S. 1)

Abington

- Regional Rail Stations (Elkins Park, Melrose Park)
- Huntingdon Valley Shopping Center
- Holy Redeemer Hospital
- Manor Junior College
- St. Basil's Academy
- Willow Grove Mall (via Abington Loop Bus)
- Cheltenham
- Cheltenham Avenue
- Lower Moreland
- Regional Rail Station (Bethayres)
- Southampton, Bucks County
- County Line Industrial Park

The Borough should make taking the bus as attractive as possible for residents, employees, shoppers, and visitors. It can facilitate this by considering signs that clearly identify bus stops and bus routes, and by placing benches and waste receptacles at bus stops where space permits. Since most of the stops are along Huntingdon Pike, any benches, waste receptacles, etc. are very visible and should be aesthetically appealing (currently there is a bench at the bus stop at Huntingdon Pike and Park Avenue). Selection of such amenities should be coordinated with planning for Huntingdon Pike's revitalization.



Pedestrian and Bicycling Linkages

Pedestrian Linkages

Sidewalks should be maintained and important missing links in the sidewalk network should be filled in. For example, sidewalks that dead-end near Shady Lane should be connected to the street. Handicapped-accessible ramps should be installed on corners where they do not already exist. Crosswalks should be installed at intersections where there is a potential for pedestrian-vehicular conflicts.

On Huntingdon Pike, a comprehensive set of pedestrian improvements should be made, in conjunction with Huntingdon Pike's Revitalization. Measures to increase pedestrian safety and make the Pike's sidewalks more attractive and efficient for pedestrians should be completed. These measures should include:

- Widening sidewalks by one foot
- Separating sidewalks from the road with an adequate-width grass strip or bollards
- Adding or enhancing crosswalks by making them more visible
- Providing additional protection at busy intersections by constructing curb extensions, ("bulb-outs"), pedestrian refuges (median islands), and/or push-button activated walk signals
- Planting shade trees
- Providing pedestrian amenities such as benches, street lamps, and waste receptacles [see Revitalization of Huntingdon Pike Chapter for further information].

Paths and Greenway Linkages

There are opportunities to construct or improve paths or trails within or along the Borough's boundary. The Borough has established a goal of using safety, directional, and trail identification signage; and enhanced crosswalks to better link the Borough's parks to one another, as well as to points outside the Borough in Abington and Philadelphia's Fox Chase neighborhood. One path that is used frequently as a cut-through is the path that connects the intersection of Loney Street and Church Road with Loney Street near South Sylvania Avenue and Cegielkowski Park. Improving this path would make it easier to use and provide access from the southern part of the Borough to Cegielkowski Park and the Borough's parking lot in that area. For this reason the Borough has established a goal in the 2005 Open Space Plan of acquiring the land and establishing an improved trail, along with lighting, benches, signage, landscaping, and bollards in this area.

An opportunity also exists for a pedestrian linkage to Lorimer County Park, and a linkage to a future rails-to-trails greenway along the Borough's northeastern boundary with Abington Township. There are plans to improve the abandoned railroad at this location and make it part of the Pennypack Trail.

Bicycling

In order to meet the goals of the County Bike Plan and make Huntingdon Pike accessible to a range of modes, bicycle use should be accommodated. The Revitalization Plan for Huntingdon Pike proposes street parking, and other measures intended to calm traffic such as wider sidewalks and the construction of pedestrian bulb-outs and possibly median refuges. It recommends reducing the travel lanes of Huntingdon Pike from 12 feet to 11 feet to accommodate these changes. Unfortunately, this means there will not be adequate room for separate bike lanes. However, bike use should still be encouraged for experienced bicyclists. Signs reminding automobiles to share the road with bicyclists should be installed to promote biker safety. The Revitalization Committee also proposed adding bike racks to Huntingdon Pike. This will encourage people traveling to Huntingdon Pike destinations to bike, and may also encourage bikers passing through Rockledge to stop at the Borough's businesses and restaurants. Installation of bike racks should be coordinated with the revitalization of Huntingdon Pike; bike racks should be as attractive as possible since they will be very visible on the Pike.

Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the road, parking, public, and pedestrian or trail transportation systems serving the Borough. The largest issue facing the Borough's road system is increasing traffic congestion and revitalization of Huntingdon Pike. The revitalization project, being undertaken jointly

with Philadelphia's Fox Chase neighborhood, will enhance the streetscape along PA 232, making the Borough's main street more attractive and safer. Parking in the Borough could also be organized more efficiently, particularly with the help of signage, shared parking, and well-maintained pedestrian links to that parking.

The Borough's pedestrian transportation system should be made safer and more attractive. The improvement of sidewalks along Huntingdon Pike is a major part of this initiative. Paths and trails linking parks and open space areas and connecting to other trails should also be established, consistent with recommendations in the Borough's Open Space Plan.



Chapter 6

Parks, Open Space, and Historic Resources

Introduction

The Borough has several open space areas (including parks) and historic resources. These resources provide active and passive recreation opportunities, protect natural scenery, enhance Borough scenery, and strengthen the Borough's identity.

Existing Conditions

Parks and Open Space

The Borough owns five significant park or open space areas totaling 7.5 acres:

- Cegielkowski Park, 4.0 Acres
- Jarrett Avenue Playground, 1.3 Acres
- Mill Park on Jarrett Avenue (the former Infanta Mill site), 0.8 Acres
- Rockledge Park (201 Rockledge Avenue), 1.5 Acres
- 29 Robbins Avenue, .5 Acres

Cegielkowski Park and the Jarrett Avenue Playground are active recreation sites, while Mill Park (27 Jarrett Avenue), Rockledge Park, and the Robbins

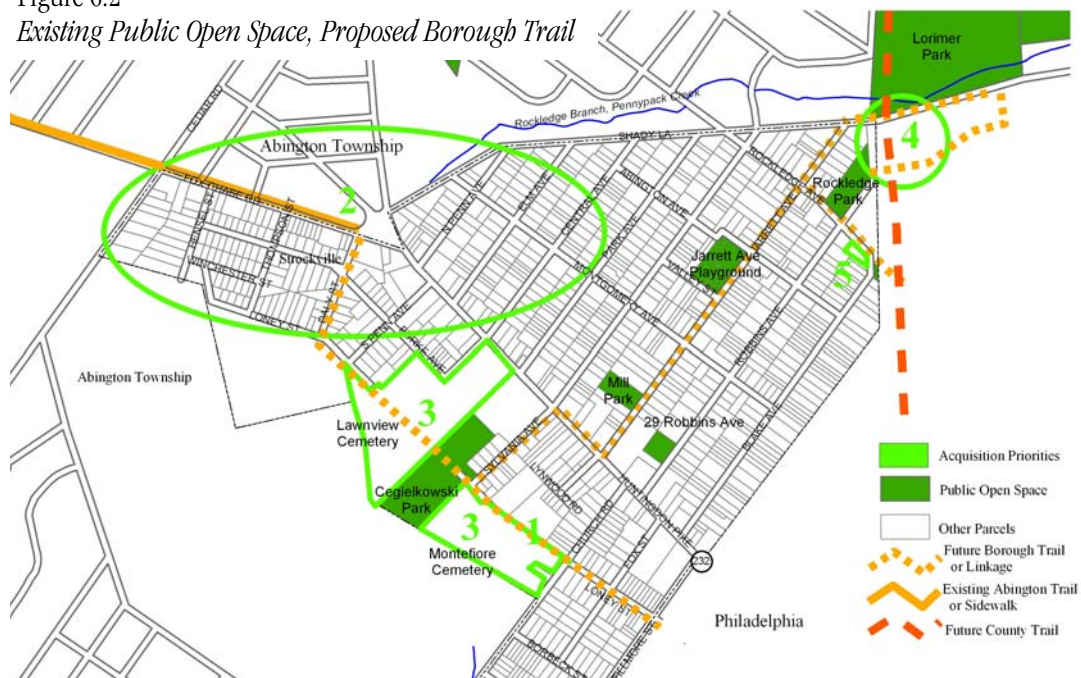
Figure 6.1
Existing Parks and Open Space

Name	Acreage	Active/ Passive	Amenities
Cegielkowski Park	4.0 Acres	Active	Baseball field, basketball court, playground, tennis court, benches, parking lot
Jarrett Avenue Playground	1.3 Acres	Active	Play equipment, picnic tables
Mill Park (27 Jarrett Avenue)	0.8 Acres	Passive	Currently in natural state. Amenities have been proposed in the Open Space Plan
Rockledge Park	1.5 Acres	Passive	Currently in natural state. Amenities have been proposed in the Open Space Plan
29 Robbins Avenue	.5 Acres	Passive	Currently in natural state.
Gym at Municipal Hall	--	Active	Gymnasium

Avenue property are passive recreation areas. Based on National Recreation Park Association Guidelines, Rockledge should have at least approximately 16 acres of parks/open space (the guidelines recommend 6.25 to 10.5 acres per 1,000 population). Thus, Rockledge has approximately 50% of the minimum recommended acreage for parks and open space. This deficit has been reduced in the last decade by the Borough's acquisition of the former Infanta Mill Site, Rockledge Park, and 29 Robbins Avenue.

Parks outside the Borough boundary are also accessible to Rockledge residents. Lorimer Park (a county park) in Abington, lies just across Shady Lane from Rockledge. This park is 235 acres. Pennypack Valley Park in

Figure 6.2
Existing Public Open Space, Proposed Borough Trail





Rockledge Park is proposed to be improved with a walking path, landscaping, lighting, benches, and other amenities suitable for passive recreation

Philadelphia abuts Lorimer Park. Both parks lie northeast of Rockledge. Although these parks do not lie within Rockledge's boundaries they are amenities that Rockledge's residents can use.

Historic Resources

The Borough has several significant historic resources. These include the structures or sites listed in Figure 6.3.

Open Space and Historic Resources Plan

In 2006 the Borough adopted its new Open Space Plan. The plan analyzed the Borough's existing open space, parks, and historic resources, and developed recommendations for improving and expanding the system using the Borough's allocation of County Open Space funds (\$649,806). Major recommendations of the Open Space Plan include:

Open Space Recommendations:

Improve and expand Rockledge parks & open space areas. Among other things, improvements proposed include landscaping, lighting, the addition of paths, benches, and a playset; and drainage and recreational facility improvements. Expansion of open space areas involves acquisition or other protection of pocket parks, Borough Trail corridors, and passive open space.

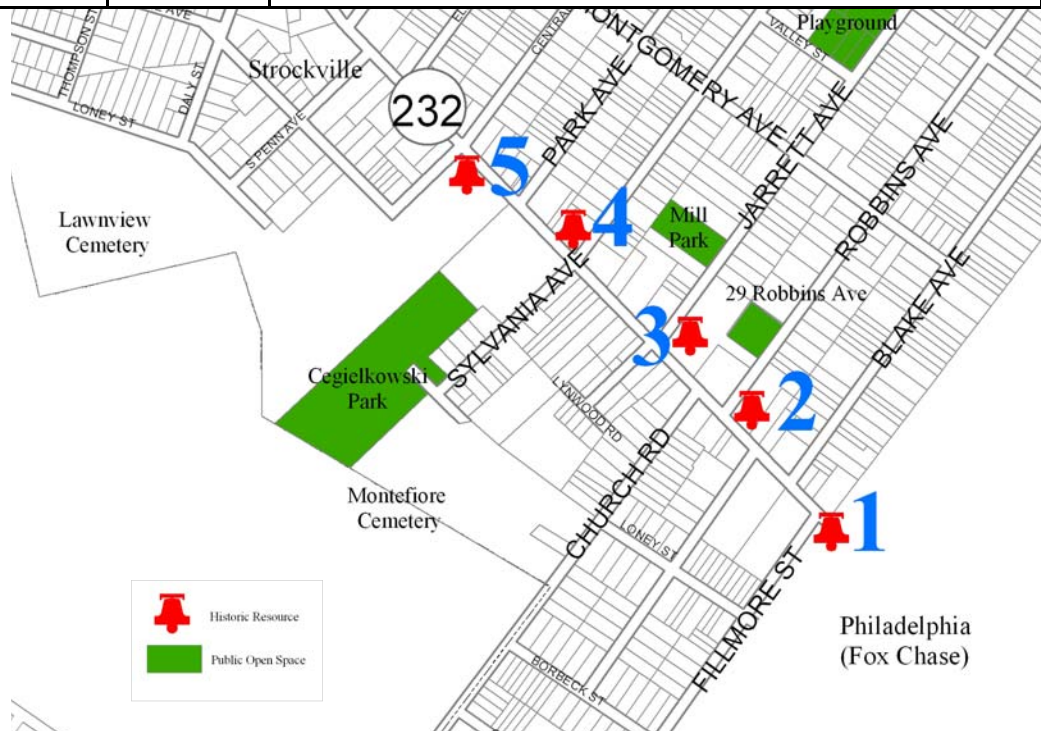
More specifically, Rockledge's plans to pursue the following open space goals:

