



Cheltenham Township was one of Philadelphia’s first suburbs, growing as railroads and roadways were extended out from the city allowing people to migrate out of the city for a variety of social and economic reasons. But, the roadways were not the reason that people decided to live in Cheltenham. The incentives for expansion came from the desire of residents and businesses to benefit from the natural resources Cheltenham had to offer – woodlands, clean streams, and an exceptional living environment that includes preserved historic structures among a diverse building inventory filled with people of all races, ethnicities and backgrounds.

Although much has changed over its 300-year history, the Township remains an attractive community in which to live and work. Cheltenham Township’s combined economic, cultural and natural amenities have attracted over 36,000 residents and 18,000 jobs to the municipality. Some of these amenities include:

- over 800 acres of preserved land
- a highly educated, civically-engaged and diverse community
- nationally- and regionally-respected educational institutions
- thriving business centers
- easy access to transportation choices

Township officials, residents and business owners understand that their quality of life depends on preserving and enhancing these amenities. They are concerned that the factors that brought them to the community may erode without proper long-term sustainability planning. Throughout Cheltenham Township’s history freethinking, creative and civically-minded people have contributed to the Township, making Cheltenham what it is today. Moving toward sustainability will require

this same limitless creative problem-solving ability and willingness to adapt to our changing times within the availability of natural resources.

Creating and maintaining a healthy community that balances social, economic, and environmental needs requires an understanding of sustainability, a term that has many meanings. In 1987 the Brundtland Commission, a committee formed to promote sustainability around the world, gave sustainability its classic definition of “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” The true meaning of sustainability is constantly being explored and revised, (a 2010 U.N. report discusses the evolution of the classic definition [here](#)). At the core of sustainability is the triple bottom line: environmental, social, and economic responsibility, along with a responsibility not to harm the current or future generations. A harmony must be established between the built and natural world which takes into account these three factors and the constraints of our natural resources and local economics.

There are numerous social and environmental factors that influence the quality of life in any community. Some of the most pressing include: climate change, en-

ergy and food security, human health, natural resource conservation, and population growth. There are also local issues which are less broad in their impact, but no less important to quality of life. These include congestion, economic vitality, and open space preservation. Implementing sustainability requires establishing and maintaining the difficult and delicate balance among individuals, society, the economy and natural resources, all while taking into account environmental and social changes. To do so, sustainability principles must be established and followed in a consensus-building, participatory process.

There are numerous sustainability principles that can form the foundation for a sustainability plan, linking the community vision to a realistic process to achieve mutually agreed upon goals. Cheltenham's Sustainability Plan relies on the four Natural Steps proposed by Dr. Karl Henrik-Robert. The Natural Steps will be the benchmark by which the Committee evaluates every policy and practice considered in the plan. All recommendations in the Cheltenham Township Sustainability Plan will seek to meet these four conditions:

- Reducing to the extent possible our dependence on fossil fuels and ecologically-persistent chemicals
- Eliminating all wasteful use of scarce natural resources and synthetic substances
- Eliminating all thoughtless and unnecessary destruction and degradation of and encroachment on our natural ecosystems and resources
- Meeting everyone's human needs fairly and efficiently

These principles guided a process that spanned more than a year and involved all parts of the Cheltenham Township community, in an effort called "Sustainable Cheltenham." That effort produced this Cheltenham Township Sustainability Plan – an overarching document using these sustainability principles to guide the community into a future where thoughtful choices and coordinated action can foster economic vitality, preserve natural resources and ensure that people and neighborhoods thrive.

To succeed, a sustainability plan must also take into account the broad scope that these issues cover. Over the years the Township has studied many of these issues and developed reports to plan for the future. The Cheltenham Township Sustainability Plan is written in the context of these previous planning efforts and takes their work into consideration. Some of the

Township's previous planning efforts include, but are not limited to:

- Cheltenham Comprehensive Plan
- Wall Park Master Plan
- Tookany Creek Trail Master Plan
- Tookany Creek Watershed Management Plan
- Tookany/Tacony-Creek Integrated Watershed Management Plan
- Community Revitalization Plan
- Arcadia University Master Plan
- Commercial District Enhancement Plan
- Glenside Commercial District/Arcadia University Revitalization and Circulation Feasibility Study
- Cheltenham Avenue Business Improvement District
- Cheltenham Open Space Plan

To protect and enhance the resources of the community for future generations, Cheltenham Township realized it needed to be a pioneer and create a formal sustainability plan to address the problems mentioned above. These new efforts will build upon previous sustainability initiatives and successes:

- 4 million dollars in federal, state and county grant-funded stream bank restoration and stabilization efforts.
- Large-scale recycling program that diverts more than 5.5 million pounds of materials each year from the waste stream.
- Greening efforts that have resulted in awards and recognition from the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society and the Montgomery County Lands Trust.
- Continued exploration of green energy and green building opportunities.
- Focus on local sustainability issues by local organizations and citizens groups.
- Creation of an Environmental Advisory Council to manage and oversee all Township efforts regarding environmental issues.

