



Lower Gwynedd Township
Parks & Recreation Board

November 19, 2024
Agenda

Lower Gwynedd Township Building
6:00 p.m.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81221913678?pwd=oYHDdOrLUzsbISItAP7oH7zToMQntr.1>

Meeting ID: 812 2191 3678

Passcode: 551209

Call In: 646-931-3860

1. Call to Order
2. Public Comment
3. Consideration of October 15, 2024 Meeting Minutes
4. Project Update – Gilmore
 - Woodland Evaluation
5. Former Texaco Lot
6. Staff and Committee Updates
 - Board of Supervisor Liaison
 - Recreation Director Update
 - Comprehensive Plan Update
7. 2025 Program Dates

Next Meeting: Tuesday, January 21, 2025

**Parks and Recreation (P&R) Board Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, October 15, 2024**

Members in Attendance: Kathy Morris; Harry Hellerman; Dan Berdahl; Morgan High; Francis Mckenzie; Michael Brockway; Kelly Swope

Staff: Sandi Feight

Board of Supervisors: Janine Martin

Call to order: Kathy M. called the meeting to order at 6:03 PM.

Public comment: none

Consideration of September 17, 2024 Meeting Minutes:

Francis M. moved to approve the minutes, Dan B. seconded it, and all approved.

Janine M. update from the BOS (Board of Supervisors):

Texaco update: After looking into the benefits of a digital sign versus the estimated cost of [about] \$70,000, the Board of supervisors elected to scrub plans for the sign. What remains are the plans to remove the faux springhouse structure at veterans park. The Parks and Recreation board is tasked with submitting ideas for the (former Texaco) property to Sandi F. before the November meeting.

Sandi F. Update from the recreation director

- Gilmore is working on plans for pollinator gardens at Oxford and Pen-Ambler parks
- The tree giveaway was a success
- Sandi F. will be evaluating where the trees given away are now residing. Perhaps learning where future give-away-trees would want to reside and targeting mailings next year.
- “Concert cones” (clean traffic codes) for concert use have been acquired through a safety grant with the Township Insurance Company.
- Traffic wand flashlights have been acquired to facilitate safe traffic control after concerts
- Yard games like corn hole have been acquired to supplement summer concert entertainment
- Fall Fest was a tremendous success.
- Sandi F. acknowledged the volunteer efforts of the current board and offered training and support to those of us who would care to take an even more active role in events like the trunk or treat event at the YMCA
- A suggestion was made to reduce the number of summer concerts to three: one for each month: June, July, and August. Further work needs to be done to see how to handle the public works team and the port-a-potty.

Kathy M. Comprehensive plan update :

The open house on October 28th is now from 4 PM to whenever attendance ends that evening.

Meeting adjourned at 7:37

PRELIMINARY FOREST EVALUATION
FOR FIRST PRIORITY AREAS
LOWER GWYNEDD TOWNSHIP
NOVEMBER 13, 2024

Prepared for:
Lower Gwynedd Township
1130 N. Bethlehem Pike
Spring House, PA 19477

Prepared By:
Valerie Liggett, ASLA, R.L.A.
ISA Certified Arborist #PD-2334A
ISA Tree Risk Assessment Qualified



GILMORE & ASSOCIATES, INC.
ENGINEERING & CONSULTING SERVICES

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SUMMARY AND PURPOSE.....	1
FIRST PRIORITY AREAS	1
OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS – DAGER ROAD TRAIL	2
OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS – PENN OAK TRAIL	4
OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS – TREWELLYN TRAIL	6
OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS – MEADOWCREEK/FOXFIELD EQUESTRIAN TRAIL	8
OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS – CENTENNIAL TRAIL	10
OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS – PEN AMBLER PARK	12
RECOMMENDED WORK PRIORITY RANKINGS	13
QUALIFICATIONS	14
APPENDIX I – TRAIL MAPS	15