- Establish a Borough Trail [see Figure 6.3] linking parks and open space within

Figure 6.3
Historic Resources

Address/Site	Number on Map	Construction Date	Historical Significance
Huntingdon Pike (boundary with Philadelphia)/ Gateway Monuments	1	c.1921	Rockledge Gateway—This location contains two stone war memorial monuments marking the gateway to Rockledge. The monuments lie on the Philadelphia side of the boundary and are under the jurisdiction of the Fairmount Park Commission.
121 Huntingdon Pike/former Rockledge Elementary School	2	1903-1917	The original Rockledge Elementary School building was erected at the northeast corner of Huntingdon Pike and Robbins Avenue in 1889. The building had a wood frame structure, and was destroyed by fire in 1902. In 1903, a new stone school opened on the same site, and a four-room expansion was completed in 1917; the school closed in 1977.
205 Huntingdon Pike/Church of the Holy Nativity	3	1893	This church was constructed in 1893-1898, having been funded by the Ryers family. It was modeled after St. Neott's Church in England and the architects were the renowned firm of Milligan & Webber of Philadelphia. It was built by the respected Fox Chase builder, Joseph Ashly. The first building on the site was constructed in 1893 for the then-Mission Parish of the Holy Nativity.
501 Huntingdon Pike/First Firehouse	4	1910	Was the first firehouse constructed for that purpose in the borough. The current firehouse, at 505 Huntingdon Pike, was constructed in 1953. Rockledge's Fire Company No. 1 was organized in 1903.
400 block of Huntingdon Pike (at Lawnview Cemetery)/ Former Site of Toll House	5	Unknown	The Fox Chase and Rockledge Turnpike Company operated the Rockledge Tollhouse near the current entrance to Lawnview Cemetery until the 1920s. At that time the state took over maintenance of the road and the Tollhouse was moved to 208 Central Avenue in 1935. [Source: "Images of America: Abington, Jenkintown, and Rockledge", Old York Road Historical Society, 2000]

Figure 6.4
Historic Resources





Rockledge purchased Mill Park during the first Montgomery County Open Space program. The Borough's recently adopted open space plan recommends it be improved with landscaping, a walking path, lighting, benches, and other amenities suitable for passive recreation.

the Borough, and also establishing a connection to Abington and Philadelphia.

- Establish a trail linkage to Lorimer Park. The Borough supports rapid development of the County's planned Pennypack Trail which would establish this connection. The Borough also will investigate short-term options of establishing a linkage to Lorimer Park.
- Acquire pocket parks in underserved portions of the Borough, and acquire vacant portion of the parcel bounded by Rockledge, Robbins, and Blake Avenues.
- Improve existing parks.
- Enhance Borough gateways.
- Protect and plant shade trees in the Borough.
- Protect cemetery land in Rockledge from development.
- Create open space endowment or gift giving campaign.
- Link selected historic sites together via Borough Trail, and erect historic marker near site of former Huntingdon Pike tollbooth (tollbooth itself was located on property now part of Lawnview Cemetery).

Conclusion

The Borough's open space system offers active and passive recreation opportunities on sites ranging from 0.5 to 4.0 acres. These sites include parks and open

Figure 6.5
Acquisition Priorities

Priority	Acquisition
1	Loney Street Acquisition (Church St to Sylvania Ave.)
2	Pocket Parks (Underserved Portions of Borough)
3	Cemeteries– Protection of this land will include some or all of the following options: Strockville to Cegielkowski Park Access Easement, conservation easement for cemetery land in Borough, or acquisition of cemetery land in Borough)
4	Access to Lorimer Park
5	Vacant Portion of the Parcel bounded by Blake, Rockledge and Robbins Avenues



space offering sports fields and courts, play equipment, and open grassy and wooded land. There is room to improve the system further by enhancing existing parks, improving connections among Borough parks and connections to the regional park and open space network, acquiring or protecting additional open space, and creating an endowment fund to encourage donations of land or funding for open space or recreation. Additional environmental improvements could be made by planting trees at parks and gaps in the street shade tree network. More people could recognize historic resources in the Borough by linking selected sites to the Borough Trail, and by erecting an historic marker near the site of the former Huntingdon Turnpike toll booth. All of these actions are part of the Borough's Open Space Plan.

(One of the proposed visions for Huntingdon Pike's revitalization in Rockledge). Graphic Credit: Kise Straw Kolodner



Chapter 7 Revitalization of Huntingdon Pike

Introduction



Huntingdon Pike in Rockledge. The road stretches from Abington in the northwest to Fox Chase, Philadelphia in the southeast.

Rockledge's main street and commercial spine is Huntingdon Pike (State Route 232). The health and appearance of Huntingdon Pike are critical elements affecting the image of the entire Borough. The Pike's businesses are varied, containing a mix of local and national employers. Recently the Borough's Revitalization Task Force evaluated conditions on the Pike and formulated goals and strategies to address issues and challenges presented. The Task Force described these goals and strategies in a publication produced by Kise Straw & Kolodner



Attractive awnings and signage are an important component of revitalization planning for Huntingdon Pike

entitled: “A New Vision for Huntingdon Pike – Rockledge Revitalization Plan” (2002). The Task Force’s Recommendations are incorporated into this chapter.

Streetscape Aesthetics

Improving a streetscape’s appearance can have significant positive effects on the image, identity, and vitality of a commercial corridor. It can also encourage existing businesses to reinvest in their properties, attract new businesses, increase pedestrian traffic, and encourage passing motorists to stop and patronize local businesses.

Commercial Façades

The appearance of commercial facades on Huntingdon Pike can greatly affect Rockledge’s image. Huntingdon Pike is heavily traveled, is the Borough’s main street, and is where nearly all of the Borough’s commercial uses are located. The Pike’s image impacts the degree to which customers patronize the Borough’s businesses and how desirable the Borough is to live in.

Façade Improvement Program

The Borough should consider establishing a façade improvement program to encourage owners of commercial property on Huntingdon Pike to rehabilitate their building facades. One recommendation the Revitalization Task Force offered for this purpose is establishment of a

revolving loan fund. Funding for such a program could be pursued through a Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) grant. Loans could be made to property owners who rehabilitate their properties; the fund would be replenished as the loans are repaid. The Task Force also recommended that property owners be required to provide matching funds. Local banks could be encouraged to provide low-interest loans to finance the property-owner match.

The Rockledge Revitalization Task Force also recognized the value of prioritizing funding requests so funding would be used most efficiently (i.e., by giving priority to large buildings, corner buildings, or a concentrated group of buildings). The Borough should consider setting up an architectural review committee and hiring an architect to assist with the façade improvement program. The architectural review committee could be comprised of Borough officials and business representatives. The architect could advise applicants to the façade improvement loan program on how to conform to the Borough's design guidelines.

Updates to the sign ordinance (discussed later in this chapter) should be linked to the façade improvement program. In this way financial incentives could be used to encourage business owners to upgrade signs that would become nonconforming under a new ordinance.

Design Guidelines

A façade improvement program on Huntingdon Pike would benefit from well-publicized design guidelines. These guidelines should provide guidance to property owners concerning façade upgrades. They would set standards which Huntingdon Pike property owners would be encouraged to attain. The Borough should use the guidelines to educate the property owners of the value and significance of their setting, surroundings, and history.

These standards, as suggested by the Revitalization Task Force, should address:

- Building mass, roof form, and scale
- Window design
- Architectural types and styles
- Exterior finishes
- Design details
- Materials
- Color palette
- Signs
- Exterior lighting

The standards should also include recommendations for renovations, infill, additions, and new construction.

Shade Trees

Shade trees should be planted along Huntingdon Pike. The creation of a greener commercial corridor will beautify, unify, and soften the commercial streetscape and make Borough sidewalks and businesses more appealing. Shade trees can reduce energy costs during the summer and serve as windbreaks.

Environmental concerns for street trees that can affect their viability include the use of de-icing salts, mechanical injuries, poor pruning practices, improper use of pesticides, water-borne pollutants, insects, and diseases. Ornamental trees should not be used because of their low branches and since they do not create a sufficient canopy. Adequate consideration should be given to placing the trees where they

Figure 7.1
Sample Block Rendering from "A New Vision for Huntingdon Pike"



Sample Block Rendering from "A New Vision for Huntingdon Pike". Key elements shown include street trees, street lights, enhanced pedestrian crossings, reduced curb cuts, and striped in-street parking [Graphic Credit: Kise Straw Kolodner]

will have adequate tree (root) pits, sunlight, room for branch growth, and drainage. Durable tree species, tolerant of urban conditions and drought, should be planted at intervals of 20-30' on center.

The Revitalization Task Force recommended the following street trees be considered:

- Green Ash (*Fraxinus Pennsylvanica*)
- Thornless Honey Locust (*Gleditsia Triacanthos Inermis*)
- London Plane Tree - botanical, Blood Good - cultivar (*Platanus X Acerifolia*)
- Japanese Scholar Tree (*Sophora Japonica*)
- Little Leaf Linden (*Tilia Cordata*)
- Japanese Zelkova (*Zelkova Serrata*)

The planting of street trees can be the focus of community events, such as Arbor Day or Earth Day events, as well as memorial tree plantings.



Street trees can add a canopy to a commercial area which makes it more attractive and draws pedestrians

Pedestrian-Oriented Lighting

New street lights should be installed on Huntingdon Pike to promote pedestrian safety and encourage activity at night, as well as improve Borough aesthetics and identity. The Revitalization Task Force recommends the lights be placed 60 feet apart, with a mounting height of 12 feet.

Street Furniture

Street furniture should be added to Huntingdon Pike's sidewalks. Benches, trash receptacles, and bike racks are recommended. Bus stops would be enhanced by benches and trash receptacles, and the latter would help ensure litter does not accumulate along Huntingdon Pike. The installation of bike racks would accommodate people who would bike to points along Huntingdon Pike and would encourage passing bikers to stop at local businesses. Bike racks, along with signs telling motorists to share the road with bicyclists, would help establish biking as a feasible alternative transportation option on Huntingdon Pike in Rockledge.

Municipal Signage

A comprehensive municipal signage program should be implemented on Huntingdon Pike that includes points of interest signs, directional signage,

Other regional resources available with professional expertise on types and techniques of street tree plantings include:

- Rockledge Revitalization Task Force;
- Kise Straw & Kolodner, Planners;
- The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society;
- The Morris Arboretum;
- Temple-Ambler, Horticulture Program;
- The Penn State University Cooperative Extension Service;
- The International Society of Arboriculture; Urban Horticulture Institute, Cornell
- Pennsylvania Nurserymen's Association

and parking identification signs (the Borough recently installed new street signs with colors that differentiate the borough of neighboring municipalities' street signs). All of the signage should be attractive, easily readable, fit with the surroundings, and provide a sense of unity and identity to the portion of Huntingdon Pike in Rockledge.

Wayfinder or landmark signs (which identify points of interest) also help create a sense of identity; these could be used to identify such amenities and institutions as the Rockledge commercial corridor, public buildings, parks, hospital offices, bike routes, religious institutions, and cemeteries. Directional signage could be used to help route traffic to adjacent jurisdictions, the nearest SEPTA rail station (Fox Chase), and Pennypack Valley and Lorimer Parks. Improvements to municipal signage will complement improvements to commercial and other signage achieved through an updated sign ordinance (discussed later in this chapter).

Public Spaces



Ardmore, PA

The Borough should consider creating public spaces or small plazas along the Huntingdon Pike corridor. These would likely be flexible spaces that could change to suit the Borough's needs. Uses for such open space could include the hosting of public art displays or community events. Existing open space resources should be linked to Huntingdon Pike more strongly through new signage (trail directional, distance, and identification signage) and pedestrian improvements along Huntingdon Pike. New public open space locations the Revitalization Task Force suggested for consideration include: the entrance to Lawnview Memorial Cemetery on Huntingdon Pike, the site owned by the

Borough on Robbins Avenue adjacent to the Holy Nativity Church, and the Holy Nativity Church property itself. Except for the site the Borough owns, this would require negotiation with the existing land owners.