The sustainability plan can become an important municipal tool to address the issues Cheltenham faces. Impacts from climate change, energy insecurity, natural resource loss, population and demographic shifts, shifts in regional economies, and environmental justice issues are first felt on a local level. Municipalities are able to incorporate sustainable practices into their daily oper-

ations and long-term planning to address these issues internally, which buffer the local economy and environment from these impacts. A municipality that adopts a sustainability plan can lead by example and advocate for sustainable practices among businesses and residents.

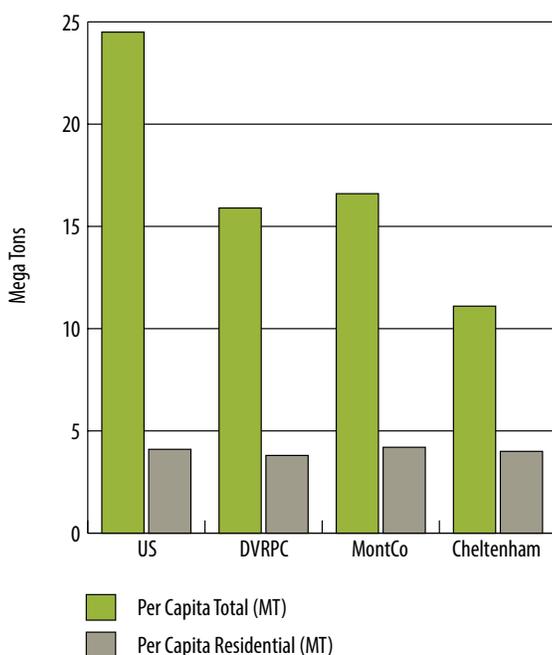
The plan outlined in this document is a collaboration between Township officials and staff, Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC), and the Sustainable Cheltenham Committee (a group of 45 citizens and representatives of major Cheltenham institutions, including the School District of Cheltenham Township, Arcadia University, and Einstein Hospital). Several public meetings, a sustainability open house and a public website were used to create a dialogue between residents and the Sustainability Committee. These meetings and discussions highlighted some of the major challenges facing Cheltenham and its communities:

Energy Quick Fact: The combustion of natural gas, coal and petroleum for energy lead to the emission of greenhouse gases: carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide. While there is a national trend towards using more renewable energy resources, imported fossil fuels continue to be the main source of national and global energy production. According to the DVRPC Regional Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory, Cheltenham emits significantly less GHGs per capita from total emission sources than the national average. However, there is no substantial

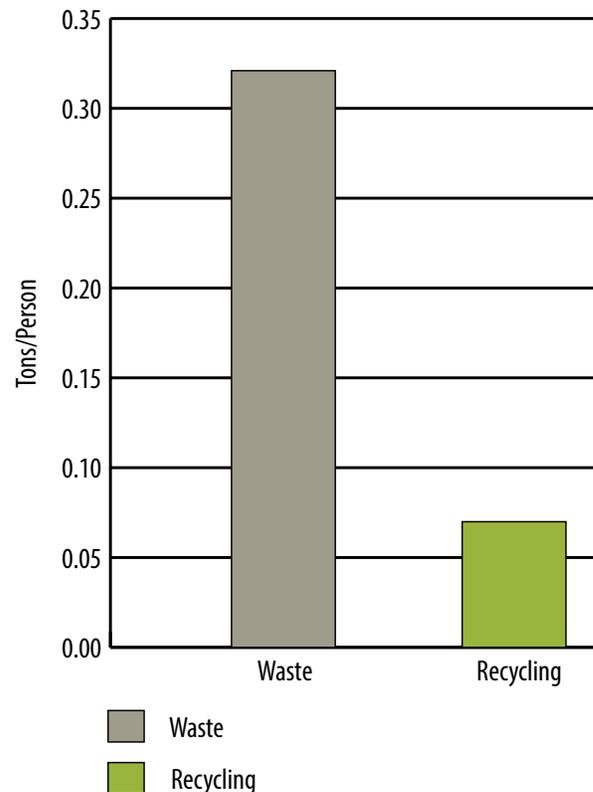
difference when residential GHG emissions are taken into account alone.