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SUMMARY AND PURPOSE

The following Preliminary Forest Evaluation report includes assessments of each of the First Priority Assessment areas as indicated by Lower Gwynedd Township and includes a summary evaluation of each of the woodland areas and primary issues of concern, in order for the Township to effectively manage, care for, and expand the woodland areas evaluated. Further detailing of work priorities is to be completed upon coordination with the Township upon discussion of recommendations and provision of feedback. In accordance with the proposal provided to the Township dated June 20, 2024, a general evaluation of forest health has been prepared discussing forest diversity and composition, structure, and regeneration. Unusual issues unique to each site have been noted, and recommendations made based on observations of each of the evaluated areas as well as issues raised through discussion with the Township. Upon evaluation of this preliminary report by the Township, strategic work items and priority rankings will be identified, as well as provision of more detailed information as needed including planting, plant maintenance, and deer protection recommendations, as well as invasive species removal recommendations. Upon finalization of this report, a Forest Management Plan will be prepared for each of the First Priority Areas identified.

FIRST PRIORITY AREAS

As requested by Lower Gwynedd Township, the following trail segments were identified as First Priority Areas to be evaluated as part of this Preliminary Forest Evaluation report:

- Dager Road Trail
- Penn Oak Trail
- Trewellyn Trail (Estates and Reserve sections)
- Meadowcreek/Foxfield Equestrian Trail Easement
- Centennial Trail
- Pen Ambler Park

OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS — DAGER ROAD TRAIL

The section of the Dager Road Trail that was evaluated runs from the trailhead across Dager Road from Bethlehem Baptist Church to the western Wissahickon High School parking lot. Trees ages range from sapling to mature, but the majority of trees are estimated to be in the 16"-24" caliper size range, indicating a uniformity to the age of the woods in this area and poor forest structure. The area owned and maintained by the Township consists of a narrow strip along the length of the trail, with a meadow area preserved by the Natural Lands Trust lying to the south along a large portion of the trail. Tree species are predominantly Maple and dead/dying Ash, with some Oak, Beech, Walnut and Elm, indicating limited diversity. Understory vegetation ranges from dense invasive growth (Honeysuckle, Wineberry) to sparse growth within more shaded areas, and vine growth is notable in areas where canopy gaps from fallen or standing dead trees permit growth. Where present, this invasive growth limits the growth of more desirable native species. This area generally lacks both species and age diversity of trees, and where dense understory growth is present it is dominated by invasives, which all contribute to stunted regeneration of the forest area. Of primary concern for this trail segment is the number of hazardous trees, many of which consist of standing dead Ash trees or other trees with significant structural or health issues.



Dead Ash Trees



Invasive understory growth along trail near trailhead



Open understory areas



Adjacent Natural Lands Trust preserved property

- Recommendations:
 - Removal of hazardous trees along this trail segment should be top priority, due to the significant potential for failure of many of these trees. An estimated 60-70 trees along this trail present significant risk and should be removed as soon as possible. It is recommended that the trail be closed during times of high winds until this issue can be addressed. An annual evaluation should be conducted thereafter to determine if additional removals or other tree work would be advisable for this trail segment. Where tree parts are small enough to chip, chips should be spread within the surrounding wooded areas. Stumps should be left in place to decompose. Some larger tree parts should be left in place to decompose, so long as large piles of logs are not created.
 - Due to the confined nature of the woodlands corridor along this trail segment, and the relatively confined location of dense stands of invasive understory species, this may be a good location for selective invasives removal and supplementary shrub and tree understory planting within more shaded areas which currently lack understory growth. Planting of shade-tolerant native species within more open, shaded understory areas would require relatively little removal of invasives.
 - Vine removal should be addressed in areas where it is an issue by cutting the vines at approximately 1' above ground level and returning several times during the next few growing seasons to re-cut new growth until the vines have used up their reserve energy and have died.
 - Some understory clearing at the trailhead across from Bethlehem Baptist Church may be advisable for the purposes of improving sight lines at this access point.
 - Benches and interpretive signage regarding the adjacent Natural Lands Trust meadow area, as well as new understory plantings, could be provided along this trail segment.

OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS — PENN OAK TRAIL

The Penn Oak Trail segments evaluated are located throughout the Penn Oak neighborhood. Tree ages range from sapling to mature, but most are estimated to be within the 16"-24" caliper size range, indicating a uniformity to the age of woods in this area and poor forest structure. There are also notably large areas dominated by invasive shrubs and vines, which effectively compete against and outgrow more desirable native species. Tree species include Walnut, Catalpa, dead and dying Ash trees, Maples, Oaks, and a variety of residential landscaping which backs up to the trail. Species vary throughout the site based on site conditions, but these are the dominating species. The shrub understory is dominated by invasives including Honeysuckle and Multiflora Rose, demonstrating poor forest structure. A large number of hazardous trees exist throughout this area, including trees exhibiting decay and dead and dying Ash trees. Of note is a large area of dead/dying Ash at the northern end of the trail, along the northern boundary of the Penn Oak neighborhood. The healthiest wooded area can be found east of the bend in Penn Oak Rd. South where trail cross through this large wooded area. Even then, there are a number of hazardous trees in this location that should be removed. This area generally lacks both species and age diversity of trees, and where dense understory growth is present it is dominated by invasives, which all contribute to stunted regeneration of the forest area. Of primary consideration for this trail is reforestation efforts.



Dead Ash Trees



Invasive shrubs along trail



Potential planting area



Potential planting area

- Recommendations:
 - Removal of hazardous trees along this trail should be top priority, due to the significant potential for failure of many of these trees. An estimated 50 trees along this trail present significant risk and should be removed as soon as possible. An annual evaluation should be conducted thereafter to determine if additional removals or other tree work would be advisable for this trail segment. Where tree parts are small enough to chip, chips should be spread within the surrounding wooded areas. Stumps should be left in place to decompose. Some larger tree parts should be left in place to decompose, so long as large piles of logs are not created.
 - Several relatively open potential replanting areas are highlighted in the map accompanying this report. This would be contingent upon a lack of utility structures or other conflicts. Some are within more manicured areas where lawn is currently maintained; others are in areas that are relatively free of trees, shrubs, and most importantly the invasive shrub layer. Planting, maintenance, and deer protection recommendations will be provided in the Forest Management Plan upon determination of final priorities and priority rankings.

OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS — TREWELLYN TRAIL

These trail sections are located within the Trewellyn subdivision, specifically within the Estates and Reserve sections. Much of the length of the trail is dominated by invasive understory vegetation, most of which consists of Honeysuckle and vines such as Grape and Wisteria. These vines have strangled a number of trees, and the Honeysuckle growth is dense enough to restrict the growth of desirable native species. A wide range of tree sizes exist on the site from saplings to 36" +/- . However, the majority of trees on the site appear to trend toward the younger side, maxing out at 18-20" in diameter. This indicates uniformity to the age of the woodlands, and therefore poor forest structure. The trails wrap around the Estates and Reserve sections of the neighborhood, and connect to the adjacent shopping center. Tree species primarily include Oak, Maple and some dead Ash. There appears to be a greater concentration of Oak trees at this site than in other locations that were evaluated. The site lacks species and age diversity of trees, and due to dominant invasives regeneration is limited.



Tree with strangling vines



Honeysuckle growth along trail



Potential understory planting location



Potential understory planting location

- Recommendations:
 - Removal of hazardous trees along these trail segments should be top priority, due to the significant potential for failure of many of these trees. An estimated 25-35 trees along this trail present significant risk and should be removed as soon as possible. An annual evaluation should be conducted thereafter to determine if additional removals or other tree work would be advisable for this trail segment. Where tree parts are small enough to chip, chips should be spread within the surrounding wooded areas. Stumps should be left in place to decompose. Some larger tree parts should be left in place to decompose, so long as large piles of logs are not created.
 - Several potential planting/reforestation areas are highlighted on the accompanying map. One is located within a wooded area where invasive understory vegetation is sparse, and therefore shade-tolerant native understory species would have a chance at success. The second is adjacent the intersection of Tintern Drive and N. Bethlehem Pike, where additional buffering could be provided between the neighborhood and N. Bethlehem Pike. The third is also between a cul-de-sac and N. Bethlehem Pike, where the wooded area is more open and therefore understory plantings such as shrubs would have a better chance at survival.
 - Due to the large amount of invasive shrubs on the site, wholesale removal would not be practical, feasible, or fiscally advisable. However, focus could be placed on the removal of vines that are strangling trees on the site. Vine removal should be addressed in areas where it is an issue by cutting the vines at approximately 1' above ground level and returning several times during the next few growing seasons to re-cut new growth until the vines have used up their reserve energy and have died.

OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS – MEADOWCREEK/FOXFIELD EQUESTRIAN TRAIL

While this equestrian trail does not yet exist, the vegetation along the staked easement was evaluated. In many locations where the easement backs up to other properties, there is encroachment by neighbors in the form of mowing, vegetation clearing, fencing, and landscaping. Only 10 or so hazardous trees were found within the easement itself; most trees of concern were noted on adjacent properties, and these concerns, along with encroachment issues, will need to be addressed with adjoining property owners. As with other evaluated trail locations, invasive vegetation in the form of Honeysuckle and Burning Bush shrubs was found in locations where the easement passes through wooded areas adjacent Penllyn Creek and the accompanying floodplain and wetlands, and Japanese Stiltgrass was found throughout the herbaceous layer. Bamboo has been planted on several properties and was noted to be encroaching the easement. Trees are predominantly Maple, and range in size from sapling to approximately 36" in diameter, with the majority ranging in size from 16-24" diameter. While there are a range of tree sizes, the woods appear to be fairly uniform in age. Due to this factor and accompanying invasive shrub growth, woodland structure is poor and diversity of species is extremely limited. While not particularly dense, the invasive shrub understory does limit the growth of desired native species. This may be an opportunity for selective invasives removal and replanting with more desirable native species, as the limited acreage for this easement would make management much more practical. Primary concerns appear to be encroachment by neighbors and hazardous trees on properties adjoining the easement, as well as invasive species and forest regeneration.



Wooded area adjacent Penllyn Creek



Bamboo encroaching easement



Fencing encroachment within easement



Fencing encroachment within easement

- Recommendations:
 - Removal of hazardous trees along this trail segment should be top priority, due to the significant potential for failure. Approximately 10 trees within the easement should be removed; coordination will be necessary with adjoining homeowners to remove hazardous trees on those properties, along with encroaching fencing and vegetation. Where tree parts are small enough to chip, chips should be spread within the surrounding wooded areas. Stumps should be left in place to decompose. Due to the limited width of the easement, trunks that are not able to be chipped may need to be hauled off-site.
 - Due to more sparse understory growth and the small acreage of this site, this may be a good location for selective invasives removal and supplementary shrub and tree understory planting within more shaded areas which currently lack healthy understory growth.

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OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS – CENTENNIAL TRAIL

This trail section runs from trailheads at Kingsley Ct. and Red Barn Road south until it intersects with Old Bethlehem Pike. Trees range in size from sapling to very large (36"+) indicating a good variation in tree age and forest structure throughout the site and the potential for regeneration. As with other sites evaluated in the Township, the understory is dominated by invasive species (primarily honeysuckle) and in one location bamboo is encroaching from an adjacent property. These invasive shrubs leave very little open understory along the trail. Trees along this trail segment appear to be healthier than at other trail sections evaluated, but removal of 15-20 hazardous and declining trees is still recommended. Tree species include predominantly Oak and Maple, with some White Pine, Walnut, and dead/dying Ash. Species diversity on the site is limited. As with other locations, vine growth presents an issue. However, of primary concern in this location is encroachment onto Township property by residents whose properties back up to the Township-owned parcels where the trail is located. Instances of residents mowing and clearing on Township property, landscaping, and depositing yard waste were noted frequently.



