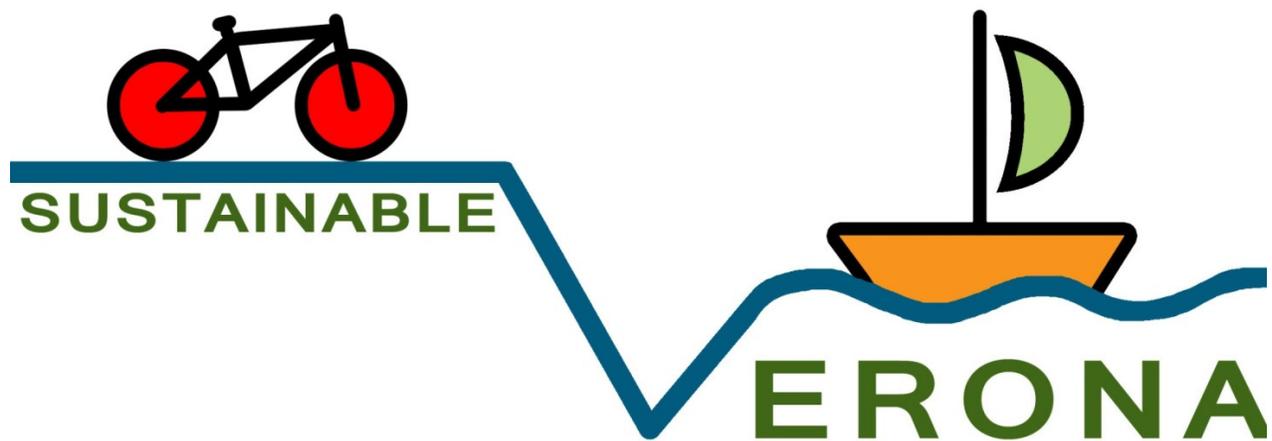


CARNEGIE MELLON UNIVERSITY  
Spring 2009

# Verona

## A Sustainable Community Development Report



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PRELIMINARY REPORT 5/3/2010



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## 1. Introduction

The community of Verona, through an enthusiastic group of residents, who formed the Verona in Progress (VIP) group, contacted us, students at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, in order to develop a Sustainability Needs Assessment. The study was conducted during the Spring Semester of 2010 between 03/01/2010 and 05/05/2010 in the context of the Sustainable Community Development class, under the supervision of Matthew M. Mehalik, Ph.D. of the Heinz College, School of Public Policy and Management.

In our project team's estimation, the focus of the development of a Sustainability Needs Assessment for the Borough of Verona should capitalize on Verona's greatest strength – the riverfront location. Enhancing riverfront access and recreation opportunities can significantly contribute to a sustainable future for the Borough of Verona.

This Sustainability Needs Assessment Project has provided us the opportunity to meet with concerned members of the Borough of Verona (VIP - Verona in Progress) to discuss how Verona can utilize its strengths to maintain stability and to encourage growth, over time, as part of a Sustainable Community Plan. We have learned to define a Sustainable Community Plan as one that incorporates Economic, Environmental and Social Goals.

For the Borough of Verona, Economic Goals can be described as those goals which may: increase local job opportunities which are required to sustain community members; increase funding, through grants and loans, to revitalize community image and services; and increase tax revenues to maintain long-term community services.

Environmental Goals can be described as those goals which may: improve air, water and land quality to increase the quality of life for all community members; generate revenue for the community through the increase of outdoor oriented businesses and recreational opportunities for existing residents and visitors; and generate revenue through the attraction of new residents who share an interest in riverfront recreation and outdoor activities.

Social Goals could be described as those goals which may: encourage an economically diverse population to fulfill employment and tax revenue requirements; provide access to community services for all residents; and celebrate cultural differences to add interest, attract new residents and attract visitors of all age groups.

