



*Established 1725*

# London Britain Township Newsletter

**Chester County, Pennsylvania**

**Summer 2012**

## *Understanding Open Space in London Britain Township*

Unless conserved through legal means, all parcels of land have the possibility to be developed; it is the right of the landowner to determine how his or her lands will be developed within the regulations of a municipality's zoning and subdivision/land use ordinances.

Keeping London Britain Township's rural residential character and not allowing the over-development of this Township is at the heart of open space planning and preservation for this community. This issue of the London Britain Township newsletter focuses on the Township's open space preservation plan so that all residents can understand its history, its objectives and goals, its funding, its benefits for residents, and reflect on its success in our community.

### ***A History of Open Space in LBT***

Since the mid-1980s Southern Chester County has been the focus of developers hoping to purchase large tracts of land to develop into one-acre cookie-cutter housing developments.

Open space planning in London Britain Township was first mentioned in the 1990 Comprehensive Plan with the primary goal to purchase and establish a Township Park. The second focus was on the preservation of agricultural lands in the southwest corner of the Township as a way to establish a greenway between the Fair Hill Natural Resources Area and the White Clay Creek Preserve.

In 1992 the Township adopted its Open Space, Recreation and Environmental Resources Plan. It provided a comprehensive inventory of Township open space, natural resources, recreational facilities, and cultural and historic resources. It included recommendations such as amending Township ordinances to protect natural resources, create open space and continue development of an interconnected trail system.

In 1996 Chester County adopted Landscapes: Managing Change in Chester County, a comprehensive planning document that encouraged the preservation of the county's dwindling agricultural lands, natural spaces, and open land. Part of Landscapes was the development of a grant fund at the county level to help local municipalities obtain open space.

The Quality of Life section of the 2006 Community Planning Survey identified that overall retention of rural character, open space preservation and equestrian/agricultural preservation ranked in the top most important planning objectives identified by residents. Residents want to promote further development of parks, recreation, and trails.

The wishes of the community were integrated into the current London Britain Township Comprehensive Plan, adopted November 24, 2008. Chapter 4 of the 2008 Comprehensive Plan details London Britain Township's Open Space and Recreation plan.

### ***LBT Open Space Preservation Efforts***

In addition to the 1990 Comprehensive Plan, and the Open Space, Recreation and Environmental Resources Plan (mentioned above) and the community-supported open space real estate tax (described on page 2), the 2008 Comprehensive Plan outlines the Township's other preservation efforts as follows:

#### **Zoning**

The Township zoning ordinance includes natural resource protection standards that limit or prohibit the disturbance of natural resources including, but not limited to steep slopes, woodlands, wetlands, and floodplains. These standards serve to protect wildlife habitat and sensitive resources throughout the Township. Enforcing these standards and applying them to proposed development plans promotes the creation of the Township open space and greenway network.

#### **Open Space Design**

The Conservation Overlay District of the zoning ordinance requires significant open space protection in the RA Zoning District that encompasses a majority of the Township. Between 40 percent and 70 percent of a tract must be permanently preserved as open space with residential development permitted on the remainder of the tract.

#### **Transfer of Development Rights**

The Township zoning ordinance permits the transfer of development rights between two or more parcels that are under single ownership when developed under a unified plan.

#### **Township Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance**

The LBT Subdivision and Land Development ordinance, similar to and in conjunction with the Zoning Ordinance, includes a variety of regulations protecting open space, trails, and natural resources.

#### **London Britain Township Land Trust**

The London Britain Township Land Trust was incorporated in 1999 to serve as a supporting organization for the Township in its efforts to preserve land. Members of the Board are residents who serve in a voluntary capacity. Part of its mission is to assist the Township in decisions regarding open space, assist land owners with land conservation decisions, serve as a liaison with conservation organizations, acquire land in fee and by easements, and manage open space areas and greenways.

#### **Mason-Dixon Greenway Master Site Plan, South**

The Mason Dixon Greenway Master Site Plan, South provides an in depth description of the background and importance of creating a linkage between the White Clay Creek Preserve and the Fair Hill Resource Management Area. The focus is on the southern portion of the greenway from Elbow Lane to Strickersville Road, including preserved lands near the Flint Hill Crossing subdivision.



White Clay Creek State Preserve

## *LBT's Open Space Goals and Objectives*

Chapter 4 of LBT's 2008 Comprehensive Plan defines the goals and objectives of open space in this community.

The two goals are:

- Increase the Township's protected open space system to expand and complement the White Clay Creek Preserve and Fair Hill natural resource area and encourage preservation of open space in a natural state.
- Maintain, enhance and expand the trails, parks, and recreational facilities to promote and facilitate healthy lifestyles and activities of Township residents.