Pedestrian Safety Measures

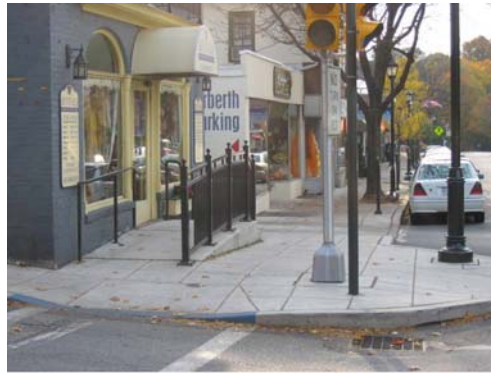
Huntingdon Pike in Rockledge is congested during peak travel hours. At other times, automobiles tend to travel along it at high rates of speed. Sidewalks along the Pike, however do not do much to shield pedestrians.

They are narrow, in many places are immediately adjacent to the road, and in others are separated by very narrow grass strips.

These situations create hazards for automobiles, but even greater ones for pedestrians. Unfortunately, current pedestrian safety measures are not very effective. The Borough will implement a traffic calming program and take other measures to increase pedestrian safety. Making pedestrians feel safe and encouraging automobiles to slow down (and thereby have more time to notice the Borough's commercial area) is likely to draw more pedestrians to Huntingdon Pike and more customers to its commercial area.

Sidewalks and Curb Extensions

The Borough should redesign and enhance the existing sidewalks along Huntingdon Pike. The goal should be to create an attractive, safe, and unified sidewalk system. Specific recommendations of the Revitalization Task Force include widening sidewalks in mid-block areas, extending curbs and giving them aesthetic treatments at Borough entrances, and extending sidewalks with bulb-outs at intersections with side streets to create safer street crossings. Bulb-outs increase pedestrian visibility at intersections, protect on-street parking, and prevent illegal parking at intersections. Curb extensions decrease pedestrian crossing widths and time, slow traffic, and decrease turning speeds.



Bulb-Out, Narberth

Pedestrian Crossings

One of the first things the Borough plans to do to improve traffic safety is add or upgrade pedestrian crossings along Huntingdon Pike so they are more visible to traffic. The Borough will consider installing crosswalks with a surface that contrasts with that of the street, such as painted hatch marks or a decorative, mesh design imprinted on tar (the latter lasts longer and has fewer maintenance problems than concrete pavers, bricks, or treated asphalt).



Crosswalk with Bold Hatching

Traffic Calming:
A comprehensive strategy designed to slow motor vehicle traffic and make an area safer and more attractive for pedestrians. This strategy uses a variety of techniques, including wide sidewalks separated from traffic by grass strips or bollards; curb extensions, pedestrian refuges (islands), raised crosswalks, pedestrian signal lights, pedestrian crossing signs, and push-button-activated signals at pedestrian crossings; and reduced lane widths, reduced turning radii, slower speed limits, and an aesthetically pleasing streetscape to slow traffic.



Decorative Crosswalk, West Conshohocken

Varied surface materials tend to catch drivers' attention, making them focus on the crosswalk and slow down. It also makes the streetscape more attractive. The Borough will ensure that each pedestrian crossing along Huntingdon Pike is safe and visible to both pedestrians and drivers. For intersections that need extra visual emphasis but where pedestrian crossing signals are not considered appropriate, the Borough should consider adding signs or flashing lights emphasizing the crosswalk.

Pedestrian and Traffic Signals

Another important action the Borough should take to enhance pedestrian safety is the installation of pedestrian and traffic signals. Pedestrian signals are needed along the Pike because of high traffic volume and high speeds. The intersection at Church Road also needs pedestrian signals because the intersection's configuration is confusing.

A new traffic signal was just installed for the intersection of Huntingdon Pike and Sylvania Avenue; this had been an intersection with many accidents and was an area where pedestrians had a particularly difficult time crossing the Pike. This should facilitate pedestrian crossing of the Pike, and is the designated crossing location for the future Borough Trail in the Borough's Open Space Plan.

Pedestrian Buffers and Refuges

Figure 7.2

Conceptual Rendering—Pedestrian Refuges



This early simulation of conceptual Huntingdon Pike improvements shows pedestrian refuges, right

Sidewalk buffers do not exist along many portions of the Pike. Possible buffers along wider sections of sidewalk include landscaping, street lights, street trees, and on-street parking. Where space does not permit such items, bollards may be used. Street lights also improve pedestrian safety by helping pedestrians and drivers of passing cars see at night.

The Borough will establish pedestrian refuges where possible. These are placed in raised medians at intersections so pedestrians do not have to cross the entire street at one time (this is particularly useful for pedestrians whose walking speed is limited). Raised medians also have a traffic calming effect. The Revitalization Task Force recommended that where median refuges are installed, Huntingdon Pike should consist of two 11-foot travel lanes, a seven-foot median refuge and an 11-foot turning lane where appropriate.

Reduced Lane Widths and Turning Radii

Another measure that will help achieve traffic calming is reducing traffic lane widths and turning radii. Most of the travel lanes along Huntingdon Pike are at least 12 feet wide. A narrower lane can still provide adequate space for vehicles, but also accommodate bicycle lanes and encourage

drivers to slow down. The Revitalization Task Force recommended that the mid-block cross section of Huntingdon Pike should maintain its 8-foot parking lanes on each side of the street, narrow traffic lanes from 12-feet to 11-feet, and widen sidewalks on each side by one-foot. Any lane width reduction will need to be coordinated with PENNDOT, which has authority in that area.

Existing curb radii in Rockledge allow cars to make quick turns at certain intersections, which can be dangerous for pedestrians. Traffic engineering guidelines allow for smaller radii where speeds should be slow. The curb radii at some intersections along Huntingdon Pike should be reduced. One intersection where this would be particularly appropriate is at the intersection of Fox Chase Road and Shady Lane where the existing curb radii currently allow vehicles to make particularly fast turning movements.

Gateways

Currently a gateway exists on the border with Philadelphia that includes stone memorial monuments on each side of the road. The Rockledge Revitalization Task Force recommends the existing monuments be preserved and enhanced with widened sidewalks to create a buffer around the monuments and provide sufficient area for a welcome sign and landscaping improvements. The Task Force also recommends that two gateway signs be constructed on the border between Rockledge and Abington Township: one at the intersection of Huntingdon Pike and Shady Lane, and one at the intersection of Huntingdon Pike and Fox Chase Road. The latter should consist of attractive signage and landscaping.

These gateways will identify the Borough's boundaries to visitors, increase the sense of identity associated with Rockledge, and help beautify Huntingdon Pike. The Borough's preferred gateway style, as recommended in "A New Vision for Huntingdon Pike", is focused on signage. It should be visible, attractive, thematic, and fit with its surroundings. The Borough's

Figure 7.3
Conceptual Gateway Improvements



Gateway at Abington Township Boundary- Simulated Improvements from "A New Vision for Huntingdon Pike". Graphic Credit: Kise Straw Kolodner

Open Space Plan recommended that in addition to signage, supplementing elements such as landscaping could be included.

PENNDOT has indicated the potential exists for Huntingdon Pike to be narrowed from two eastbound lanes to one at the intersection with Shady Lane. This could be accomplished by marking the right lane with a “right turn only” demarcation, and continuing Huntingdon Pike into the Borough with one eastbound lane. This would allow for a widened sidewalk and ample space for a visible and attractive gateway, while eliminating the confusion of the terminating right lane.

Median Treatments

The entrance to Rockledge from Abington should be enhanced by treating the median with decorative pavers. Where the median is wider closer to Penn Avenue the median should be landscaped. This should be done carefully since landscaping on medians is often damaged by salt, pollution, and a lack of irrigation. These actions will improve Huntingdon Pike’s appearance; the landscaping should also calm traffic by serving as a visual obstacle.

Parking

Shared Parking

Shared parking can increase the efficiency of Rockledge’s existing parking supply. Some businesses’ parking lots are larger than they need. Others are utilized well during one part of the day but not during others. If businesses agree to allow adjacent or nearby businesses’ to utilize their lots for parking for all day or part of the day, the overall Borough parking supply would be better utilized and reduce the need for constructing new lots.

Shared parking requires that an operational agreement (“shared parking agreement”) be established between or among businesses. This may or may not involve monetary transactions. Directional and informational signage should be installed to help drivers find available parking and explain the shared lots available to park in.

Physical improvements may be necessary or desirable in some cases where shared parking is implemented. New curb cuts, minor regrading, removal of physical barriers, restriping of parking lots, and an engineering study are some of the actions that may be undertaken. Adding connections and creating curb cuts between adjacent lots will reduce the need for cars to turn back onto Huntingdon Pike to search for parking in another lot. These parking improvement costs will likely be borne by the business owners involved with possible assistance from the Borough (the Borough should consider applying for County Revitalization funding for this purpose).

The Revitalization Task Force identified the following businesses as potential businesses to participate in a shared parking agreement:

- Ackers Plaza
- Municipal Hall
- Duplicating Center
- Fox Chase Physical Therapy
- Austrian Village
- Gurcsik Studio and Vision Center
- Holy Nativity Church
- Fox Chase Cancer Center Annex
- Hollywood Plaza (in Abington)

For maximum flexibility, businesses will be allowed to share parking even if they do not occupy adjacent parcels. However, the distance between a business and the parking it utilizes should not be excessive. Typically people are willing to walk 400 to 800 feet from their parking space to their destination. The Borough will set maximum distances by use category, as the distance people are willing to walk varies. The Borough will set maximum limits by broad categories as follows:

- Adjacent parking required (less than 100 feet from destination):
 - Disabled parking spaces
 - Deliveries and loading
 - Convenience stores
- Short walking distance required (less than 400 feet):
 - Medical and professional offices
 - Grocery stores
 - Residential
- Medium walking distance required (less than 800 feet):
 - General retail
 - Dining
 - Employees
 - Religious institutions
- Long walking distance permitted (less than 1200 feet):
 - Special events
 - Overflow parking

Safe and convenient pedestrian connections, discussed earlier, will make shared parking more desirable.



Some parking lots in Rockledge are underutilized and could be used for shared parking

Public Parking

Even with a shared parking system the Borough should consider improving its public parking facilities to better serve the central commercial district on Huntingdon Pike. In particular, the municipal parking lot at the intersection of Loney Street and Sylvania Avenue is underutilized most of the time. It currently serves the adjacent park, but could more efficiently be used by serving other municipal uses as well. Wayfinding signage and the maintenance of a safe pedestrian connection to Huntingdon Pike would make this lot a more attractive facility for Huntingdon Pike shoppers and employees.



Municipal Parking Lot, South Sylvania Avenue

Sign Ordinance Update

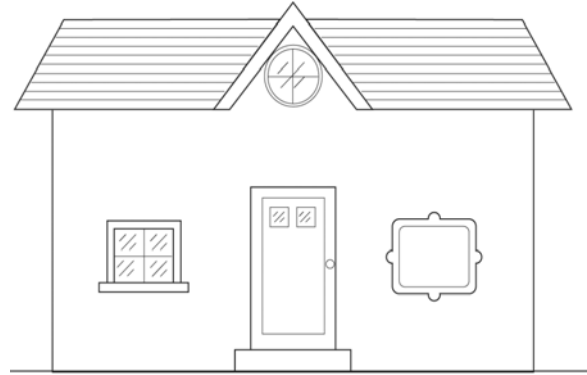
Signage is a fundamental part of a streetscape; it affects aesthetics and local identity, and helps convey important information. Improving the appearance, organization, and effectiveness of signage can be a crucial part of a streetscape improvement program.

In conjunction with the Rockledge Revitalization Plan's recommendations, the Borough's sign ordinance was updated to reduce visual clutter and improve aesthetics, particularly along Huntingdon Pike. The new standards address sign characteristics including type, quantity, size, location, and appearance. Among other changes, the new sign ordinance:

- Banned internally illuminated signs

- Banned freestanding pole signs
- Banned snipe signs
- Limited freestanding ground signs to larger lots
- Provided for awning signs
- Provided for sandwich board signs
- Required nonconforming signs be replaced when any change, repair, or maintenance is proposed constituting an expense of at least 25 percent of the sign's cost
- Required signs to be compatible with design guidelines (if adopted in future)

Figure 7.4
Sketches of Signs Permitted by Borough Ordinance



Parallel Wall Sign Permitted Under New Sign Ordinance

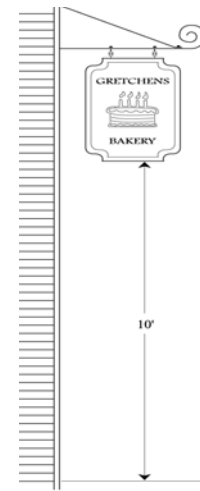
In addition, the Borough could:

- Incorporate sign standards into proposed design guidelines that will clearly illustrate goals and options for improving signs.
- Educate local business and property owners about how important improving sign quality is in improving the overall appearance of the district and work with the business community to encourage the voluntary removal of non-conforming signs. The Borough recommends the Rockledge-Fox Chase Business Association take a lead role in this effort.
- Provide financial incentives, such as making sign improvement an eligible project under the proposed facade improvement loan program.