Encroachment by neighbors



Large dead tree, vine growth, and invasives



Neighbor maintaining lawn on Township property



Township property cleared by neighbor



Yard waste deposited by neighbors

- Recommendations
 - As with other trail segments evaluated, removal of hazardous trees should be top priority, for safety reasons. An estimated 15-20 trees along this trail present significant risk and should be removed as soon as possible. An annual evaluation should be conducted thereafter to determine if additional removals or other tree work would be advisable for this trail segment. Where tree parts are small enough to chip, chips should be spread within the surrounding wooded areas. Stumps should be left in place to decompose. Some larger tree parts should be left in place to decompose, so long as large piles of logs are not created.
 - A clear delineation of the property boundaries between the Township property and neighbors is recommended. Following a survey of the property boundaries, delineation of the property corners could be made by the planting of small shade trees or large shrubs at each of the property corners.
 - Vine removal should be addressed in areas where it is an issue by cutting the vines at approximately 1' above ground level and returning several times during the next few growing seasons to re-cut new growth until the vines have used up their reserve energy and have died.

OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS – PEN AMBLER PARK

The area requested to be evaluated is the trail loop surrounding the amphitheater. No necessary tree removals or hazardous trees were noted with the exception of five (5) Ash trees which should be removed when feasible, but do not appear to pose any imminent danger. Landscaping consists primarily of managed park landscaping including ornamental trees and shrubs, and would not necessarily be classified as a woodland area. A goal for this area would be the strategic planting of additional trees and shrubs.

Areas for potential planting are limited due to the nature of the amphitheater, which needs clear sight lines from viewing areas. The attached plan notes potential locations for the planting of 2-3 additional shade trees to the rear of the lawn seating area, as well as a location for shrubs which could serve as a 'backdrop' to the amphitheater stage.



Amphitheater



Amphitheater



Potential tree planting area to rear of amphitheater



Dying Ash tree

Recommendations:

- Plant ornamental shrubs to the rear of the amphitheater stage
- Remove five (5) dead/dying Ash trees
- Plant 2-3 additional shade trees behind amphitheater lawn seating area

RECOMMENDED WORK PRIORITY RANKINGS

- To be completed upon determination of priority rankings in coordination with Lower Gwynedd Township.

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QUALIFICATIONS

Valerie Liggett is a Registered Landscape Architect with 20 years' experience and has been an ISA Certified Arborist® since 2014 with TRAQ qualification since 2016. She is an experienced arboriculture consultant providing services including Tree Risk Assessments, tree inspections, tree protection plan preparation and review, preparation of shade tree ordinances, consultation with Shade Tree Advisory Commissions, and species recommendations.

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APPENDIX I – TRAIL MAPS

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Bethlehem Baptist Church

Hazardous Trees

Meadowcreek Cir.

Dager Rd.

