

## Chapter 4

# Natural and Historic Resources

The singular most extensive and noteworthy natural resource(s) in Horsham are the rich variety of natural lands associated with the Little Neshaminy Creek, the Park Creek, and the Pennypack Creek Watersheds and their numerous tributaries that traverse broad areas of Horsham Township. More than one-third of the Township is characterized by the floodplains, wetlands and other sensitive environments within the riparian corridors associated with these three prominent watersheds.

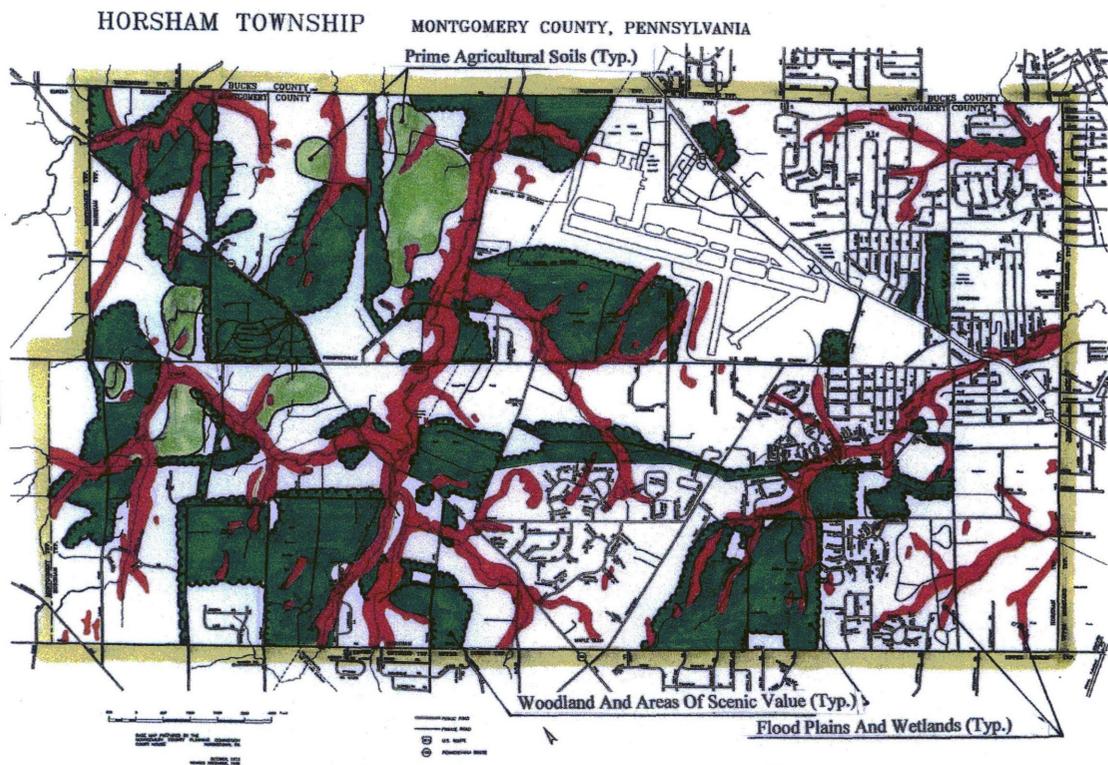


Figure 4-1  
Composite Map of Environmentally  
Sensitive Areas

As can be seen, the creek valleys in Horsham affect all sectors of the Township (including isolated areas on the Naval base).

The Township's record of preserving natural features and recreation areas is a good one, and includes sensitive areas of the three principal watersheds.

## **Steep Slopes**

Land with steep slopes (in excess of 15% slope) often has a combination of vegetation, climate, soil and underlying geology that differs from the surrounding area. Frequently, this means that the environmental sensitivity of the steep slope is different as well. Susceptibility to erosion and mass movement may be greater than the surrounding area, especially if vegetation is removed. Increased runoff and sedimentation from disturbed slopes require increased public expenditure for flood control and stormwater management. Also, different species of plants and the associated wildlife that depends on these plants may be present only on the slopes, creating unique recreation opportunities.