Waste Quick Fact: Waste production continues to be a major environmental problem. In 2010, Americans generated approximately *250 million tons of trash*. Unless handled properly, disposal of such large quantities of waste, some hazardous, can lead to groundwater and air pollution. Current disposal practices often ignore the potential for reuse of these materials. Cheltenham residents produce less waste per capita than the national average, but only by 0.01 pounds. In 2010, Cheltenham’s 36,793 residents produced 11,808 tons of residential and commercial waste and diverted 2,573 tons into the recycling stream.

PER CAPITA GHG EMISSIONS IN 2010



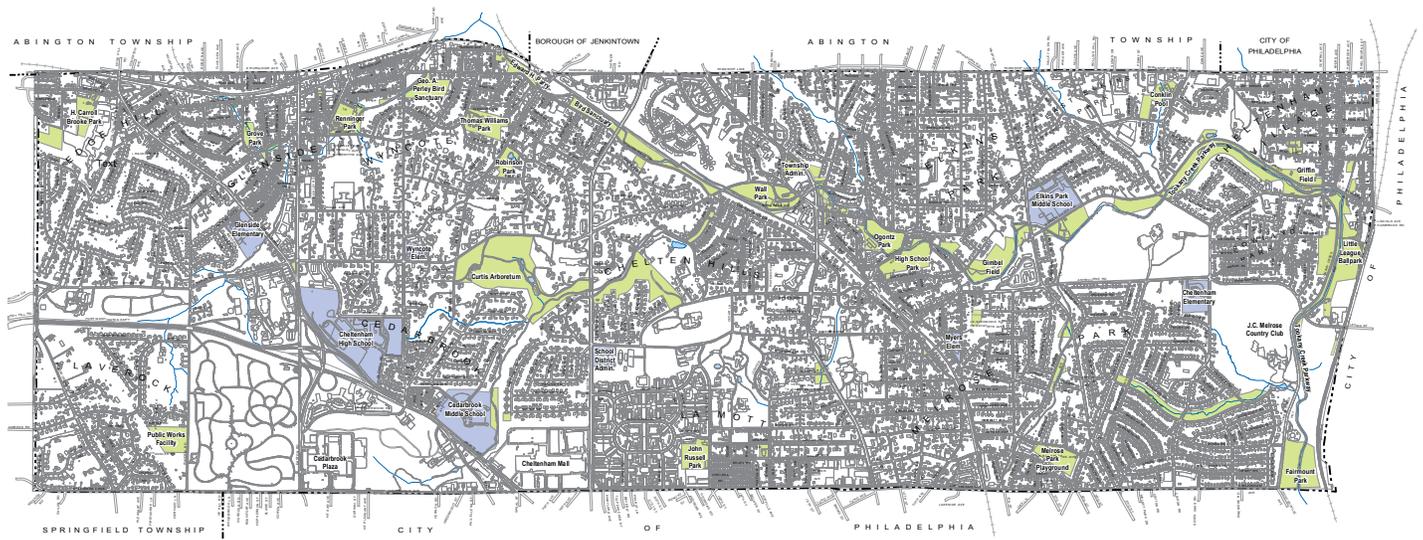
PER CAPITA GENERATION IN CHELTENHAM IN 2010



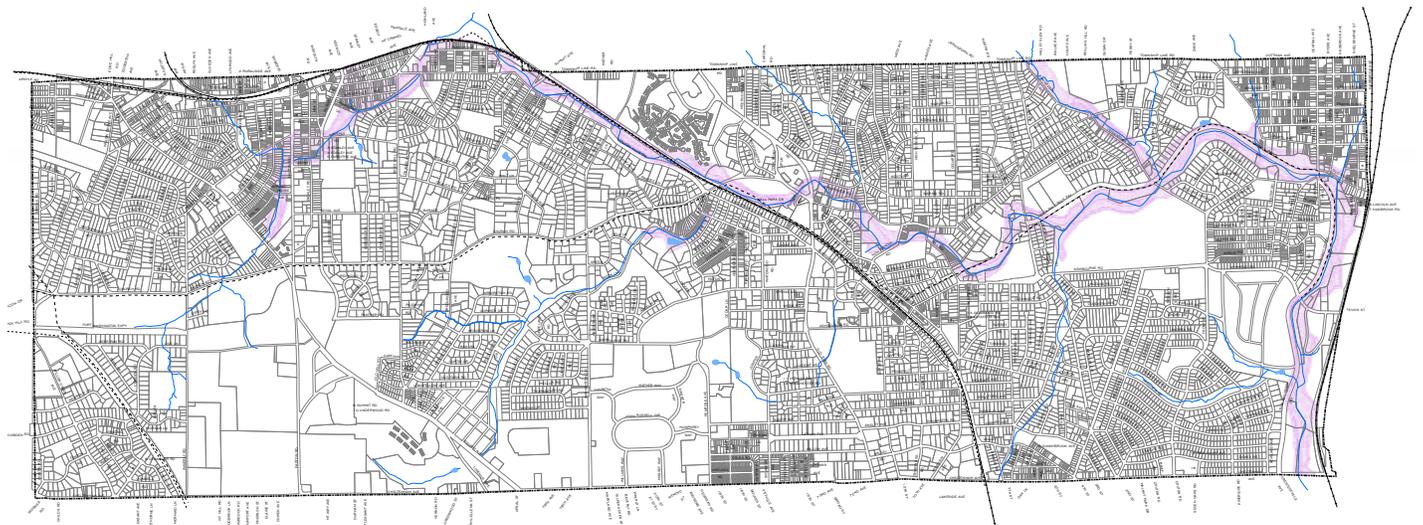
Water Quick Fact: The US EPA estimates that there are *41,154 impaired waterbodies* nationally. This impairment is a result of contamination by pathogens, heavy metals, nutrients or organic materials, usually from atmospheric deposition, agriculture, stormwater, or hydrologic modifications. Cheltenham lies primarily within the Tookany Creek watershed, which has been listed as impaired by the US EPA. Of the Township's 9.06 square miles, 98% has been developed. Of that, 31.2% is impervious surface, discharging significant amounts of stormwater to the creek.