The objectives are:

- Continue the active efforts of the Township for the purchase of conservation easements, development rights, or fee simple purchase of land for open space, natural, and scenic resources preservation purposes, and pursue various funding sources.
- Require and develop a contiguous and continual Township trail system as part of the subdivision and land development process.
- Examine and implement regulatory and non-regulatory measures, incentives and programs for the preservation of open space and the protection of sensitive, scenic, and important natural resources.
- Educate landowners about public and private means of land preservation in association with natural resource protection.
- Promote the use of open space conservation measures already in use in the Township, such as through the London Britain Land Trust.
- Develop the Township Park, as needed, to meet the needs of residents based on the recommendations of the Nichol Park Master Plan.
- Examine creating physical links among Township and non-Township park, recreation, and open space facilities.

Every decision the Township makes in regard to open space preservation is measured by how well the decision meets the intention of these goals and objectives.

Kalb Property, Privately Conserved, 2011

Mason Dixon Greenway Trail, Lot 5

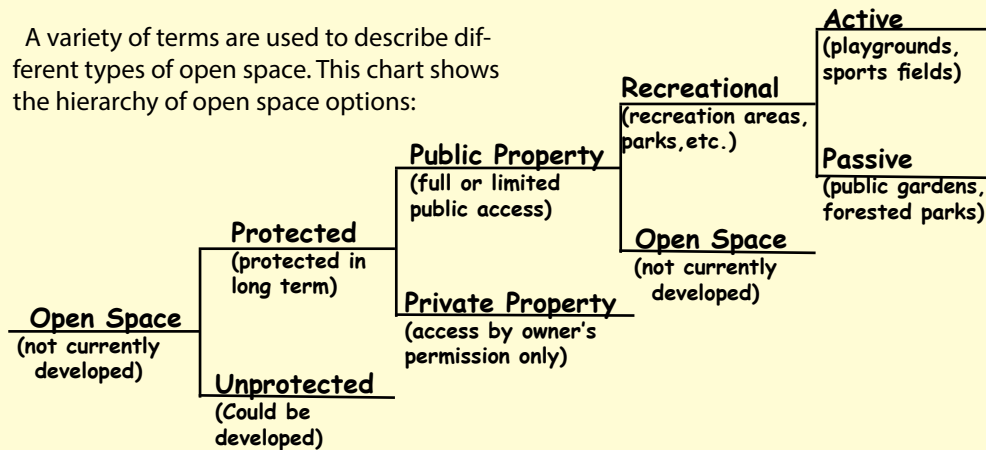
Meadowset Farm Privately conserved, 2011

Wilkins Farm Agricultural Easement, 2010

# What is Open Space?

General term: any land that is not covered by buildings or pavement.

A variety of terms are used to describe different types of open space. This chart shows the hierarchy of open space options:



## Why Support Open Space Preservation?

1. Preserved open space protects the rural character of our community and our quality of life.
2. Open space protects drinking water supplies, with its ability to filter storm water before it reaches area creeks, streams, and aquifers.
3. Riparian buffers along creeks and streams reduce flooding and improve the health of the stream, therefore improving the quality of aquatic life.
4. Most new homes add a minimum of two cars using the road network. Open space decreases road congestion and air pollution.
5. Protected areas allow wildlife and native plants to survive. Linked open spaces creates a biodiversity corridor.
6. Preserved lands provide opportunities to hike, fish, hunt, and appreciate nature.
7. Plus there are economic benefits to supporting open space (see below).

## Economic Benefits of Open Space

A study by the Green Space Alliance and the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission examined the economic benefits of open space in the five-county southeastern Pennsylvania region. Approximately 14 percent of land, or 300 square miles, in the five-county region is preserved open space. The study found that this open space provides substantial economic benefits. Specifically this space:

- Increases homeowner's property values by an average of \$10,000 per household;
- Saves local governments and utilities more than \$132 million a year in costs associated with environmental services such as drinking water filtration and flood control;
- Helps residents and businesses avoid nearly \$800 million in direct and indirect medical costs and save businesses an additional \$500 million in workers' compensation costs and costs related to lost productivity;
- Generates more that \$566 million in annual spending, \$299 million in annual salaries and \$30 million in state and local tax revenue, and
- Supports nearly 7,000 jobs.

The complete study is available at [www.greenspacealliance.org](http://www.greenspacealliance.org).

## LBT Cost of Community Services

In 2006, Brandywine Conservancy conducted a Cost of Community Services analysis for the Township. The result of this analysis documented that tax revenue generated by new residential development does not cover the costs of municipal services and educational demands that the development generates. Farms and commercial land uses generate a net budget surplus.