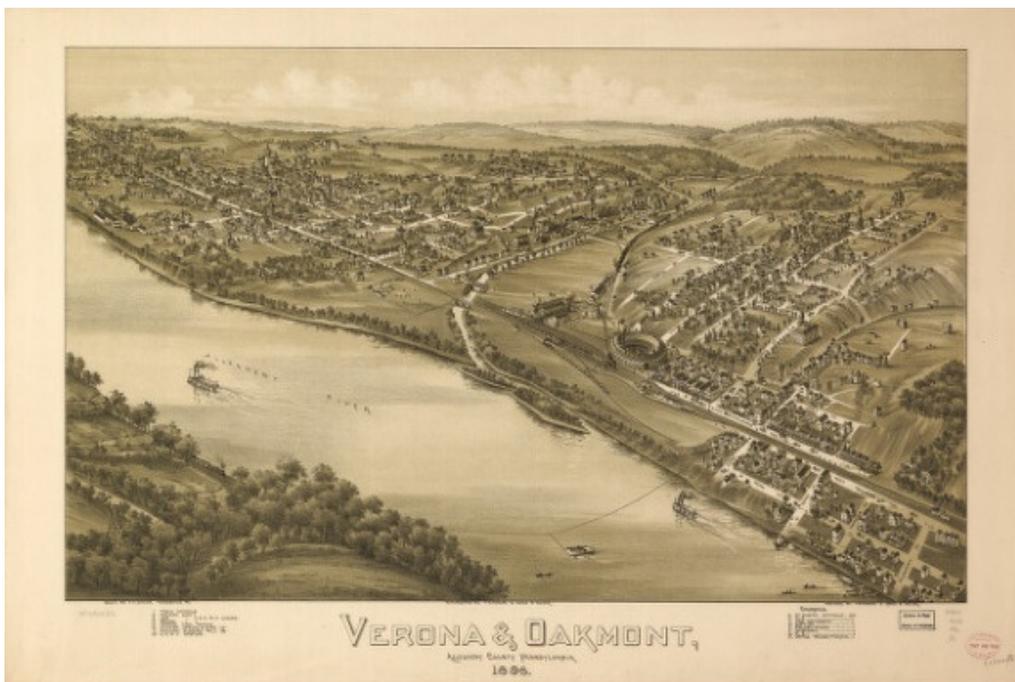


## 2. Verona, a Brief History

The Borough of Verona was established in 1871 on the banks of the Allegheny River. It was named after James Verner, who owned a 400 acre farm in the area the borough is located in. At the beginning of the twentieth century the Allegheny Valley Railroad operated a roundhouse and a major repair center for steam locomotives in the area. The presence of the railroad company contributed to a large extent to the image of Verona as a Railroad Town. The easy access to the railroad also meant a strong development of tool works, lumber yards, steel-casting works, structural iron works, and a chemical plant. Companies like, Ingall’s Ironworks and Wooding’s Toolworks were grouped together in an area north of the borough.

Industry is still a component of the community, and provides a strong tax base, through Daily Juice Products, Rob Roy Industries and others. These light manufacturing and storage facilities have replaced the original companies in the industrial area of the borough. Today, Verona is known more as a location to launch boats into the Allegheny River and as a quiet suburban community than as an industrial location.

Verona’s history as a family oriented, faith based community is still apparent through the high percentage of high school graduates, the high percentage of residents who declare an affiliation with a faith based community and the strong support of a local school district, shared with its neighbor, Oakmont.

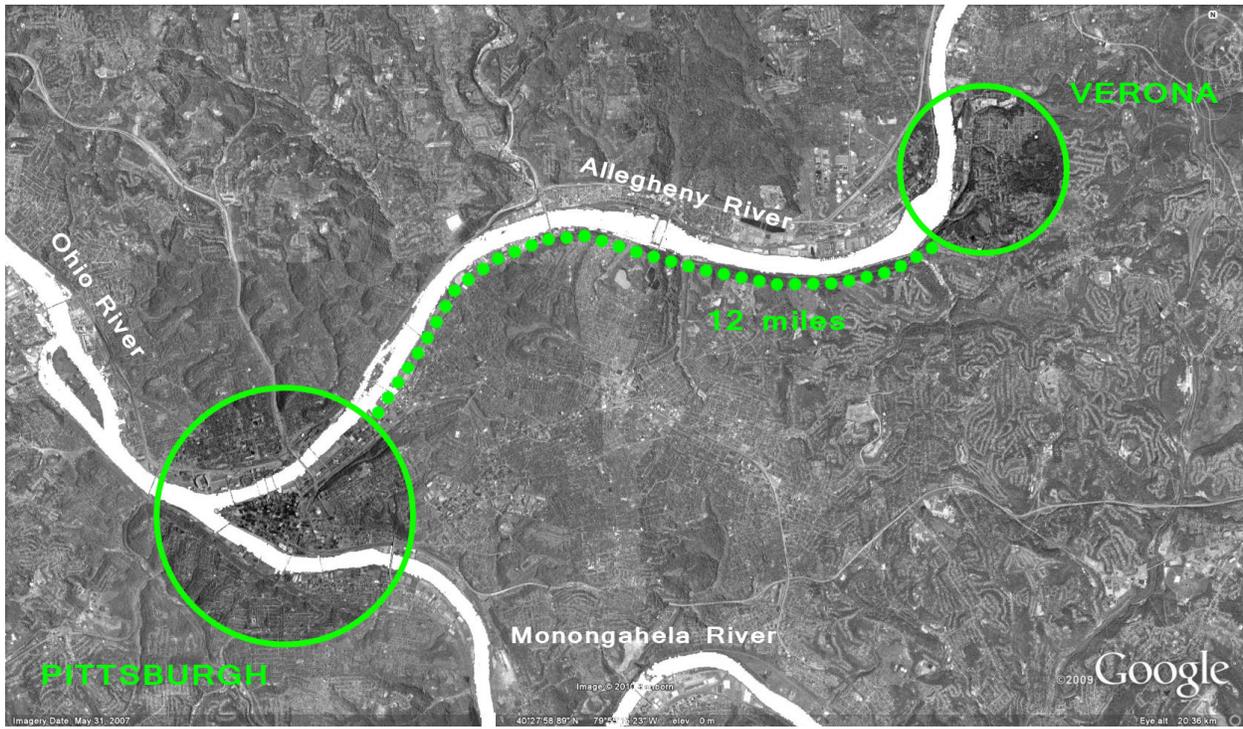


*View of Verona (to the right) from the Allegheny River – 1898 (source: <http://memory.loc.gov>)*



### 3. Location and Demographics

The borough of Verona is located on the Eastern banks of the Allegheny River, about 12 miles North East from downtown Pittsburgh, along the Allegheny River Boulevard corridor. The geographical location of Verona and its connection to the river has led to a significant development of industry and recreational activities along the river. The downtown area of the borough is also located in that area. In the year 2000, the total area of Verona was about 0.6 sq.mi, comprising of 0.53 sq.mi of land and 0.1 sq.mi of water.