Coordination with Fox Chase

The Borough of Rockledge should continue pursuing joint main street revitalization planning with the adjacent Philadelphia neighborhood of Fox Chase. Rockledge's main commercial street is Huntingdon Pike and Fox Chase's is Oxford Avenue; this is the same road (State Route 232). By continuing their promising cooperation with regard to Route 232's revitalization, Rockledge and Fox Chase can share ideas, information, and plans. Maintaining awareness of and coordination with the plans of neighboring areas can create plans that have a greater impact, are more efficient, and affect a larger area. The two communities have retained the same consultant to formulate a revitalization plan for each main street, thus ensuring Route 232 revitalization plans are not devised in one community that ignore the plans of the other community.

The two communities have also coordinated their requests for revitalization funding. Rockledge and Fox Chase were recently awarded a joint, \$250,000 state grant. At this stage it appears that Fox Chase may use \$100,000 of the grant for construction drawings for Oxford Avenue revitalization, Rockledge may use \$80,000 for construction drawings for Huntingdon Pike revitalization, and the remainder may be used as seed money for the combined Rockledge-Fox Chase area.



Projecting Wall Sign Permitted Under New Sign Ordinance

Role of the Rockledge-Fox Chase Business Association

The Rockledge-Fox Chase Business Association is an existing organization experienced in working with both the Borough of Rockledge and the neighborhood of Fox Chase. Therefore, any ventures between the two areas should also include the Business Association. The business association should be consulted whenever new revitalization efforts are undertaken that relate to both Rockledge and Fox Chase.

The Business Association currently offers information to shoppers at existing businesses in the form of a list, category, and contact information. It should be encouraged to undertake additional marketing to make their information more visible, possibly by establishing a web site linked to the Borough's web site.

The Borough, preferably with the assistance of the Business Association, should establish an information center for people interested in opening a business in Rockledge. It could be a one-stop shop, or central information source. Such a resource base might be used to inform shoppers about the area to collect a range of information about doing business or shopping in the Rockledge-Fox Chase area.

One technique that is sometimes used for revitalization of commercial areas is the formation of a business improvement district (BID). A BID involves joint action by local business owners to improve the commercial area. However, It requires a financial contribution by the business owners that is used for BID activities, often including street cleaning, security, marketing, and aesthetic improvements. However, at this time there does not appear to be much interest in a business improvement district among Rockledge business owners.

Another area that might be useful for the Business Association to lead is the implementation of a shared informational signage program that directs visitors to points of interest in the two communities. Coordinated marketing of the Rockledge and Fox Chase commercial areas, and coordination of the two neighborhoods' community events would also be beneficial.

Implementation

Timing

For the Huntingdon Pike Improvement Project, the Huntingdon Pike Streetscape, traffic calming, and gateway improvements should be made in three phases. The first would target the central part of the Pike between Central Avenue and Jarrett Avenue, and the second and third would target the two gateways.

The Revitalization Committee recommends that meetings be held to begin to discuss the revitalization projects with the necessary stakeholders. Just as meetings were held to discuss signage improvements,

meetings could be held to discuss Huntingdon Pike, shared parking, commercial district façade improvements and potential design guidelines. For streetscape and facade improvement projects, this should involve the Rockledge Planning Commission, Borough officials, the Business Association, interested residents, and other stakeholders. Meetings on the parking improvement project should target businesses that are most likely to participate in shared parking. The Planning Commission may also choose to designate a subcommittee of stakeholders to work on each subject area.

The Borough should then seek a consultant for relevant projects. The Borough and Fox Chase solicited a consultant to prepare a detailed streetscape plan and engineering documents. The Borough may also choose to hire an architect to provide professional advice on design guidelines and perhaps serve on a design committee. The Borough may choose to set up an advisory design review board.

Funding

Huntingdon Pike Improvements

The Borough should consider providing upfront matching funds or solicit funding from the Rockledge-Fox Chase Business Association to begin the preliminary engineering process. Sources for the design and construction of streetscape improvements include:

Federal:

- U.S. Department of Transportation - FHWA
- Transportation Enhancement Program
- Transportation and Community and System Preservation (TCSP) Pilot Program - for parking improvements

State:

- PennDOT
- Infrastructure Development Program (IDP) - for parking improvements

Local:

- Montgomery County Revitalization Program - Implementation Funding
- Borough of Rockledge Local Match

Private:

- Foundations

Corporate stakeholders

Local banking institutions might be asked to contribute funding to the revitalization program. Wachovia, Fox Chase Bank, Willow Grove Bank, and others are present in the area, and banks are encouraged to meet the lending needs of their communities by the Community Reinvestment Act. Other private institutions with a stake in the area are Fox Chase Cancer Center, Jeanes Hospital (part of the Temple University Health System), and Manor Junior College.

After a detailed streetscape design has been completed, funding will need to be secured for the actual construction of improvements. Funding may be facilitated by political representatives, the Montgomery County Planning Commission, the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission and PENNDOT. The project will need to be placed on DVRPC's transportation improvement program and PENNDOT's 12-year program to receive federal funding.

Parking Improvements

Funding will be required to physically connect parking lots, make grading improvements, re-stripe lots, make drainage improvements, and add directional and informational signage for shared parking. An engineering study will likely be required for some of these parking improvements. Businesses will have to provide their own funding for most of the shared parking improvements (which they will benefit from), but the Borough should consider providing financial assistance to help start the process or maintain momentum.

Improvements should be made to the existing municipal lot on Loney Street (primarily wayfinding signage) since it is currently underutilized. The Borough may choose to provide matching funds for business owners. It may also wish to provide funding for wayfinding signage since it should be coordinated with the Borough's overall streetscape design program.

Design Improvements

The Borough may choose to implement a façade improvement program utilizing grants or loans. If grants are used, the Borough might require the recipient to provide matching funds. A low-interest loan program could be established with the assistance of local banks to help homeowners raise the matching funds.

If a loan program is implemented, the borough should, with the assistance of the planning commission, pursue grants, possibly through DCED, for specific design projects and award them to property owners who have applied to the Borough. If the Borough obtains seed funding for façade improvements, a revolving loan fund could be established. As funds are paid back to the Borough by property owners, the funds can

be re-loaned to other property owners. Loan recipients could be required to provide matching funds. A mechanism would need to be established to address default situations. One method of dealing with defaults is to place a lien on the property and deduct the lien amount from the sale proceeds when the owner sells the house. However, since that could take a long time, it would be good for the Borough to have adequate reserves to continue the program in the event of a default.

The Borough may also choose to hire an architect for professional design assistance and possibly serve on a design advisory committee. The Borough would need to allocate funds for this purpose as well.

Conclusion

Huntingdon Pike is Rockledge's main street and commercial center. Its revitalization will affect not only its own image but that of the entire Borough. The commercial success and attractiveness of the Pike makes an impression on shoppers, employers, and pedestrians; it also affects the attractiveness of Rockledge's adjacent residential neighborhoods. The streetscape, safety, parking, signs, gateways, facades, and rail-bus-bicycling linkages are all important components of this revitalization effort. For these reasons it is important that a comprehensive, sustained program be followed to adopt and implement the strategies outlined above.

The Borough of Ambler utilizes similar tools to address façade improvements along its main commercial street (Butler Avenue). Currently Ambler has a grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development that provides business owners with up to \$3,000 apiece for façade improvements. Release of funds to the property owners is contingent on approval by the Borough's Main Street design review committee, which includes an architect.



Chapter 8

Existing Land Use

Introduction

Land use patterns of a community are the result of many factors and pressures acting over time. Location, highway access, commerce, topography and other natural features, and historical factors including suburbanization were all factors which influenced Rockledge's development. The Borough's land use pattern evolved gradually over time, primarily the result of natural, unplanned growth during the early 1900s, followed by some control after the adoption of the Borough's first zoning ordinance in 1940. Land use in the Borough is now essentially static.

Although the Borough is mostly built-out there are still opportunities for development of underutilized parcels, infill development, and revitalization. One of the challenges of Rockledge's comprehensive plan is to develop land use policies which will utilize the Borough's existing land use pattern as a foundation for the further development and revitalization of the Borough in the future.

In addition to the Existing Land Use Map, The Table details the acreage of each category and the percent change from 1972 to 2006. The assigned

land use categories are derived from Montgomery County Board of Assessment parcel data. Analysis of these numbers is useful in understanding patterns of land use changes in the Borough, and helps to identify potential land use issues of concern for the Borough.

Existing Conditions

Conceptual Land Use Pattern

Rockledge's conceptual land use pattern can be characterized as a gridiron street system focused around a commercial strip along Huntingdon Pike. This pattern reflects the earlier lotting practices of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which involved small, uniform subdivisions on a gridiron street system. The gridiron pattern is typical of Montgomery County's boroughs which developed prior to suburban areas characterized by curvilinear streets and cul-de-sacs.

Rockledge's gridiron street system is moderately isolated from the surrounding intra-regional road network and local street networks outside the Borough. Although this feature modestly limits accessibility to the surrounding area, it has had the positive effect of separating local from regional traffic, which has helped preserve the quiet, peaceful, and relatively secluded residential character of much of Rockledge. The preservation and enhancement of this quality should be a primary goal of Rockledge's land use planning process.

Figure 8.1
Land Use Comparison, 1972 and 2006

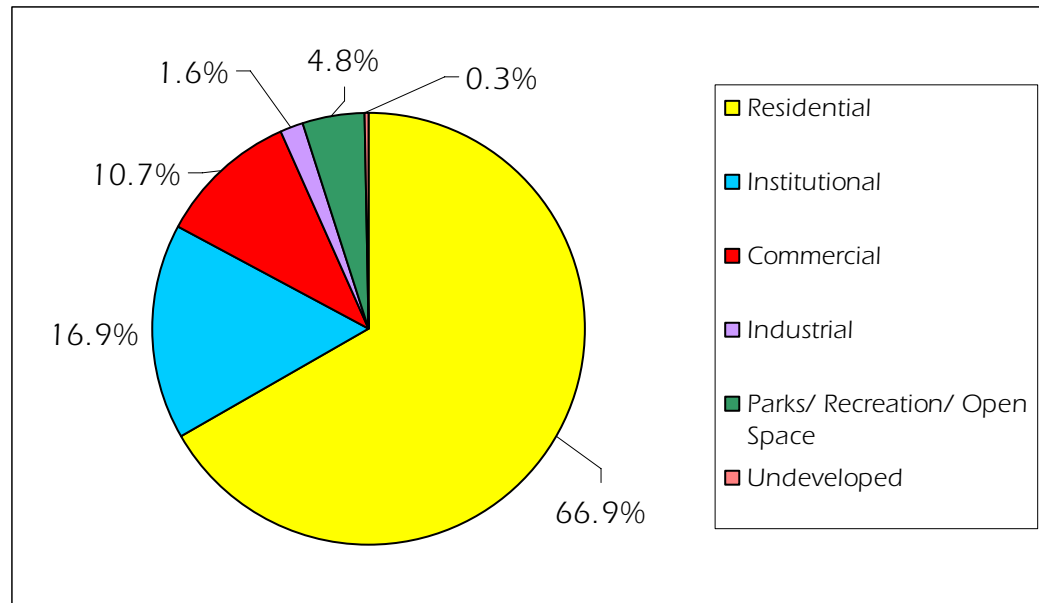
Type	1972		2006		Percentile Change
	Acres	%	Acres	%	
Residential	127.0	62.9%	119.7	66.8%	+4.0%
Institutional	29.8	14.9%	28.5	15.9%	+1.2%
Commercial / Office	12.6	6.4%	19.1	10.7%	+4.4%
Industrial	4.7	2.5%	2.8	1.6%	-0.8%
Parks/ Open Space ²	8.7	4.5%	8.1	4.8%	0.5%
Undeveloped	19.1	9.4%	1.1	0.3%	-9.1%
Total ¹	202	100%	179	100%	—

Notes: (1) Discrepancy in Total Acres from 1972 to 2006 due to digitalization of parcels. (2) Public Parks and Open Space actually increased by 2.3 acres (percentile change understated due to digitalization of parcels)

Figure 8.2
Land Use, 2006



Figure 8.3
Land Use Allocation Chart, 2006



Residential

The Borough of Rockledge has traditionally contained a mixture of land uses, with nonresidential uses predominant on Huntingdon Pike, and residential uses prevalent in other areas. Residential land uses are by far the largest single land use type in the Borough, as shown in Table 8.1. Two-thirds (67%) of Rockledge's land is used for residential purposes. This is an increase of four percentage points since 1972, which can be explained primarily through development of small, scattered undeveloped parcels.