The USGS Topographic Quadrangles show that Horsham Township has a slight amount of steep slopes and virtually no slopes in excess of 15% except for narrow edges along the water courses in the significant creek valleys: the Little Neshaminy, Park and Pennypack Creek Watersheds. Slope changes in Horsham are gradual and at their steepest gradient are typically within the 5 to 8% slope range, which is considered moderate rather than steep (usually in excess of 15% slope). However, the steep edges along creek valleys should be protected.

## **Woodlands and Scenic Resources**

Wooded areas are primarily located in the undeveloped stream valleys, on golf courses, in the passive areas of many Township parks and in protected lands such as the Natural Lands Trust properties, the College Farm Settlement, and broad vacant lands in the northwest sector of the Township. Approximately 50% of the vacant and protected open space portions of the Township are substantially wooded consisting of mature deciduous forests (areas of 10 acres or greater).

Numerous country roadways are considered to have scenic qualities including:

- Cedar Hill Road
- Chestnut Lane
- Davis Grove Road
- Keith Valley Road
- Limekiln Pike
- Mann Road
- McKean Road
- Mullin Road
- Park Road
- Tennis Avenue



*Driving north on Chestnut Lane*

## **Farms and Prime Agricultural Soils**

Farming activity on tracts in excess of 25 acres exists in concentrations along both sides of Mann Road and in the far north and west edges of the Township. Crops are grown on tracts generally along both sides of Limekiln Pike west of Whitmarsh Memorial Cemetery and on large tracts between Limekiln Pike and County Line Road west of Keith Valley Road. Many of these properties shown as Agricultural lands on the Existing Land Use Plan found in this report are members of an Agricultural Security Area designated by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Some of these properties, such as the two Thompson properties and Strawbridge Park (the agricultural lands), are presently deed restricted pursuant to private conservation easements. Portions of these properties are generally level and also heavily wooded, particularly those traversed by tributaries of the Park Creek Watershed.

## **Historic Resources**

Early structures that once dotted the landscape and formed the nucleus of villages still stand among the more recent residential development. Historic resources include structures and sites of architectural significance and those associated with important events or people that shaped the history of the community, region, state or nation. Their preservation can contribute to community character. The Montgomery County Planning Commission prepared a county-wide

listing of historic sites and structures in 1973, updated in 1976. This is the only inventory for Horsham known to have been conducted. Figure 4-2, Historic Resources, identifies the resources from this inventory that still remain. The current owners have been supplied to the list.

1. Philip J. Baur House
2. Buttonwood Farm
3. Whitemarsh Cemetery Chapel
4. William Donnelly
5. Miss Maria Snyder (Toll House)
6. Burgdorf House
7. M. Mintz House
8. Kenderline Mill - R. Mintz Homestead
9. Keith House (Graeme Park)
10. Horsham Friends Meeting
- 10A. Caretaker's House, Horsham Friends Meeting
11. Joseph C. Park House
12. Arthur Polley House
13. St. Catherine of Sienna Rectory
14. Iredell House
15. Former Rulon E. Wetherill
16. Former Mrs. Morris Roosevelt
17. Dr. Harbib Tansey
18. George Felbin
19. Whitemarsh Creamery
20. Paul A. Urffer
21. Horsham Township (former Anderson House Compound)
22. Sidney N. Replier
23. E. E. Novotny
24. Richard Harvey, III
25. James L. Milford
26. Edward Mortimer Homestead



*Horsham Meeting House Viewed from Easton Road (circa 1803)*

The 1975 inventory ranked the Kenderdine Mill & Smith Homestead, Keith House (Graeme Park), and Horsham Friends Meeting as first priority for preservation, and as such these buildings and sites are suitable for placement on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Keith House may possess the greatest wealth of historical qualities of any of those situated in Horsham Township. The Keith House was originally known as "Fountain Low" named by William Keith, who built the house and other buildings in 1722. William Keith was Pennsylvania's Provisional Governor, who lived in the house from 1726 to 1728. Following a dispute with the William Penn family he was removed from office and moved back to England.