Climate Change Quick Fact: Climate change generally refers to the significant and lasting change in global temperatures, weather and climate patterns via anthropogenic sources; it does not depend on whether "global warming" is or is not happening. It is also influenced by natural sources: oceanic processes, variations in solar radiation, and volcanic activity. Current climate-related impacts include changes in precipitation patterns (heavy downpours, drought), rising temperatures, and earlier snowmelt. Changes in climate have the potential to influence crop, livestock and human health. Cheltenham Township has approximately 380 acres in the 100-year floodplain. Climate change will influence the strength of storms, potentially leading to damaging and recurring flooding in these areas.

IMPERVIOUS COVERAGE

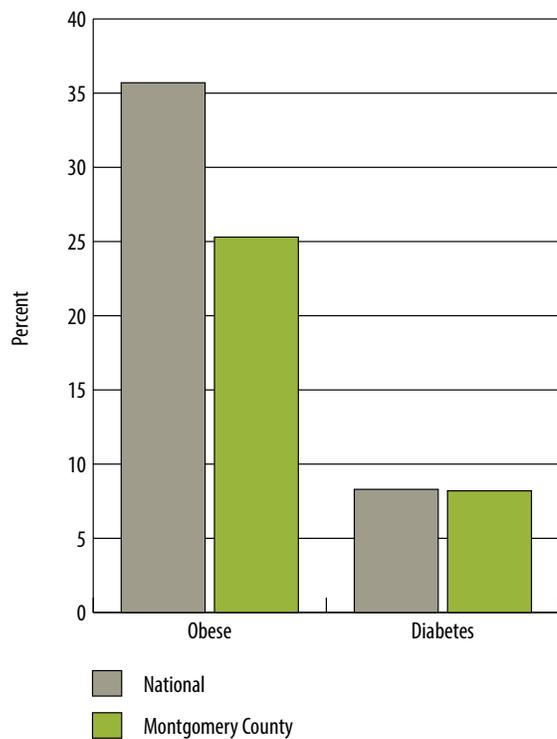


CURRENT FEMA FLOODPLAIN



Healthy Living Quick Fact: Some of the nation’s population lacks access to the basics underlying a healthy lifestyle. This could be a lack of access to education, healthcare, healthy foods, recreation, transportation, and clean air and water. This is exemplified in the nation’s obesity rates, where more than *one-third of U.S. adults* (35.7 percent) are obese, and approximately 8.3 percent of the population has diabetes. Based on 2010 Census data, 25 percent of Montgomery County’s population suffers from obesity and the resultant health problems (8.2 percent of the population has diabetes).