The map in Figure 8.4 focuses on residential uses and provides a closer look at the four main categories of residential land use types in the Borough: single-family detached, single-family attached (such as townhouses), twins and duplexes, and multifamily (such as apartments). As shown on the map, generally these residential uses are mixed together. However, some patterns are evident. The Strockville neighborhood is almost totally made up of single-family detached homes, with several multifamily units along Fox Chase Road. Twins, duplexes, and single-family attached units are generally scattered throughout the rest of the Borough, although Blake Avenue, streets between Huntingdon Pike and Montgomery Avenue, and the block between Borbeck and Chandler Streets have significant clusters of them.

The average residential lot sizes in Rockledge are approximately 6,200 square feet for single-family detached dwellings, 6,100 square feet per dwelling unit for two-family dwellings, 7,800 square feet per unit for triplexes and quadruplexes, and 11,800 square feet for low-rise apartment

buildings. These are relatively small, reflecting the compact character of the Borough.

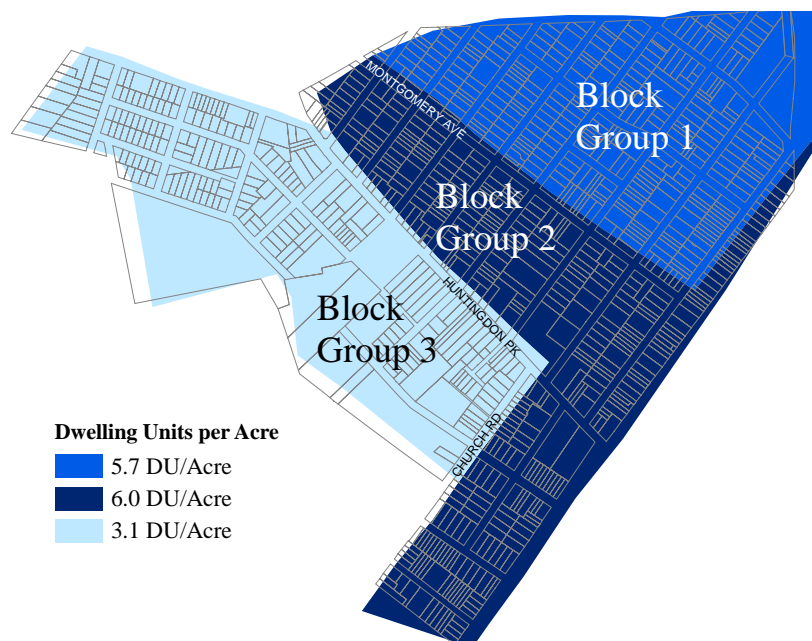
Residential density in the Borough ranges from 3.1 dwelling units per acre in Block Group 3 to roughly twice that density in the rest of the Borough (5.7 dwelling units per acre in Block Group 1 and 6.0 dwelling units per acre in Block Group 2). This is illustrated in Figure 8.4. The residential density in Block Group 3 is low since this land includes much non-residential land (including the cemeteries and other institutional uses, a park, retail and office uses).

For additional information on residential land uses in the Borough, see Chapter 4: Housing.

Figure 8.5
Residential Density by Block Group

Block Group	Acres	Dwelling Units (DU)	Density(DU/Acre)
1	66.5	379	5.7
2	78.5	473	6.0
3	77.1	239	3.1

Figure 8.6
Residential Density



Commercial/Office

Commercial and office uses comprise about 11% of the Borough. This is an increase of four percentage points since 1972. This was attributable to continued commercial development along Huntingdon Pike, the most significant of which was Rockledge Plaza at South Sylvania Avenue (see Figure 8.7). Rockledge's commercial area differs from many of the central business districts around the County. Unlike many areas, Rockledge's central business district is not as intensely developed.

A few areas do take the form of traditional urban commercial development. However, much of the commercial district contains scattered free-standing buildings set back from the street, off-street parking is often located in front of buildings, and there is a lack of architectural design features. The location of a cemetery and suburban-style shopping plaza further breaks up the continuity of the commercial area's form.

The commercial area can also be divided into two sub-areas based on type of development, which is reflected in the Borough's zoning ordinance. The first is part of the ROR Retail Office Residential zoning district. This area contains a more intense mix of retail shops, offices, and residential uses. Some buildings are built to the sidewalk, with fewer areas of off-street parking in front of buildings. This area is more pedestrian-friendly. The second part of the commercial area is the HB Highway Business zoning district (located along Huntingdon Pike near Abington). This contains automobile-oriented uses with ample parking areas located in front of buildings.

Industrial

Approximately two percent of Rockledge's land is used for industrial purposes (industrial uses declined from 2.5 percent to 1.6 percent of the Borough since 1972). This decline is consistent with regional trends. The industrial uses remaining are low-intensity, low impact uses.

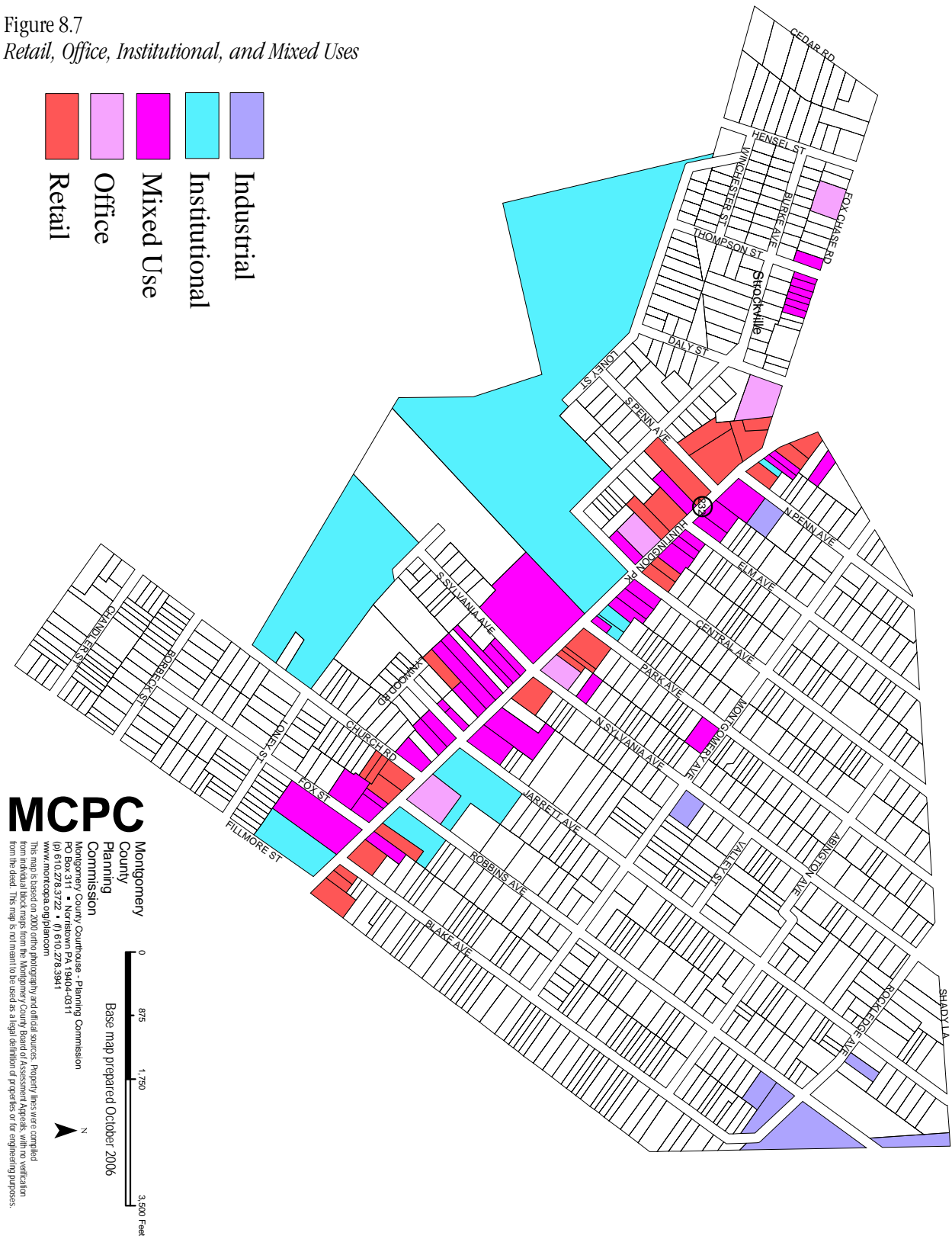
Institutional

Institutional uses comprise 17% of the Borough, an increase of one percentage point since 1972. These uses include government facilities (e.g., Municipal Hall, fire station, police station, and Borough maintenance garage), Fox Chase Cancer Center offices, a church, and Lawnview and Montefiore cemeteries. The addition of the Fox Chase Cancer Center offices on Huntingdon Pike and Fillmore Street increased the share of institutional uses in the Borough.

Parks/Recreation

Approximately 5% of the Borough consists of parks and recreational activity areas. This category includes community parks and open space, sports

Figure 8.7
Retail, Office, Institutional, and Mixed Uses



fields, and playgrounds (it does not count the recreational space in the basement of the Municipal Hall since that is counted in the institutional land use category). This land use category increased by 2.3 acres with the acquisition of Rockledge Park and Mill Park. The Table 8.1 shows open space and park land did not change much as a percentage. While Rockledge Park and Mill Park increased land in this category, land counted as recreational in 1972 on Loney, Fox, and Fillmore Streets no longer serves as a recreational area. In addition, digitalization of parcels may have also explain why parks and open space did not increase as a percentage of total land area.

Undeveloped Land

Less than one percent of Rockledge's land remains undeveloped, down from nine percent in 1972. This land is comprised of small, scattered parcels that have been subdivided from other parcels but not yet developed. It should be noted that the portion of Lawnview Cemetery in the Borough is classified as institutional land although it remains undeveloped by the cemetery. If this section of the cemetery were ever subdivided from the rest of the cemetery it could add a significant undeveloped parcel to the Borough.

Conclusion

Since 1972 there have not been dramatic changes in the Borough's land uses. The most significant change was the development of virtually all land classified as undeveloped in 1972. This occurred as most of the various small, scattered, undeveloped parcels existing in 1972 were developed as different land use types.

The largest individual land use change was in the residential category, which grew by four percentage points and now comprises two-thirds of Borough land. Commercial and office uses increased by four percentage points; the most significant development was Rockledge Plaza on Huntingdon Pike and South Sylvania Avenue. Institutional land uses increased slightly, with the most significant addition being Fox Chase Cancer Center developing institutional land on Huntingdon Pike between Fillmore and Fox Streets. Industrial uses have shrunk somewhat, and now occupy less than two percent of Borough land. Parks and Open Space grew since 1972 with the acquisition of Rockledge Park and Mill Park, although this was offset somewhat by the loss of a recreational area at Fox and Loney Streets.

Rockledge today is a predominantly residential Borough with commercial-office and institutional uses concentrated on Huntingdon Pike, the Borough's main thoroughfare. Parks and open space are generally well-distributed across the Borough, and industrial uses are low-intensity in nature.



Chapter 9 Future Land Use Recommendations

Introduction

The analysis of existing conditions in the Borough, which incorporated the results of discussions with Borough officials and a public meeting with interested Borough residents, revealed the following basic conclusions about Rockledge in 2006: Rockledge is primarily a residential community of single-family detached and semi-detached dwellings. Institutional uses are the second largest use of land in the Borough (16 percent), and commercial or office uses are third largest (11 percent). Nonresidential uses primarily occupy land along Huntingdon Pike, although the two cemeteries occupy significant land away from the Pike.

The future land use plan will attempt to meet the problems and challenges of the next 10 to 20 years within the framework of the following planning policies.