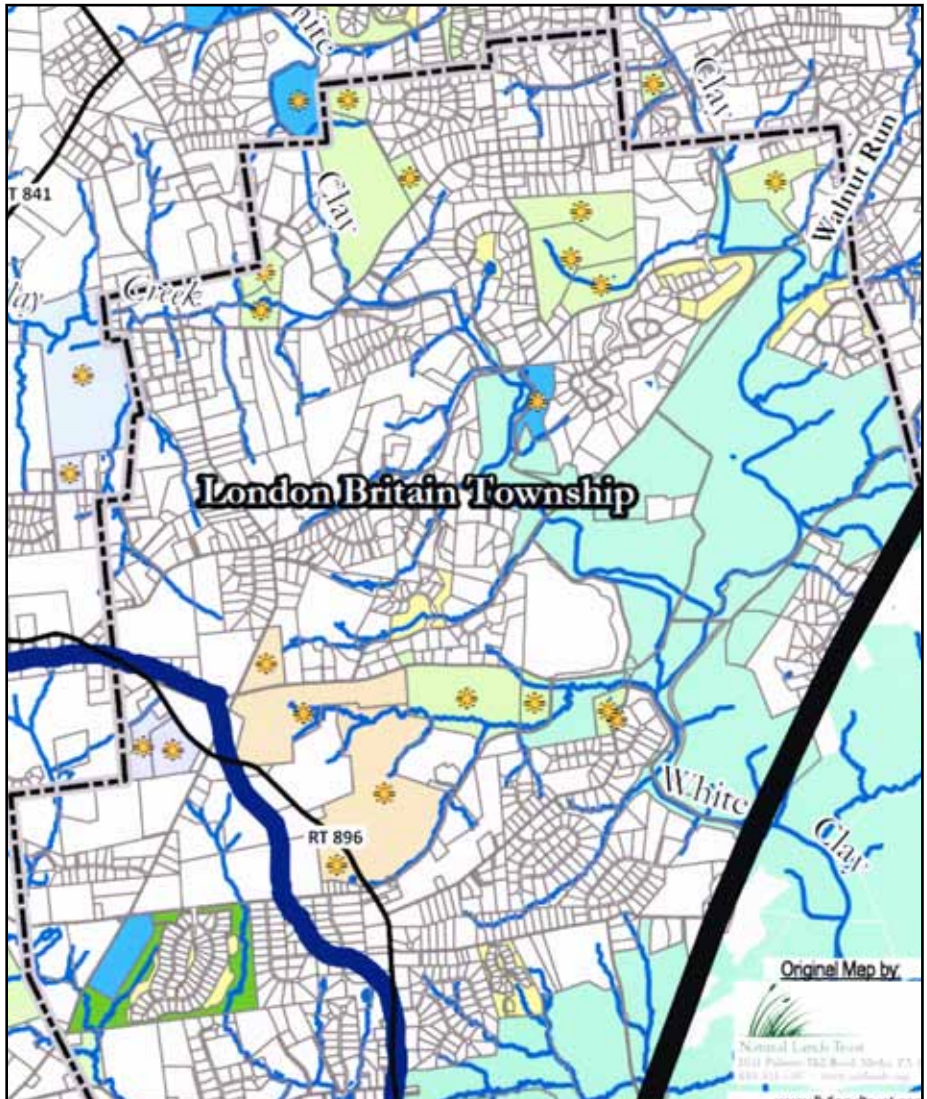
The report summarized, "For every \$1.00 in revenue from residential land, it costs \$1.03 to service that land use in terms of schools, roads, public safety, etc. Alternately, agricultural and commercial land uses require only \$0.12 in services for every \$1.00 in revenue generated."



# *Inventory of London Britain Township Open Space*

The map at right highlights the existing uses of land in London Britain Township. There are 6,278 acres of land in the Township. As of July 2012, the total of Protected Open Space Land in the Township is 2,743.6 acres which is 43.7% of the land in LBT. The breakdown of the Protected Open Space Land is:

- State Owned White Clay Creek Preserve Land: 2,021.4 acres.
- Privately Owned Lands Protected by Conservation Easements: 484.08 acres.
- Home Owner Association Owned Open Space Land: 98 acres.
- Township Owned Recreation and Open Space Land: 84.33 acres.
- LBT Land Trust Owned Recreation and Open Space Land: 55.79 acres.



Key	
	Privately owned lands
	State owned, preserved
	Privately owned and protected by easements
	Home Owner Association
	LBT Land Trust owned
	Township owned
	Agricultural easement

## *The LBT Open Space Tax*

In July 2000, London Britain Township's Board of Supervisors approved an ordinance authorizing a referendum to be placed on the November 2000 General Election ballot asking residents to accept a \$20 fee for every \$100,000 of assessed value dedicated to open space preservation.