Eleven years after his departure the buildings and land were sold to Dr. Thomas Graeme, who married Keith's stepdaughter. He modified the interior of the three story stone building to make it look more like that of a country estate than that of a distillery, which was the first use of the complex. During the American Revolution, Colonial General Anthony Wayne used the property as his headquarters in 1777.

The house and park land were donated to the State in 1958 by Margaret Strawbridge, who came to live in the house in 1920. Members of the Friends of Graeme Park have recruited volunteers to conduct tours and do light housekeeping to help maintain the house and the property. The site is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the park and house are administered by the Pennsylvania Historical Museum Commission.

## **Watersheds and Stormwater Management**

Horsham Township lies within three watershed areas. The great northwestern portion of the Township drains to the Little Neshaminy Creek and most of the southeastern portion drains to the Pennypack Creek. The dividing line of the respective drainage areas begins roughly at the intersection of Norristown Road and Welsh Road. A small portion along Route 309 drains to the Wissahickon Creek.

The portion of the Township that lies within the Little Neshaminy Creek Watershed is currently subject to the provisions of the Neshaminy/Little Neshaminy Creek Watershed Act 167 ordinance. The current Little Neshaminy Creek Act 167 ordinance requires development applications to reduce both stormwater runoff rates and stormwater volumes to pre-development drainage conditions. Horsham Township's ordinance also promotes innovative solutions to stormwater management, including recommendations from the Pennsylvania BMP manual regarding water quality improvements and sustainable solutions to reduce long-term maintenance.

The Pennypack Creek does not currently have an approved Act 167 plan. However, the portion of the Township that lies within the Pennypack Creek Watershed also requires development applications to reduce both stormwater runoff rates and stormwater volumes to

pre-development drainage conditions. Similar to the Little Neshaminy Creek portion of the Township, the stormwater ordinance promotes innovative and sustainable solutions to stormwater management, including recommendations from the Pennsylvania BMP manual.

The stormwater ordinance provisions in all watersheds in Horsham Township require that future development must occur in a sustainable and environmentally sensitive manner that both improves water quality and reduces downstream flooding.