- Preservation, protection and stabilization of existing residential neighborhoods
- Revitalization of Huntingdon Pike, including adoption of a form-based zoning code to improve design
- Defining, preserving, and improving existing institutional land uses

- Enhancement of and linkages among the Borough's open space resources

Past Planning in Rockledge

Zoning

Since 1940 the primary development control in Rockledge has been the Borough Zoning Ordinance. Although Rockledge was substantially developed prior to 1940, the ordinance regulated the encroachment of commercial uses into the Borough's residential neighborhoods from that time onwards. Prior to the writing of Rockledge's 1973 Comprehensive Plan, there were three zoning districts in the Borough: A-Residential, C-Commercial, and D-Industrial. Institutional uses were permitted in the C and D districts, and in the A district by special exception. Lawnview Memorial Cemetery was unzoned.

In 1976, acting to implement the recommendations of the 1973 Comprehensive Plan, the Borough made significant changes to its zoning. This included zoning the previously unzoned cemetery land, which brought the Borough's zoning into compliance with Pennsylvania's Act 247, the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code. Other major changes include the following zoning district creations or amendments:

The Residential District was divided into two to recognize different residential characters of different sections of the Borough. The SUR-Single-Family Urban Residential District was created to include most residences in the Borough, while the SURA-Single-Family Urban Residential-Alternative District was created to apply to the more recently developed area of the Strockville neighborhood. This area has different physical characteristics than the rest of Rockledge's residential areas, including smaller lots and homes, and no sidewalks.

An I-Institutional District was created to regulate and encourage appropriate development of uses such as municipal buildings, religious institutions, cemeteries, medical clinics, and recreational facilities.

The Commercial District was divided into two to recognize fundamentally different types of development which had arisen in different parts of the Borough's commercial areas, and regulate them appropriately. These districts are called the ROR-Retail Office Residential and the HB-Highway Business Districts. As the name implies, the former (ROR District) includes a mixture of retail, office, and residential uses that are more pedestrian-oriented. The latter (HB District) includes auto-oriented uses such as gas stations and auto repair shops, and uses which have adequate areas for their required parking.

The Industrial District was changed to the LI-Limited Industrial District, with limitations on the types and practices of industry permitted in the Borough.

Other significant recent zoning changes include the elimination of conversion of single-family homes into two-family homes (1995), a new sign ordi-

nance to limit sign clutter and improve aesthetics (2004), and a new Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SLDO), adopted in 2005.

Revitalization

Rockledge adopted “A New Vision for Huntingdon Pike: The Rockledge Revitalization Plan” in 2003. This plan focused on aesthetic, pedestrian, and parking improvements in the Rockledge commercial area along Huntingdon Pike, while working cooperatively with the Fox Chase neighborhood in the abutting section of Philadelphia. Design planning is currently underway to implement this plan. For additional information, see Chapter 7: Revitalization of Huntingdon Pike.

Open Space

Rockledge completed Open Space Plans in 1995 and 2005. These plans addressed the Borough’s open space and recreation needs and were required to leverage funding made available by Montgomery County’s Open Space Program. For more information, see Chapter 6: Parks, Open Space, and Historic Resources.

Future Land Use

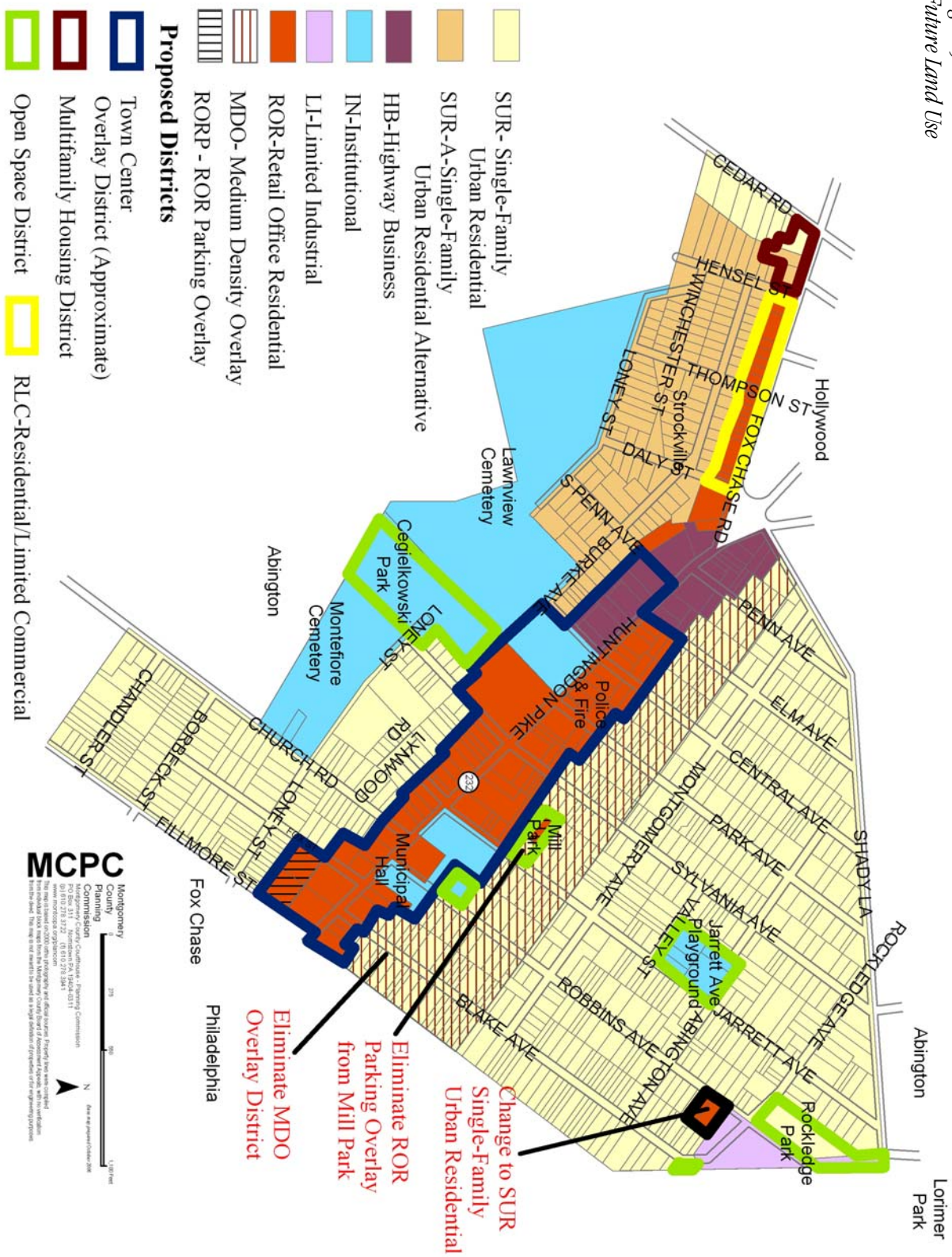
Residential Land Uses – Preserve, Protect and Stabilize

The goal for Rockledge’s residential neighborhoods is to preserve, protect and stabilize these areas by the following techniques:

- Discouraging incompatible land uses



Neighborhood Conservation means maintaining or improving the quality of housing and residential property, and encouraging homeownership



- Encouraging homeownership
- Maintaining quality of housing and residential property
- Encouraging private rehabilitation efforts
- Using landscaping requirements to enhance neighborhood appearance and buffer incompatible land uses
- Add impervious surface limits

Through rigid code enforcement the Borough can encourage homeownership and help maintain the quality of housing, residential property, and residential areas. It can also use its web site or other mechanism to educate residents about available funding programs promoting homeownership and housing rehabilitation. Rockledge can also apply for funding for housing rehabilitation or façade improvements itself. For additional information on recommendations for improving the Borough's residential areas, see Chapter 4 Housing.

Multifamily Zoning District

The Borough plans to create a multifamily residential district and apply it to an area of existing multifamily development along Fox Chase Road between Hensel Street and Cedar Road (see Figure 9.1). Adoption of a new multifamily district will help the Borough regulate the most significant area of multifamily residential uses, in a manner most appropriate to multifamily residential uses. This will help achieve the Borough's goal of maintaining quality of housing and residential property.

SLDO Changes



The Borough plans to create a zoning district to regulate multifamily residential development where it already exists

The Borough can alleviate incompatible land uses by strengthening standards for vegetative and other buffering between its Limited Industrial (LI) District and residential areas. The 1973 Rockledge Comprehensive Plan also recommended a buffer be established between the industrial and residential areas. This could be undertaken as part of a revision to the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SLDO).

Elimination of MDO District

The MDO-Medium Density Overlay District should be eliminated. This district was created to permit residential development up to 12.45 dwelling units per acre (17.42 dwelling units per acre for elderly housing). This overlay applies to most of the land zoned SUR-Single-Family Urban Residential which lies between Huntingdon Pike and Montgomery Avenue. However, this area is already built-out; thus, it would be difficult to accommodate new development with higher densities.

Other zoning changes proposed for the residential zoning districts include removing Rockledge Park, Mill Park, and the access strip to the planned Pennypack County Trail from those residential zoning districts.

The Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance should be amended to strengthen buffering and screening standards between industrial and residential uses



Industrial Land Uses

Since such a small part of the Borough is occupied by industrial land uses policy regarding industrial uses is confined to modest changes. These include modifying the SLDO to strengthen buffering and screening standards between industrial and residential uses, and acquiring a small portion of underutilized industrial land for public open space, as recom-

mended by the Borough's 2005 Open Space Plan, and adding impervious surface limits.

Commercial and Office Land Uses

Commercial and office uses in Rockledge are focused on the Huntingdon Pike commercial corridor. This area is characterized primarily by small businesses, many of which are in freestanding buildings. There is one small shopping center in the middle of the commercial district (Acker's Plaza). Although there is an interesting mixture of business types and occupancy rates are high, the business district is not as aesthetically attractive nor cohesive as desired.

In 2003 the Rockledge Revitalization Plan "A New Vision for Huntingdon Pike" was completed. Design planning is currently underway to implement this plan [for additional information, see Chapter 7: Revitalization of Huntingdon Pike]. In summary, the plan recommended five primary goals:

1. Transforming the Pike into a pedestrian-oriented "Main Street" by adding streetscape amenities and improving pedestrian safety
2. Creating Borough gateways
3. Making it easier to park, by encouraging shared parking and expanding public parking areas
4. Improving building facades
5. Revising the sign ordinance to minimize clutter and improve aesthetics (this was completed in 2004)

The Borough should implement the recommendations from the Revitalization Plan using zoning and other techniques such as financial incentive programs.

Modifications to ROR-Retail Office Residential and HB-Highway Business Zoning Districts

Rockledge will create a Town Center Overlay District to encourage development and redevelopment of commercial and office uses in a manner consistent with traditional town center design principles, rather than that of suburban development (see Figure 9.1). This district will also help implement the goals of the Revitalization Plan. Portions of the HB-Highway Business District may also be modified, where appropriate, accordingly. These changes will include the following:

Streetscape Enhancements and Pedestrian Amenities

Public improvements are planned to make the commercial district more pedestrian-friendly. In addition to these improvements, zoning should be modified to encourage improvements and amenities for pedestrians. For example, new land developments (including additions or alterations on

the front of the building) in the ROR and HB Districts could be required to provide pedestrian-oriented amenities, or a fee for the Borough to collect in a fund for establishing pedestrian amenities. These might include some of the following elements, with the requirement for an amenity increasing with the size of the land development:

- Benches
- Trash Receptacles
- Wayfinding Signage- to direct people to parking, parks and trails, municipal facilities, and other points of interest
- Bicycle Racks
- Public art or murals
- Garden
- Decorative banners
- Water feature
- Plaza or square

Parking

Land developments proposing parking in front of the building should be required to provide a substantial amount of landscaping to screen the parking and preserve a commercial area attractive to pedestrians.

Currently many parking lots on Huntingdon Pike are located between commercial buildings and the street, without vegetated buffers.



The Borough's Zoning Ordinance accommodates shared parking, but revisions could be made to enhance incentives for shared parking. Shared parking should consider use types and different peak hours of participating businesses. For example, required parking could be

reduced further if uses demonstrate they experience peak parking demand at different times of day.

