

Do you consider over-development to be an issue in Uwchlan Township and, if so, what would you do to minimize it?

I don't consider "over-development" to be an incredibly helpful term, because it is very poorly defined, and a community's perception of development and over-development changes over time.

Every community needs to be able to change and grow. There is no "freeze" button that can lock in the moment when a community is at some kind of ideal state. There has to be opportunity for new types of restaurants, businesses, homes, open spaces, and infrastructure so that the community can stay vibrant. Areas that try to stop change inevitably begin to become stale and begin to deteriorate. If you look across the state and country, towns and cities that stopped growing and stopped allowing new development and new business have stagnated or have had other unintended consequences.

In the early post-WWII era, Uwchlan Township was a rural community primarily made up of dairy farms, with a couple small villages. In 1960, the population numbered just under 1000 residents. From this point forward, the population in Uwchlan basically exploded for 30-40 years. In the 1960's, the population increased 450%, reaching approximately 5500 residents. In the 1970's it increased 53%, reaching about 8300 residents. The 1980's saw an additional 55% increase, to 13,000 residents. Finally, in the 1990's we saw some slowing (+27.5%), but still added about 3500 new residents. In the last twenty years, the growth of Uwchlan has started to stabilize, with only a 9% gain in 2000's and a 6% gain in the 2010's. The latest numbers I have seen puts our population just under 20,000 residents (source: Uwchlan Township 2020 Comprehensive Plan).

I'm sure the dairy farmers in Uwchlan complained about overdevelopment ruining their community when the first shovels hit the ground in Marchwood. I'm sure the same was said when each new development started. I suspect that at the end of each decade, if you polled the residents of Uwchlan, many people would have told you that Uwchlan was "full" or "overdeveloped," or that the Township had gotten worse in the previous 10 years. There are, of course, down sides and tradeoffs to the increased development and population. Traffic is worse, we're dealing with more stormwater issues as a result of more impervious coverage and increased severity of storms due to climate change, we see new developments encroaching on areas that were undeveloped for so long. These are real challenges, and there's no way to sugar coat the fact that these are going to adversely affect people in our community and beyond.

And yet people still have wanted to move here, and we have gotten more prosperous and added more and more amenities that have improved all of our lives. Our schools are dramatically better than they were years ago, with DASD now being one of the top districts in the state. We have thriving businesses in our commercial districts. We have dedicated parks for recreation, over 1000 acres of open space and preserved land, a great township walking path network, a growing number of top-notch restaurants, and our property values have continued to climb. We're located near to some of the top hospitals and medical centers in the state. We can afford to fund a strong, well run police department. Our emergency services provide great safety and protection, and we've so far avoided the crises hitting emergency services in more rural parts of the state.

My colleagues and I on the Board of Supervisors approved our updated vision of growth and development for our township in the 2020 Comprehensive Plan. This document (<https://www.uwchlan.com/DocumentCenter/View/814/2020-Comprehensive-Plan-Update-Final-Draft>)

provides the blueprint for how we want the township to develop for the future. Putting together this comprehensive plan is an exercise that the township does every 10 years to update the previous plan and is a major undertaking in terms of time and effort. In the plan, we identified aspects that guide the desired growth and development, related to: land use; community facilities and services; parks recreation and open space; traffic and circulation; housing; natural and historic resources; and energy conservation, waste reduction, reuse, and recycling. As stated in the plan, our goal is “provide for orderly and sustainable development in a manner that will enhance the Township and protect the health, safety, and welfare of all persons residing in Uwchlan” (Uwchlan Township 2020 Comprehensive Plan). With regards to land use, our vision from the plan is to “realize a future overall development pattern that is naturally sustainable and generally consistent with the existing pattern, accommodating attractive redevelopment and supporting economic opportunity while preserving the character of the Township” (Uwchlan Township 2020 Comprehensive Plan, Chapter 3).

One thing that is true is that the township doesn’t have absolute power to dictate what gets built and what doesn’t get built. We don’t pick and choose the people who buy land and propose developments. We also have to live with our history – choices made decades ago continue to reverberate in our time and will dictate the path of development on some properties in the township. We can work to mitigate the impacts as much as possible, but we cannot always prevent a development that we do not want.