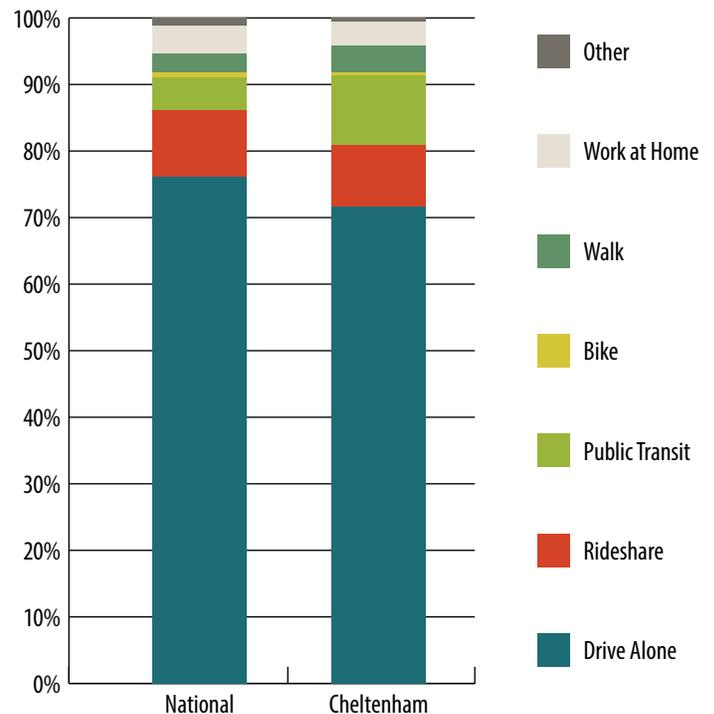
OBSESITY AND DIABETES RATES



Transportation Quick Fact: While there is a push to use alternative modes of transportation, the single-occupancy vehicle remains the most prevalent mode of transit. In 2009, 86% of national commuters drove cars (either single-occupancy or carpooled), 5% used public transportation, 3% walked, and 0.6% biked. A car-centric transportation system relies on imported oil, emits carbon dioxide and other pollutants, reduces opportunities for physical exercise, and requires a network of impervious surfaces. The relatively easy access to public transportation means that Cheltenham’s population has a higher than

average transit use (10.5 percent in 2010). However, the majority of the Cheltenham’s population still relies on single occupancy vehicles for commuting.

MODES OF TRANSPORTATION



The Sustainability Plan

Discussions among residents, the Sustainable Cheltenham Committee, and MCPC about these issues led to the identification of ten community-wide goals focusing on sustainability. Each goal contains a set of objectives for private as well as public (local government) action, and the potential for public-private ventures. The community took the planning process one step further and identified a set of concrete, achievable actions that the local governments could take to meet these important community health objectives.

This plan is meant to evolve and change over time. The goals, objectives and action items should be assessed on a regular basis and modified to fit the changing needs of Cheltenham Township. In the near future, new technologies and techniques may become available that will help Cheltenham become more sustainable, or new challenges may arise that require swift action by the community. This plan should adapt to the needs of Cheltenham Township so that it can be a valuable tool to promote

sustainability. In 2020, the Township could perform an overall assessment of the Sustainability Plan and perform a formal update of the plan to ensure it remains a useful tool for community. The rest of this document will discuss these goals and actions in greater detail.

The Cheltenham Sustainability Plan is divided into various sections detailed below. Each section can be used separately, or they can all be read as one publication. The Cheltenham Sustainability Plan contains the following sections:

Executive Summary – The executive summary is a concise description of the reasons for the plan, the planning process, how the plan is structured and how it will be implemented.

Goals and Objectives – This section describes the goals and objectives for Cheltenham Township. These goals and objectives can be used by any organization, institution or individual in the Township to promote sustainability.

Municipal Action Plan – Cheltenham Township government strives to be a leader in sustainability. If the Township hopes its businesses and residents will live in a more sustainable manner, then the Township government should commit itself to be a “good citizen” and set a good example. The Cheltenham Township Sustainability Municipal Action Plan identifies many steps that the Township could take to operate in a more sustainable manner. By adopting this plan the Cheltenham Township government has indicated its intention to implement as many of the action items as it can. Some may not be accomplished immediately and some will take consistent resolve over several years to accomplish, but all the items are worthy of review and consideration. All members of the community – especially larger employers, academic institutions, the school district, hospitals, and private living communities – are encouraged to create their own sustainability action plans and outline the steps they can undertake to accomplish our community’s sustainability goals. Numerous action items in the Municipal Action Plan will require cooperation and assistance from the public to accomplish, and many action items can also be accomplished by citizens’ and community groups’ efforts. The action items that easily lend themselves to this type of community involvement are given a special designation in the Municipal Action Plan.

Sustainability Resources – This section functions as a resource for Cheltenham Township to pursue the sustainability goals. For each goal, this section provides information so that the reader can understand the role of sustainability in Cheltenham.

Input from Stakeholders – The material in this section contains valuable comments gathered during the public process and is not an official part of the Sustainability Plan.