Other parking recommendations:

- The Borough should also continue to evaluate the feasibility of establishing a municipal parking lot. Such a lot might reduce the need for off-street parking in front of commercial buildings on Huntingdon Pike. One location the Borough should investigate for a municipal lot is the undeveloped parcel owned by the Borough at 29 Robbins Avenue. A lot at this location would be convenient to users of Municipal Hall.
- Parking requirements should be re-evaluated per land use type to determine if excessive parking is required by the Borough's zoning ordinance for some uses.
- Rockledge also may want to consider adding bike rack parking requirements for land developments of a minimum size to encourage bicycling and potentially reduce automobile parking demand.

Gateways

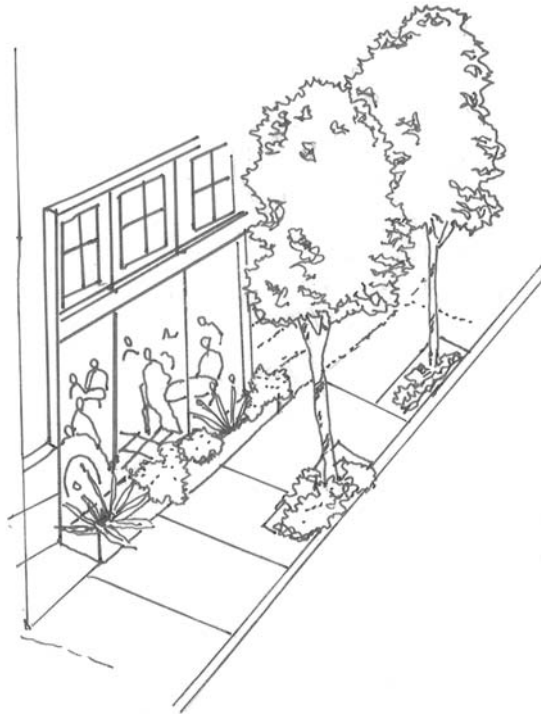
Gateways would enhance the Borough's identity by clearly marking the municipal boundaries and welcoming pedestrians and motorists to the Borough. Gateways can be used to enhance the Borough's aesthetic image. The Borough is seeking funding for gateways through the County Open Space Program and has applied for funding of gateways through the



Municipal gateways can be built using a variety of components, including attractive signage, gardens, landscaping, and visual elements such as clocks, municipal seals, or public art



Many commercial and office uses along Huntingdon Pike in Rockledge have been developed in a manner more suited to a suburban locale. The Borough will encourage development that is more pedestrian-oriented and which contributes to a town center in the future



County Revitalization Program.

Building Design

Zoning should be modified in sections of the central business district to encourage building forms and designs appropriate to a town center. One way of accomplishing this is through the creation of a Town Center Overlay District [see Figure 9.]. Portions of the commercial business district have a more traditional town character than other, more

suburban-looking portions of Huntingdon Pike in the Borough. The areas of the Borough having a more traditional town character include the north side of Huntingdon Pike between the Philadelphia boundary and the Municipal Offices, and between Sylvania Avenue and Elm Avenue. On the south side of the Pike, it includes the area between Fox Street and Sylvania Avenue. Other areas between the Philadelphia boundary and Penn Avenue could be included in a town center overlay district as well, particularly if future redevelopment of tracts or new land developments in this area is expected.

The Borough should establish detailed design guidelines, in consultation with the Rockledge-Fox Chase Business Association, for use by new commercial land developments in the commercial areas. These guidelines should be consistent with changes already made in the new sign ordinance.

Rockledge recognizes that its central business district would benefit from zoning which requires building form and design more typical of a traditional town center. These include:

- Requiring businesses to have their primary entrance face the street
- Requiring a minimum proportion of the building frontage to contain windows to encourage retail uses (or establishing a range for acceptable glass to façade ratio, based on existing attractive commercial buildings on Huntingdon Pike), and ensuring upper story windows are not boarded or covered.
- Establishing a list of recommended materials
- Lists of architectural elements to recommend and to discourage (for

example, a type and pitch of roof similar to that traditionally used in the Borough)

- Providing a clearly marked pedestrian path or sidewalk to safely allow pedestrians to cross from the street sidewalk over any parking lot to the business' front door.
- Requiring the front entrance of businesses to be distinguished by features such as a canopy, portico, or overhang.
- Replacing setback lines with build-to lines. This promotes a continuous building frontage along a sidewalk (or within a specified distance of a sidewalk), making the pedestrian experience more interesting.
- Introducing a minimum building height of two stories. This helps maintain the appearance of a traditional town center commercial district.
- Requiring buildings on corners to have their entrances oriented toward the corner.
- Blank walls (without windows) should not be permitted along any wall facing a street, parking area, or pedestrian area. If a blank wall is unavoidable, architectural treatments or murals are recommended to encourage a pedestrian-friendly streetscape that creates visual interest.
- The massing of any façade should generally not exceed 50 feet maximum (horizontal dimension). Shop fronts may be broken down even further. Massing variations every 30 feet or less is preferred. Where buildings have facades longer than 50 feet, a 3- to 5-foot break in depth in the façade should be required.

Creation of RLC-Residential/Limited Commercial District

The portion of the existing ROR-Retail-Office-Residential District along Fox Chase Road is a quieter, more residential portion of the Borough than the portion of the ROR District along Huntingdon Pike. Furthermore, the areas behind and across the street from it are totally residential, making Fox Chase Road less suitable for intense commercial development than Huntingdon Pike. Therefore, the Borough will rezone this area to RLC- Residential/Limited Commercial. New standards will be drawn up to regulate this area more appropriately. For example, the range of permitted retail and office uses could be reduced to prohibit use types which generate the most traffic (such as drive-through banks or restaurants), and a cap on nonresidential building size or density could be added.

Changes to the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SLDO)

- Requiring greening elements (window boxes, hanging baskets, raised planting beds, planting areas, etc.).
- Requiring shade tree planting along street frontages for new land developments, additions, or building alterations (where applicable).

Institutional Land Uses

Rockledge recently moved its municipal offices from a location shared with the Police Department into the building occupied by the Rockledge Community Center and Fox Chase Cancer Center day care (now known as “Municipal Hall”). The Borough Police Department consequently was able to reorganize its space to expand into the area formerly occupied by the municipal offices, as well as renovate the building façade and expand the building.

Lawnview and Montefiore Cemeteries have the most underdeveloped land in the Borough. The Borough recognizes the importance of acquiring rights or land on these properties for trail connections or preservation



Another significant institutional land use in the Borough is the cemetery land, including parts of Lawnview and Montefiore Cemeteries. In 1999 Rockledge repealed an ordinance prohibiting burials within the Borough. In the 2005 Open Space Plan, the Borough recognized the benefit of

preserving the cemetery land both for passive open space and to facilitate Rockledge’s proposed trail system. Actions to achieve or help achieve one or both of these goals include negotiating an agreement of first refusal of sale with the cemetery owners, purchasing a conservation easement and/or an access easement, and acquiring land for trails and/or passive open space preservation.

Open Space Land Uses

Currently the Borough’s public open space areas (6 parcels) are zoned Single-Family Urban Residential (SUR), Institutional (IN), or Retail-Office-Residential (ROR). Rockledge should revise its zoning ordinance to show the actual land use of these parcels by creating an open space zoning district. In addition, there is a parcel bounded by Rockledge Avenue, Blake Avenue, and Robbins Avenue zoned Limited Industrial (LI). Should the Borough purchase the underutilized portion of the property at Rockledge Avenue and Blake Avenue (consistent with the recommendations in the 2005 Open Space Plan), this property should be rezoned as Open Space.

Compatibility with Planning in Other Municipalities

Abington Township

Abington Township’s Comprehensive Plan (1992) proposes continuing existing uses in areas of the Township bordering Rockledge. These include the following uses:

Commercial: north of the Borough along Huntingdon Pike. This refers to the existing shopping center.

Open Space: northeast of Rockledge; this refers to Montgomery County's Lorimer Park.

Residential: this includes existing residential areas north and south of the Borough (it is designated "high-density residential", although the minimum lot size required- 7,500 square-feet- is relatively large by Rockledge standards).

Institutional: This includes St. Basil's Academy and Manor Junior College to the west of the Borough, Lawnview and Montefiore Cemeteries to the southwest of the Borough, and Medical Mission Sisters to the northeast of the Borough.

Philadelphia

Philadelphia's 1960 Comprehensive Plan was updated in 1988. Currently the City is conducting the Neighborhood Transformation Initiative and as part of that process plans to rewrite plans for the entire city. The adjacent Fox Chase neighborhood is comprised of commercial areas, many of which are clustered along Oxford Avenue and Rhawn Streets, and residential areas.

Current zoning for the area includes Commercial (along PA 232), Single-Family Detached, Single-Family Attached or Twins, and a few pockets of Low-Density Multifamily (including one at the intersection of PA 232 and Burholme Avenue).

Rockledge and Philadelphia's Fox Chase neighborhood have undertaken cooperative revitalization planning for the past several years. Their focus has been on the Huntingdon Pike- Oxford Avenue Revitalization (PA 232) project. Their intermunicipal efforts have created compatible revitalization plans, have begun planning for project design, and have raised large amounts of public funding. The projects seek to revitalize PA 232 in both communities, calm traffic, protect and attract pedestrians, and improve the aesthetics and image of the commercial areas, and thus of the larger communities. Another major land use issue in Fox Chase is the planned expansion of Fox Chase Cancer Center and potential loss of public open space.

Montgomery County

The Montgomery County Comprehensive Plan, or "Vision Plan" was adopted in 2005. This plan's future land use map categorizes most of Rockledge as a "Town Residential" area, with the Huntingdon Pike corridor being described as a "Town Center" area. Town Residential areas contain a mix of housing types, are oriented more towards pedestrians than automobiles, and are often linked to town centers. Town Center areas are described as having a mixture of retail, office, institutional, and residential uses. These areas are pedestrian-oriented, with buildings built close to sidewalks and often attached.

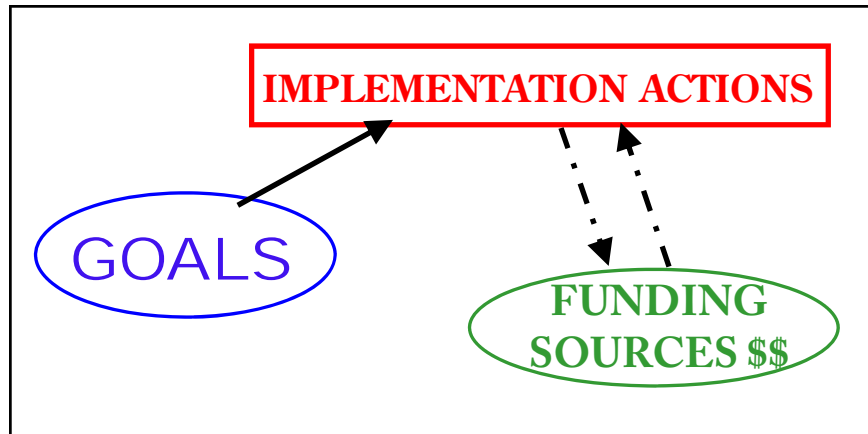
Development in these areas should have doors that open to the sidewalk and have clear windows along the street. Buildings should be built with a wall-to-window ratio that reflects existing historic structures in the area and should generally have a vertical orientation. Parking should be located to the rear of buildings. Historic and other older buildings should be preserved, rehabilitated, and reused, whenever possible.

Conclusion

Rockledge proposes to conserve and upgrade its existing residential areas. Creation of a multifamily zoning district, promotion of homeownership, discouragement of incompatible land uses, home rehabilitation, and appropriate landscaping requirements for new land developments are all components of this strategy. Because an emphasis is on preserving existing neighborhoods, the MDO-Medium-Density Overlay residential district will be eliminated.

The Borough proposes to continue its efforts to revitalize its commercial areas as part of the Huntingdon Pike-Oxford Avenue Revitalization project, which it is undertaking with the adjacent Fox Chase neighborhood in Philadelphia. The revitalization of these areas can be enhanced by adoption of a Town Center Overlay District or other zoning changes which would protect and enhance the commercial area, shaping it into a unified town center, rather than a series of disconnected, suburban-style developments.

Other planned changes include creating an open space zoning district for parks and public open space areas, requiring stronger buffers between industrial and residential development so industrial development fits better into its surrounding environment, creating a Residential/Limited Commercial District for the portion of the ROR District along Fox Chase Road to provide for a less intense commercial area, and creating a Multifamily District to regulate existing multifamily development. The Borough also plans to pursue an access easement or purchase of land to facilitate a trail across the cemetery properties, and to consider measures to preserve larger portions of the cemeteries as open space in the future if feasible.