Dense Understory
Invasives and Vine
Growth

Sparse Understory
Growth

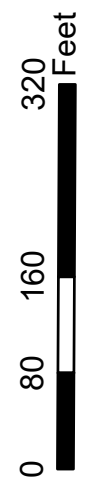
Natural Lands Trust Preserved Property

Wissahickon High School
Parking Lot

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Image Source: PEMA 2018

1 inch = 160 feet



Dager Road Trail

November 12, 2024



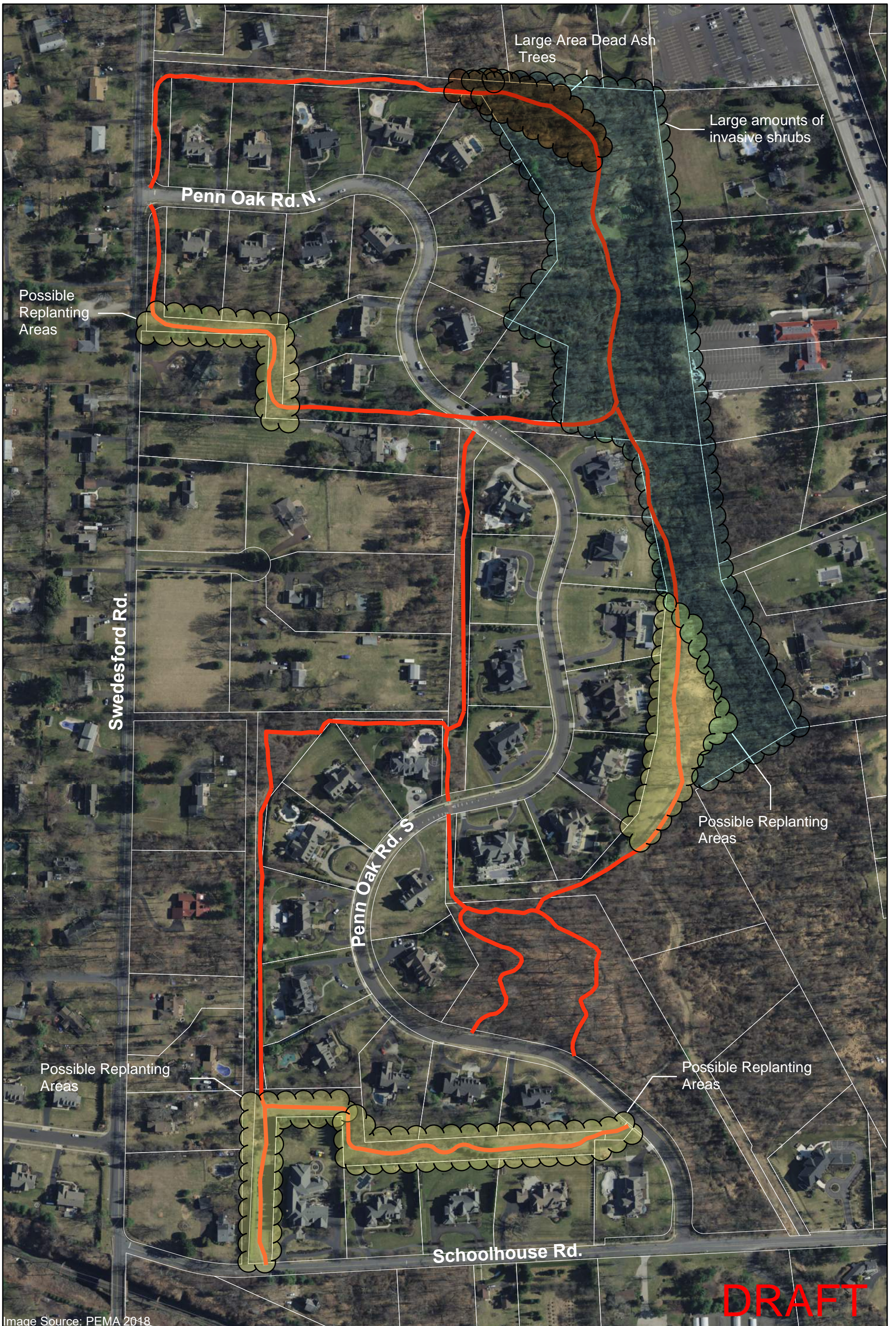
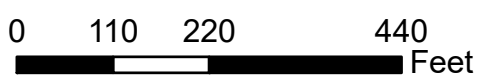