The referendum was overwhelmingly passed with more than 80% of voters accepting a real estate tax dedicated to the preservation of open space in this community.

Beginning in January 2001, the tax was instituted in London Britain Township.

## *LBT Open Space Funding Facts*

In January 2001, the Township Supervisors adopted a 0.2 mill property tax dedicated to open space preservation after the open space lands tax referendum in the November 2000 was overwhelmingly approved by Township residents. Since 2001, the fund has collected taxes of \$541,000.

The Township has utilized the funds to:

- Match \$430,964 in grants from the state and county and pay loan principal and interest expenditures utilized to purchase 27.6 acres of land for passive recreation and park uses (at a cost of \$665,157).
- Obtain a trail easement for a contribution of \$35,821.25.
- Contribute \$81,000 towards conservation easements on four properties.

The cash balance of the Open Space Fund as of April 30, 2012 is \$408,902.60. \$209,821 is encumbered by the principal amount of the loans incurred to purchase the land.

**Nichol Park, Township-owned, Active Recreation**



**Nivendel Farm, Privately Conserved, 2010**





## Inside this Issue: London Britain's Open Space Program

- History of Open Space
- Preservation Efforts
- What is Open Space
- Open Space Goals and Objective
- Benefits of Open Space
- Open Space Funding

### Township Directory

#### BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Glenn Frederick - Chairman  
David Owens - Vice Chairman  
Aileen Parrish - Member

#### STAFF

Carolyn Matalon -  
Secretary and Parks Manager  
Dave Gargula - Zoning Officer  
Joe Ferguson - Roadmaster and  
Director of Public Works  
Dan Tracey, Gary Neil , and Steve  
Dudkewitz- Road Crew  
Pat Walsh, Walsh Engineering -  
Township Engineer  
Janie Schnelle- Tax Collector  
Nette Stejskal - Treasurer and  
Project Coordinator

#### CONTACT INFO

##### Office/Meeting Hall/Garage:

81 Good Hope Road  
Landenberg PA 19350

##### Mailing address:

P.O. Box 215,  
Kemblesville PA 19347

Phone: 610-255-0388

Fax: 610-255-3542

#### WEBSITE

[www.londonbritaintownship-pa.gov](http://www.londonbritaintownship-pa.gov)

#### EMAIL

[carolyn.londonbritaintwp@comcast.net](mailto:carolyn.londonbritaintwp@comcast.net)

*This newsletter is published by the London Britain Township Board of Supervisors, and produced by Secretary Carolyn Matalon and Lucas Communications and Publications.*

London Britain Township  
P. O. Box 215  
Kemblesville, PA 19347

### Nichol Park Dedication Honors the Cheynes

On January 20, 2012 Nichol Park's playground was dedicated with the unveiling of a plaque, which says:

*To the children of London Britain Township*

*This playground is dedicated to Bob and Sally Cheyne in recognition of their service for 25 years to keep our township rural, natural and scenic for you to enjoy today.*

*As we go forward, may you carry their vision for a beautiful London Britain and share it with your children.*



*Sally Cheyne (tan coat), is surrounded by friends and family at the plaque's unveiling.*



*Joey Ferguson, fifth generation Ferguson in LBT, cuts the ribbon of the Joseph and Mary Ferguson Woodland Walkway (named after his grandparents who farmed this land).*

### Mason-Dixon Greenway South Dedicated

The Mason-Dixon Greenway South dedication ceremony on June 15, highlighted the accomplishment of a major portion of a wildlife corridor from Fair Hill to White Clay Creek. It celebrated the people and organizations who made the project possible. Among the participants were State Representative Chris Ross and County Commissioner Ryan Costello, LBT Supervisors, LBT Land Trust and many residents.

This 92-acre passive recreation park is open for hiking, biking, and horseback riding. The parking lot is located on Flint Hill Road, less than a quarter-mile south of Strickersville Road. Give it a try this summer.

### Welcome WGFC Event

LBT would like to hold a community event to welcome the West Grove Fire Company to the Township. LBT resident, Carla Lucas, has agreed to chair the committee and invites others to join her. Please call the Township Office for details.

### Friends of White Clay Creek Preserve

Friends of White Clay Creek Preserve (PA) was chartered by a group of concerned citizens to support the Pennsylvania portion of the White Clay Creek Preserve and Park system in March 2012. It is a local chapter of the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation, an organization dedicated to helping all of Pennsylvania's state parks, forests and preserves.

At [www.FriendsofPaWCCP.org](http://www.FriendsofPaWCCP.org), learn more about the organization, new events/programs and volunteer opportunities.

**2013 Budget- Check the Township website for all process updates up to the time of the budget adoption in December 2012.**