Nonetheless, I’m incredibly optimistic about our township. I hear people say how the township is now “ruined” or “full” or that “it’s really going down.” To those people, I say, go take a walk along the Shamona Creek or Struble trail, or listen to music at Eagleview Town Center. Get a beverage and a meal at one of the great restaurants. Go watch the kids play softball, baseball, lacrosse, soccer, or any of the other sports in one of our parks. Or go play pickleball at our new Ted Gacomis Park. Read about the great colleges our kids are getting into. See a play at the Barley Sheaf. There is so much positive about this area that I think it’s easy to lose sight of how lucky we are.

I think everyone deserves to have a representative who is optimistic about our township. I hope the whoever gets elected believes this is a great place to live, and that it’s going to remain a great place to live. We certainly have our challenges, but we are also a vibrant community that is growing at a responsible rate, which has a well-developed comprehensive plan to assist in executing responsible growth, and which has a great future in front of us.

Do you believe that Uwchlan Township should require open space and, if so, how would you protect it?

I assume this question means to require open space from developers when they propose a new plan or a redevelopment plan. I believe that large new developments that will create significant impacts on the township should generally be expected and required to provide some open space area as part of their development plan. For small developments, like a single small building or a house, requiring open space won’t usually be feasible or particularly efficient. However, when the development is of a size where the whole community is affected, the developer needs to mitigate these impacts, and open space/preserved land is one of the top ways to do this.

This has been the practice of the Uwchlan Board of Supervisors going back to the 1960's, and in some cases the township has been able to preserve pretty large areas, protecting them from future development. Many of our parks and preserved spaces are a result of conditional use hearings where the township was able to place conditions on the approval of the plan that included parks or open space.

In our 2020 Comprehensive Plan, we laid out our strategy for continuing to expand our open space either by directly acquiring sites or requiring their preservation as open space when new development was initiated. In the plan, we state that increasing the amount of space for small parks should be one of the goals of the land development process (e.g., conditional use requirements). We have identified immediate, short-term, long term, and on-going actions that we can take to implement our parks, recreation, and open space goals. Of course, events have made some of the recommendations outdated already, but overall the plan still speaks to our preservation goals. I won't cover every aspect, but some of the highlights include:

1. Immediate/Short term goals:
 - a. Create areas within existing parks and planned parks for "new sports" and uses
 - b. Add a requirement in our ordinance for a minimum percent of usable open space within any area that requires open space.
 - c. Require that Sketch and Preliminary Plans evaluate and plot sensitive environmental features, areas for natural open space, viewsheds, and potential road layout before including lots/buildings.
2. Long term goals:
 - a. Obtain suitable neighborhood parkland within the open space of 71-acre Gray property.
 - b. Development of the 240-acre DASD tract should include a community park that includes easily accessible active and passive recreation adjacent to Lionville Station Road.
 - c. Development of the 27-acre Neilson tract south of the PA Turnpike should include parkland suitable for recreation on a portion of the property.
 - d. Continue to augment existing parks by acquiring adjacent parcels, if and when they become available.
 - e. Evaluate and consider the acquisition of the Pennypacker Country Club, if the property becomes available.
3. Ongoing
 - a. Continue to acquire a buffer along the Shamona Creek via the development process, conservation easement, or actual purchase.
 - b. Continue to acquire "gaps" within the walkway network

Obviously, there are many goals in the comprehensive plan and we won't be able to achieve all of them. Nonetheless, this is the vision we have, and I will remain flexible to take opportunities to preserve open space where I can when it is in the best interest of the community.

Do you believe that Uwchlan Township should protect its remaining farm land and, if so, how would you protect it?

The typical way that a farm is preserved in Pennsylvania is through an agricultural conservation easement. This is an agreement that is made with the owner of the farm that restricts the use of the property to only agricultural purposes. The farmer retains ownership of the land but is financially compensated for giving up rights to develop the property. (<https://www.chesco.org/4618/Farmland-Preservation>)

I strongly support the Chester County Agricultural Land Preservation Program, which manages the county's distribution of agricultural conservation easements. While Uwchlan and some of our neighbors will never be majority farmland in the foreseeable future, I think it's important to maintain some local connections to our past and to our food sources. Milky Way Farm already has an agricultural conservation easement on its 93 acres of land. Farms like this provide open space, beautiful vistas, educational opportunities, locally grown product, and, in the case of Milky Way, amazing ice cream. Milky Way Farm represents a window into our township's history, and it is wonderful that it has already been preserved.