Image Source: PEMA 2018

1 inch = 220 feet

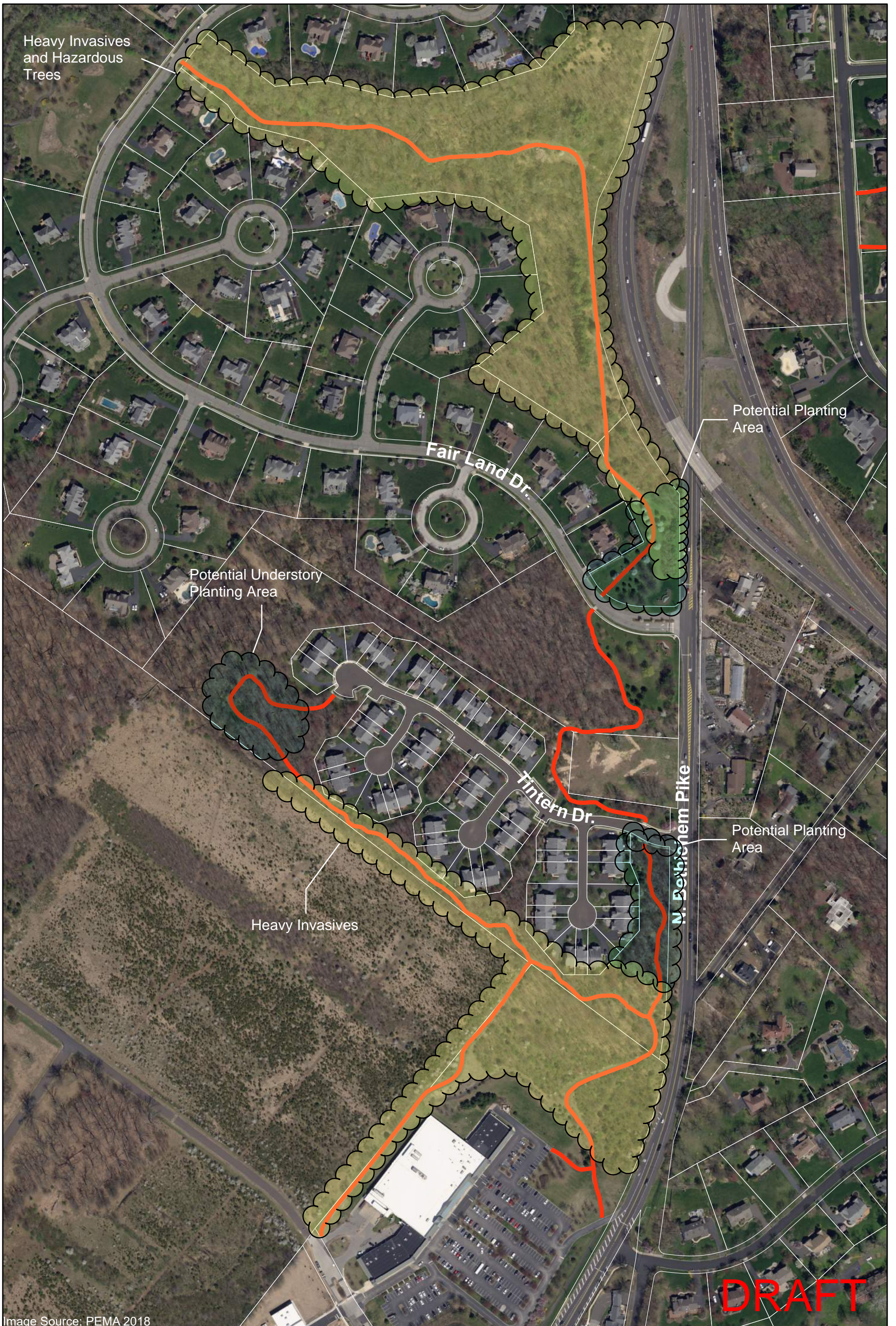


Penn Oak Trail

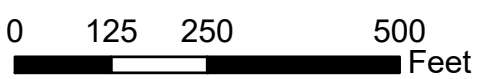
November 12, 2024

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1 inch = 250 feet



Trewellyn Trail Estates and Reserve

November 12, 2024





Image Source: PEMA 2018

Approximate
Easement Location

Bamboo Found

Meadowcreek Cir.

Invasives, dead trees
and vines along this
corridor

Encroachment by
neighbors along all
property lines

Dager Rd.

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1 inch = 120 feet

0 60 120 240 Feet

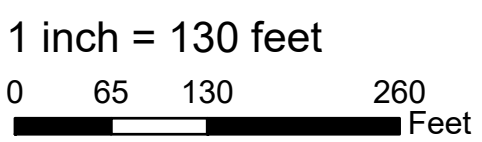
Meadowcreek/Foxfield
Equestrian Trail

November 12, 2024



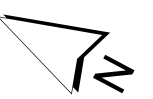


Image Source: PEMA 2018



Centennial Trail Estates and Reserve

November 12, 2024





Pen Ambler Rd.

Remove Ash Tree

Remove Ash Tree

Remove 3 Ash Trees

Potential Tree Planting Location(s)

Potential Understory Shrub Plantings



November 12, 2024

Pen Ambler Park

1 inch = 50 feet



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Image Source: PEMA 2018