Chapter 10 Implementation

Introduction

This chapter describes how the Borough of Rockledge intends to implement the recommended policies of this Comprehensive Plan. Below are the major policy areas of the plan, with corresponding implementation actions which the Borough should consider:

Chapter 3: Community Facilities

- Infrastructure—the Borough should continue with its efforts to fund and construct street lights that are more attractive and pedestrian-oriented than the existing ones.
- Open Space— Pursue implementation of recommendations from Rockledge 2005 Open Space Plan (see recommendations from Chapter 6: Parks, Open Space, and Historic Resources of Comprehensive Plan).

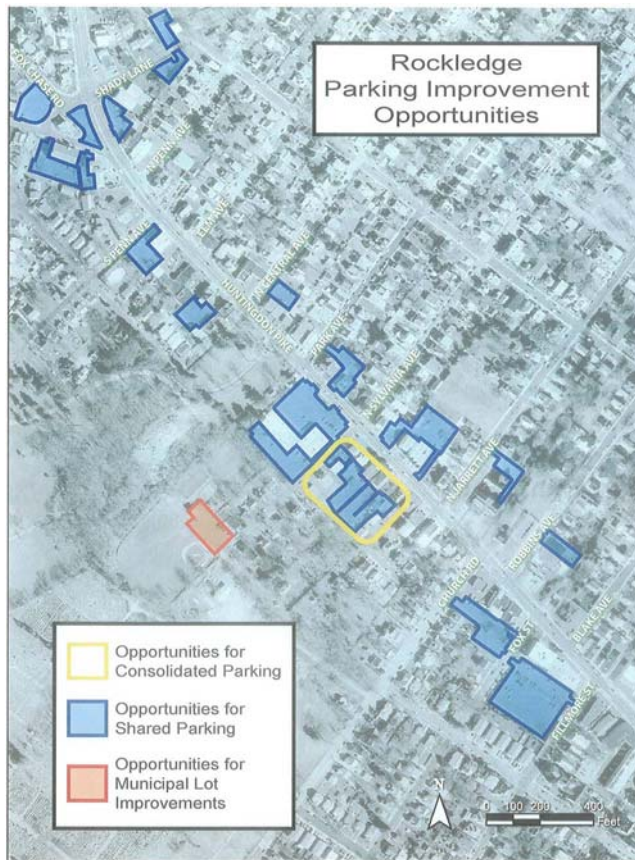
Chapter 4: Housing

- Encourage conversion of multifamily dwellings (that were originally single-family homes) back to single-family homes
- Promote homeownership
- Promote housing rehabilitation

- Promote neighborhood conservation, particularly through effective code enforcement
- Retain adequate housing type choices for current and future residents.

Chapter 5: Transportation

- Improve Huntingdon Pike as part of the Rockledge Revitalization Plan. This is to include aesthetic improvements, safety enhancements, better accommodation of pedestrians, and parking improvements (see Chapter 7: Revitalization of Huntingdon Pike).



Shared parking opportunities were identified by the Rockledge Revitalization Plan

- Delete unbuilt paper streets (portions of Loney Street and Robbins Avenue).
- Communicate with PENNDOT on maintenance issues pertaining to state-owned Huntingdon Pike and Fox Chase Road. It is also important for the Borough to maintain a high-level of communication with PENNDOT during the planning and implementation of the Huntingdon Pike Revitalization Project.
- Make public transportation as attractive an option as possible in the Borough by improving transit signage and improving amenities at bus stops, where space permits.
- Use the proximity to SEPTA's bus and R8 Regional Rail line in Fox Chase to market the Borough to prospective residents and businesses.
- Maintain the sidewalk network and construct missing links.
- Install crosswalks at intersections where pedestrian-automobile conflicts are a concern.
- Construct or improve paths and trails in and connecting to the Borough (in conjunction with recommendations of Chapter 6 Parks, Open space, and Historic Resources).

- Use safety signs and bike racks to facilitate safe and convenient bicycle use in the Borough.

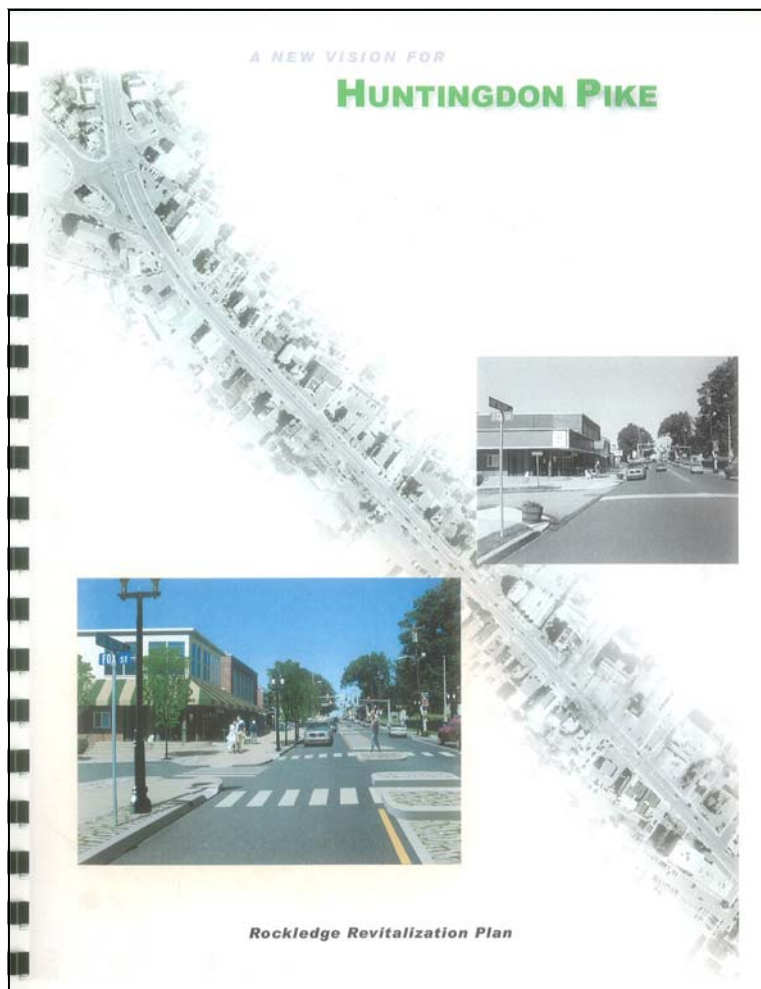
Chapter 6: Parks, Open Space, and Historic Resources

- Improve existing open space.
- Acquire or protect additional open space (pocket parks, Borough Trail corridors, and passive open space)

- Establish a Borough Trail linking parks and open space within the Borough, which will also establish a connection to Abington and Philadelphia
- Use a trail to link the Borough to Lorimer Park and support the rapid development of the County's planned Pennypack Trail
- Establish gateways at key Borough entrances
- Protect and plant shade trees in the Borough
- Protect cemetery land in Rockledge from development
- Create open space endowment or gift giving campaign
- Erect historic marker near site of former Huntingdon Pike tollbooth (tollbooth itself was located on property now part of Lawnview Cemetery).

Chapter 7: Revitalization

- The Borough should implement the recommendations from the Revitalization Plan for Huntingdon Pike using zoning and other techniques such



Huntingdon Pike Revitalization Plan

as financial incentive programs. These recommendations include:

- Transform the Pike into a pedestrian-oriented “Main Street” by adding streetscape amenities and improving pedestrian safety
- Create Borough gateways
- Make it easier to park, by encouraging shared parking and expanding public parking areas
- Improve building facades

Chapter 9: Future Land Use

- Residential land uses:

Implement recommendations of Chapter 4: Housing (including promotion of homeownership, discouragement of incompatible land uses, and home rehabilitation)

Create multifamily residential district for area of existing multifamily development along Fox Chase Road

Use landscaping requirements in the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SLDO) to enhance residential areas

Eliminate the MDO-Medium-Density Overlay residential district (emphasis is now on improvement of existing residential neighborhoods)

- Industrial land uses:

Establish buffer and screening requirements in SLDO for industrial development abutting residential and other nonindustrial uses

- Commercial and office land uses. In addition to the recommendations of the Huntingdon Pike Revitalization Plan:

Adopt zoning to encourage design of future commercial land developments to contribute to traditional town center rather than disconnected suburban-style development. This should address form-based requirements such as building design and massing, parking location, a building build-to line, minimum building height, and pedestrian orientation of buildings

Adopt changes to SLDO to add shade trees and greening elements to commercial areas

Encourage planting of shade trees, landscaping, and other greening of commercial and office areas

Establish design guidelines as basis for a façade improvement program

Install attractive street lights and pedestrian amenities

Implement municipal signage program, including signage directing drivers to municipal parking

Investigate creation of public spaces such as plazas

Text changes to the SLDO for industrial use buffers will likely be similar to principles delineated in the Montgomery County Comprehensive Plan (2005). These include:

- *Industrial uses should contain extensive landscaping and buffering, particularly on sides near residential uses*
- *Off-street loading and trash areas must be screened and set back a significant distance from residential property lines*



Zoning changes and design guidelines are intended to create more attractive, pedestrian-oriented facades along Huntingdon Pike

Continue cooperative planning efforts with Fox Chase on Huntingdon Pike Revitalization project, and via Rockledge-Fox Chase Business Association

- Institutional land uses:

Pursue purchase or easement of undeveloped cemetery land for trail connections

Consider feasibility of easement, purchase, and other methods to protect undeveloped cemetery land from development



An open space district should be created which encompasses all public parks, playgrounds, and open space areas in the Borough

- Open space land uses

Create Open Space (OS) Zoning District and rezone existing public parks and open space areas to become part of this district

Funding Opportunities

Rockledge should investigate funding opportunities from various programs to help implement the goals of the Comprehensive Plan. Considering the small size of the Borough, Rockledge would maximize its chances of obtaining funding by working with neighboring communities in the funding application process. In recent years the Borough has worked successfully with the Fox Chase neighborhood of Philadelphia to fund improvements to Huntingdon Pike and Oxford Avenue (PA 232).

The tables on the following pages list funding programs and sources by project type which Rockledge should consider.

Figure 10.1
Potential Funding Sources

Project	Potential Funding Sources
Community Facilities (Street Lights)	CDBG
	LGCPPL
	MCCR
Open Space	CDBG
	CMAQ
	DCNR
	DEP-Growing Greener
	ESP
	GF/GT
	General Revenue Funds and Bond Issues
	HSSRS (PennDOT)
	Open Space Donations
	PECO Energy Green Region Program
	PHMC
	Private Foundations (PERT, CMC, HC, MCLT)
	TCDI
	TE
	Treevitalize (PHS)
Housing	AHTF
	CDBG
	ESP
	HRA
	MCCR
	PAHP
	WAP
Revitalization	CDBG
	ESPTA
	GF/GT
	MCCR
	PennDOT
	Private Foundations (such as William Penn Foundation and Wachovia)
	Treevitalize (PHS)
	UDP
Transportation	CMAQ
	GF/GT
	LGCPPL
	MCCR
	PennDOT (including HSSRS)
	TE
	TIP

Figure 10.1
Potential Funding Sources (Key to Abbreviations)

AHTF	Act 137 Affordable Housing Trust Fund (MCDHCD)
CDBG	Community Development Block Grant
CMAQ	Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (DVRPC)
CMC	Conservancy of Montgomery County
DCED	PA Department of Community and Economic Development
DCNR	PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
DEP	PA Department of Environmental Protection
DVRPC	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission
ESP	Elm Street Program (DCED)
ESPTA	Economic Stimulus Package Technical Assistance (DCED)
GF/GT	Green Fields/Green Towns (Montgomery County)
HC	Heritage Conservancy
HSSRS	Hometown Streets and Safe Routes to School (PennDOT)
HRA	Housing & Redevelopment Assistance (PA)
HUD	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
LGCP	Local Government Capital Project Loan Program (DCED)
MCCR	Montgomery County Community Revitalization (DCED)
MCDHCD	Montgomery County Department of Housing and Community Development
MCHA	Montgomery County Housing Authority
MCLT	Montgomery County Lands Trust
PAHP	Pennsylvania Accessible Housing Program (DCED)
PERT	Pennypack Environmental Restoration Trust
PHMC	Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission
RAMC	Redevelopment Authority of Montgomery County
TCDI	Transportation and Community Development Initiative (DVRPC)
TE	Transportation Enhancements (DVRPC)
TIP	Transportation Improvement Program (DVRPC, MCPC)
UDP	Urban Development Program (DCED)
WAP	Weatherization Assistance Program (DCED)