The only other properties that are being farmed in Uwchlan Township are the DASD property (aka Lionville Station Farm) and the Gray property (71 acres on Worthington Rd). Milky Way Farm is the only property that is farmed by a farmer who owns the land. Looking at the County's Comprehensive Plan, there are no properties in Uwchlan that are currently considered by the county to be future opportunities for agricultural conservation easements (see Figure 1 below).

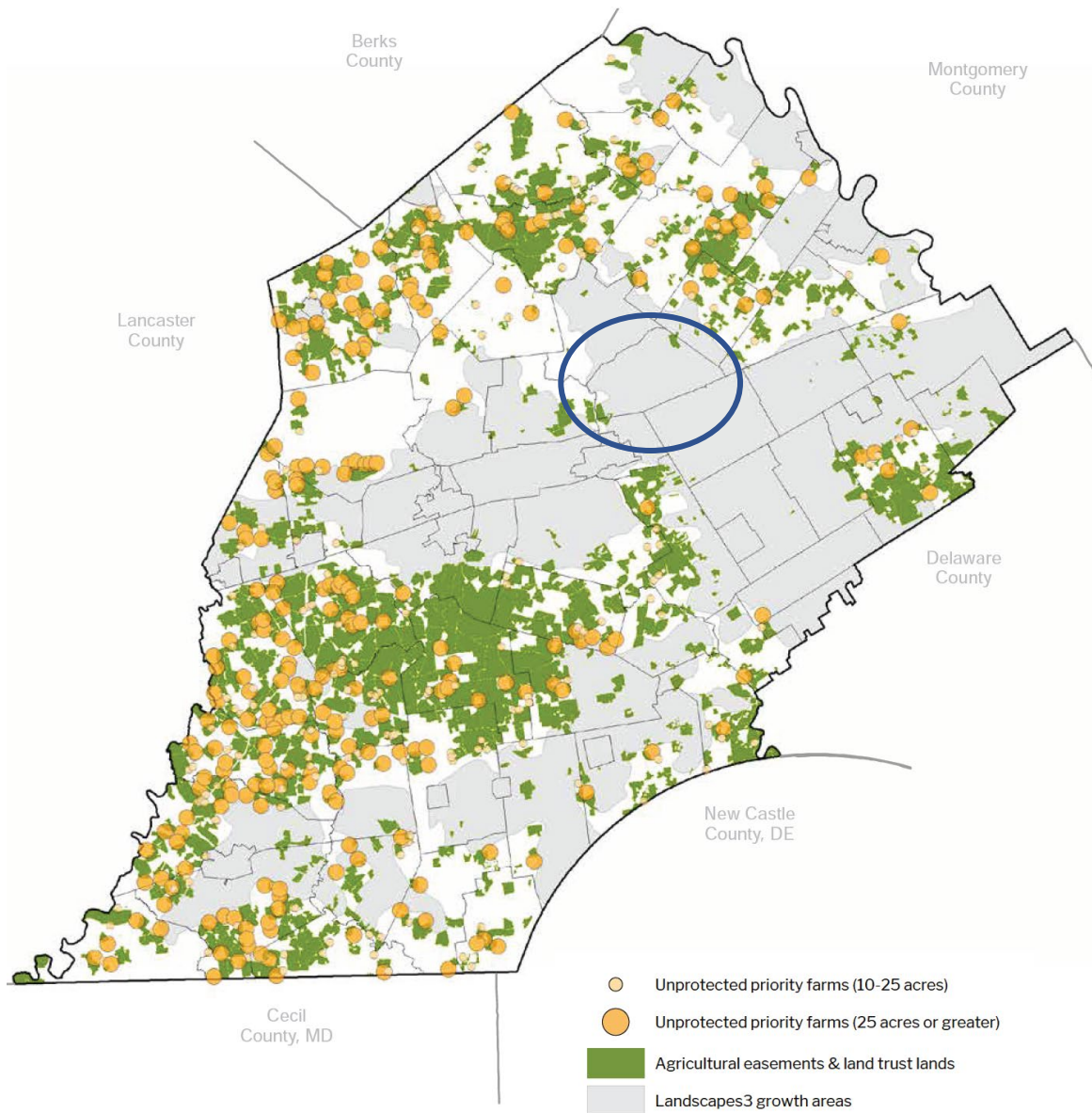


Figure 1 Farmland Conservation Opportunities - Chester County Landscapes 3 (Uwchlan circled)
<https://www.chescoplanning.org/Landscapes3/0-Home.cfm>

The DASD property/Lionville Station Farm is obviously the property that most people know about right now. The current developer has displayed no interest in an agricultural use, and the finances of this seem out of reach at this time, but if the situation changes, I would be open to assist a farmer who obtained ownership of part or all of the property if they wanted to pursue a conservation easement.