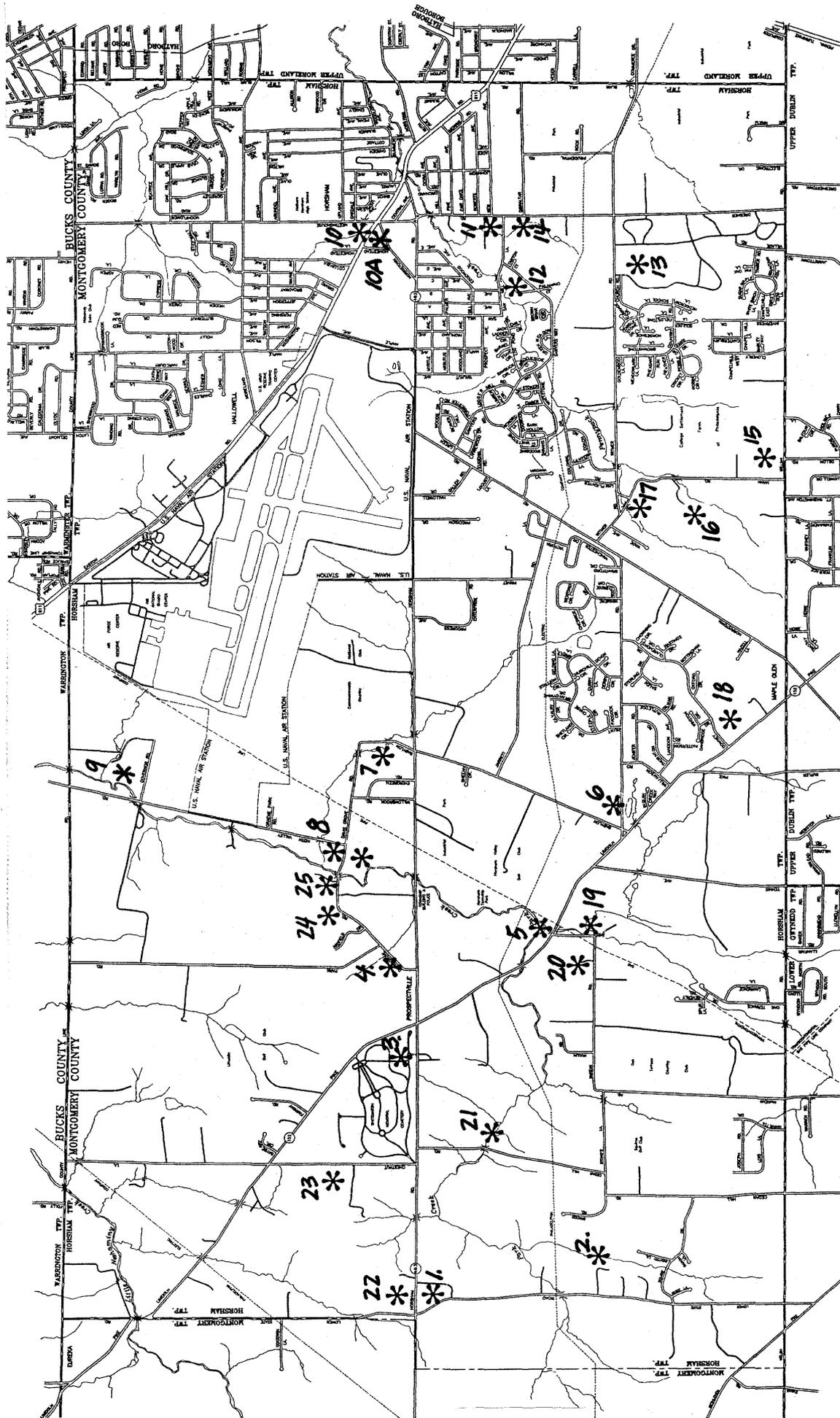
## **Recommendations**

Existing zoning ordinances and environmental protection regulations include significant control of the following sensitive areas:

1. Protection of riparian buffer zones along streams and creek banks.
2. Protection of areas with steep slopes.
3. Protection of regulated wetlands along with sensitive margin areas around the wetlands.
4. Protection of mature woodland areas.
5. Protection of floodplains consistent with FEMA standards.

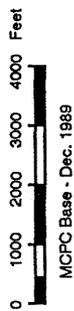
It is determined that healthy riparian corridors will improve water quality, protect the health of stream wildlife, permit natural stormwater retention areas, control erosion and protect existing habitats, and create climate moderation.

In 2005, Horsham adopted zoning regulations which support the protection of Class I and Class II historic resources (based on Pennsylvania Historic Preservation criteria) by creating an Historic Resource Overlay District. Historic resources that are preserved may benefit from land use and density bonuses in furtherance of their unique historic, architectural and cultural assets. The regulations also discourage the unnecessary demolition of historic resources. The ordinance is administered by the Horsham Historical Advisory Commission which advises Township Council.



**Figure 4-2**  
**Historic Resources**

\* Known Historic Sites and Structures



Prepared by  
 Montgomery County Planning Commission  
 Courthouse Norristown, Pennsylvania  
 MAY 1991

*Updated by E. VAN RIEKER, 1995*  
 SOURCE: Inventory of Historical and Cultural Resources, MCPC 1975.