The owners of the Gray property are actively attempting to develop the land according to the current zoning (R-1 Residential). The township rejected their request for a waiver for environmental cleanup prior to construction, and we are currently in the appeal process. The property has some serious environmental issues that need to be addressed for any future use. In any case, the owner of the property is not looking to have an agricultural conservation easement.

As noted above, the county has not communicated interest in any of the properties that do not already have an easement, and the owners of those properties do appear to be interested at this time either. Nonetheless, I'm completely open to supporting agricultural conservation easements and working with the county if the situation changes.

If the current Agreement of Sale for Lionville Station Farm is canceled, would you facilitate a referendum for Uwchlan Township to purchase the property? If so, how do you envision the property being preserved and/or used in a way that enhances the character of Uwchlan Township and Chester County?

I support an open space fee or bond to support the purchase of properties that the township has the opportunity and desire to acquire. According to state law, this would have to be approved by referendum by the electorate as a ballot question. The fee would be used to fund purchases on land we identify within the township that would be valuable for preservation. These could then become active parks, passive natural areas, or remain preserved spaces that retain unique beneficial aspects, such as stormwater functions.

At this time, the agreement of sale between DASD and Audubon has not been cancelled and I do not feel it would be appropriate or legally prudent to speak directly about the Lionville Station Farm or any participation the township might have in any theoretical transactions. Any discussion about what the township would propose to do with land under contract with a developer (beyond what is allowed in a comprehensive plan) might result in the developer attempting to have me recused, or could be used in an appeal if the developer is not satisfied with the result of the vote. I understand that my opponent will be able to answer this question freely, which may put me at a disadvantage, but I feel this is the responsible way to represent the interest of the community.

What measures, if any, will you take to prioritize the general physical health and general wellbeing of the residents of Uwchlan Township and Chester Country?

We've recently opened our Ted Gacomis Senior Park, a park geared less towards youth sports and more towards older residents, with pickleball, bocci ball, and exercise equipment around a short walking path. The landscaping plan, when complete, should make this a very attractive park, and it's already being heavily used. A few years earlier, a 9-hole Disc Golf course was added to our Shamona Creek Park, thanks to generous donations from some residents and Disc Golf enthusiasts. I think we should continue to evaluate whether new amenities can be added to our existing parks to increase everyone's enjoyment and use. For example, I'd like to see if we can get a Cricket field somewhere, since that sport has a fair amount of popularity in the area.

Another upgrade I'd like to see is continuing to expand our trail network to eliminate gaps between Newcomen and Valley Hill Road, which would get us closer to linking up with the Chester Valley Trail and, ultimately, the Schuylkill River Trail. I would also like to extend the Uwchlan Trail up N. Milford Rd to link to Shamona Creek Elementary School and the Marsh Creek Sixth Grade Center.

In cooperation with the school district, we've made some significant improvements to Devon Dr. between Downingtown East High School and Lionville Park. This stretch of road has the most pedestrian traffic in the entire township, mostly consisting of the middle school and high school students after dismissal, as well as young kids and parents on weekends when games are being played at Lionville Park. The road was re-engineered to upgrade the safety features at 3 road crossings, which included the addition of a median which provides a safe location for pedestrians and also serves to slow traffic.

Since I've been on the board, we've prioritized funding our emergency services so that residents can continue to have quick responses from our fire and ambulance companies. The previous board was giving ZERO to the Uwchlan Ambulance. Since I was elected, we've been working with the ambulance company to develop a predictable and sustainable funding mechanism to ensure that Uwchlan is covered by a well-funded and well-staffed ambulance company. We're now providing \$100,000/yr to the ambulance, and working with the surrounding municipalities to make sure we're all giving a fair share.

We've also funded the fire company for a major purchase of a new ladder truck, along with a yearly contribution.

We're working to maintain a top-notch police department that is also held to the highest level of accountability by implemented the following actions:

- Increased police budget every year to make sure they have the best training and the equipment they need
- Expanded the leadership and oversight of the department by adding a Lt. position
- Approved and required use of body cameras for every officer
- Approved revisions to policy manual to define and clarify acceptable use of force
- Started planning to pursuing accreditation through the Pennsylvania Law Enforcement Accreditation Program

What measures, if any, will you take to protect the environment and its effect on the residents of Uwchlan Township and Chester Country?

I won't repeat my comments from previous questions, but our comprehensive plan laid out how we hope to preserve additional properties across the township.

Our comprehensive plan also lists our strategies for protecting and improving our natural resources:

- Continue to have environmental reviews (through consultants and the Environmental Advisory Council) for subdivision and land development applications
- Develop environmental education awareness programs for township residents, which we have been doing through our EAC
- Promote the planting of native trees and plants within open spaces and brownfield sites.
- Evaluate the need to create a tree replacement program
- Where possible, add increased riparian buffer setbacks to maintain and improve the water quality of our streams
- We're working to prepare a watershed management plan

What measures, if any, will you take to facilitate the proactive coordination of development between neighboring townships in Chester County?

When a large development is submitted to any township-sized municipality, there are almost always impacts that go beyond the borders of the municipality, and the rights of those surrounding municipalities should be represented in the approval process.

As we all know, many of the major development projects that come to us have far-reaching effects that impact surrounding neighbors. As currently formulated, the Municipal Planning Code (MPC) gives very little official consideration to surrounding townships when considering approvals, denials, or imposition of conditions.

We need to have a revision to the MPC to give the residents of surrounding municipalities a voice and representation in the process, but also to give the municipality where the development is occurring (aka, the host municipality) a legal rationale for considering the impacts of large developments on the surrounding municipalities. The host municipality should not have to cede authority or responsibility, but it should have to consider the rights and burdens of development on the residents of the neighboring communities, and those residents should have the right to be represented in the process by their own elected officials.

The Local Government Committee of the PA House of Representatives is considering House Bill (HB) 782, which would revise the MPC in just such a way. It would create a new hearing format where impact reports would have to consider the impacts across township lines, and the host municipality would have to consider those impacts for approval/denial and setting conditions. I don't necessarily believe this is a perfect bill – I would like to understand the appeal process and how disputes among the neighboring municipalities can be resolved – but it's a big step forward. I have submitted written testimony to the Local Government Committee in support of this bill.

Large developments have large impacts, which don't recognize township borders. We have to have a flexible, fair approach that allows for the entire affected community to have representation during the review of these large, regionally significant plans. I support the many of the concepts of the HB 782 and hope that the legislature will move forward on this as quickly as possible.

What local, state and national Conservation Programs do you support that can benefit the general well-being of the residents of Uwchlan Township and Chester County?

There are some well-known organizations that I think are valuable and whose work I highly respect:

- Natural Lands has been involved in several significant land preservation deals in the area. While they haven't shown interest in any Uwchlan properties to date, I would always keep them in mind if the situation is right.
- The Sierra Club has had a very successful campaign raising awareness for the need to transition to carbon neutral and renewable energy sources. We were one of the first townships in the

state to sign on to the Sierra Club's Ready for 100 program, setting a goal to use 100% renewable energy for all purposes no later than 2050 (among other goals).

That said, in terms of helping the residents of Uwchlan Township, we've had more success with county and state organizations:

- Chester County is a good resource for work we need done for parks, especially when they align with the goals of the county's Landscapes 3 plan. In the past we've received a grant from the Preservation Partnership Program for trail improvements.
- We've looked into grant opportunities via the Greenways Trails and Recreation Program (GTRP) through the PA Department of Community & Economic Development, and if we get the opportunity to connect the Uwchlan Trail to Shamona Creek Elementary via Milford Rd or for the extension of the Uwchlan Trail to West Whiteland, I would try to get money to help fund it through this grant program.
- We paid for part of our comprehensive plan with a Vision Partnership Planning Grant through the Chester County Planning Commission.
- We paid for almost entire cost of installing the EV charging station at the Township Administration Building through a grant from the PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).
- The Acker Park and Williamsburg retention basin refurbishments were paid for in large part from grants from DEP.

My opinion is that is usually better to identify what we want to get done and then look for organizations or government agencies that have grant opportunities to support it, than to look for organizations that we want to work with and then try to figure out what we want to do with them. Grant writing is time consuming and often unsuccessful, so going into it with a vision of what we're trying to accomplish is my preferred path forward.