*Location of the Borough of Verona (image based on google maps)*

The 2000 Census indicated the a population of 3,124 for the borough. Of this number, 96.3 % were white, 3.2 % African American, with the rest consisting of Asian and American Indian residents. The borough of Verona like many older towns within Allegheny County has had a declining population over the last decades. According to the Allegheny County Economic Development and US census bureau, the borough of Verona has lost 16.4% in population from 1970s' to 2000. <sup>i</sup> Although the population in Verona over the age of 65 is higher than the Pittsburgh average, the Borough can be regarded as having a relatively young population, with a median age of 39.4 years. 58.5 % of the residents are between 20-54 years. Nevertheless the median per capita income was \$ 15,881 according to the 2000 data.



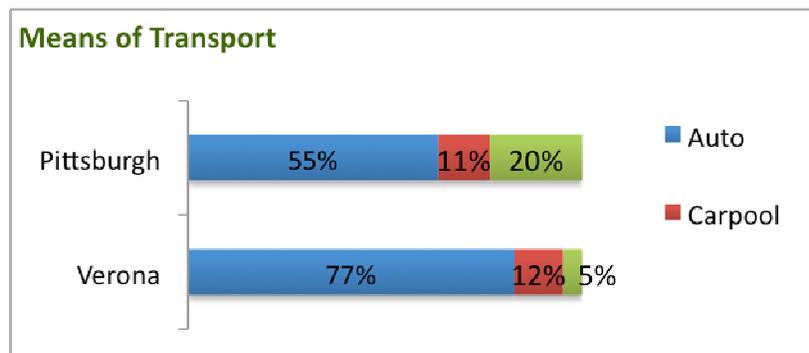
### People

	Verona	Pittsburgh
Over 65 years	17.6%	12.4%
White Population	98.5%	75.1%
African-American Population	3.1%	12.3%
Hispanic Population	0.3%	12.5%

#### Verona Demographics compared to Pittsburgh

There are a total of 1,376 households in Verona (from 1480 units), at an approximate density of 2,767.2/sq.mi. Most of the buildings were built prior to 1959 with 25.2 % in the period 1940 – 1959 and 47.8 % in before 1939. There is an even split between owner-occupied and renter-occupied housing units (50.4 % - 49.6 %) and the median household income was \$ 28,245 in the year 2000, with 14.1% of the population below the poverty line.

Transportation within Verona presents an opportunity to increase different modes of transportation. 77% of residents drive to work in Verona while 55% of residents in Pittsburgh drive to work. Only 5% of Verona residents use public transit systems. This is an opportunity to promote public transit within the Borough.



Means of Daily Transport for Verona Residents

Though Verona has a lower than median income compared to the Allegheny County and the State of PA: Allegheny County – \$ 48,788, PA – \$ 50,700 (USDA – Economic Research Service); and a lower than median house value compared to the State of PA: Verona – 79,900, PA – 164,700; the Cost of Living Index in Verona is low compared to the US Index: Verona – 84, US – 100. Robberies and poverty have decreased from 2006-2008, which indicates that Verona continues to be a safe and stable community, even in a troubled, global economic time. The overall atmosphere in Verona is not that of a distressed community. Indeed there is a large business vacancy rate in the Downtown area, but the overall feeling is positive and a small group of residents have come together to form Verona in Progress, a group which aims to put Verona on a sustainable development path.



Verona (image based on Google maps)



Verona Zoning

#### 4. Description of the geographic location

The borough can be divided in three major areas, each with its distinct character and usage patterns. The division can be made both on geographic grounds and based on the distribution of uses within the community. The geographic location of Verona has shaped the distribution of land usage within its limits. The borough stretches for approximately 1 mile along the Allegheny River and its northern boundary is represented by the Plum Creek, which divides it from the neighboring community of Oakmont. To the south and East, Verona neighbors the community of Penn Hills. The topography of the area varies from the low lying stretch of land along the river and along Plum Creek (to the North) to a sloped area to the east.



Verona – Zone 1

### Zone 1 – Industrial

The area to the north of the borough, along the Plum Creek valley is predominantly industrial, with medium sized manufacturing facilities. The American Beverage Corporation and CXL Warehouse are the biggest light industrial facilities in this area, providing a strong economic base for Verona. This is also the location of the former Allegheny Valley Railroad Round House and thus benefits from a railroad connection. The location within the Plum Creek Valley provides a clear separation from the residential areas, both in terms of visual connection and sound pollution.



Verona – Zone 2

### Zone2 – Residential

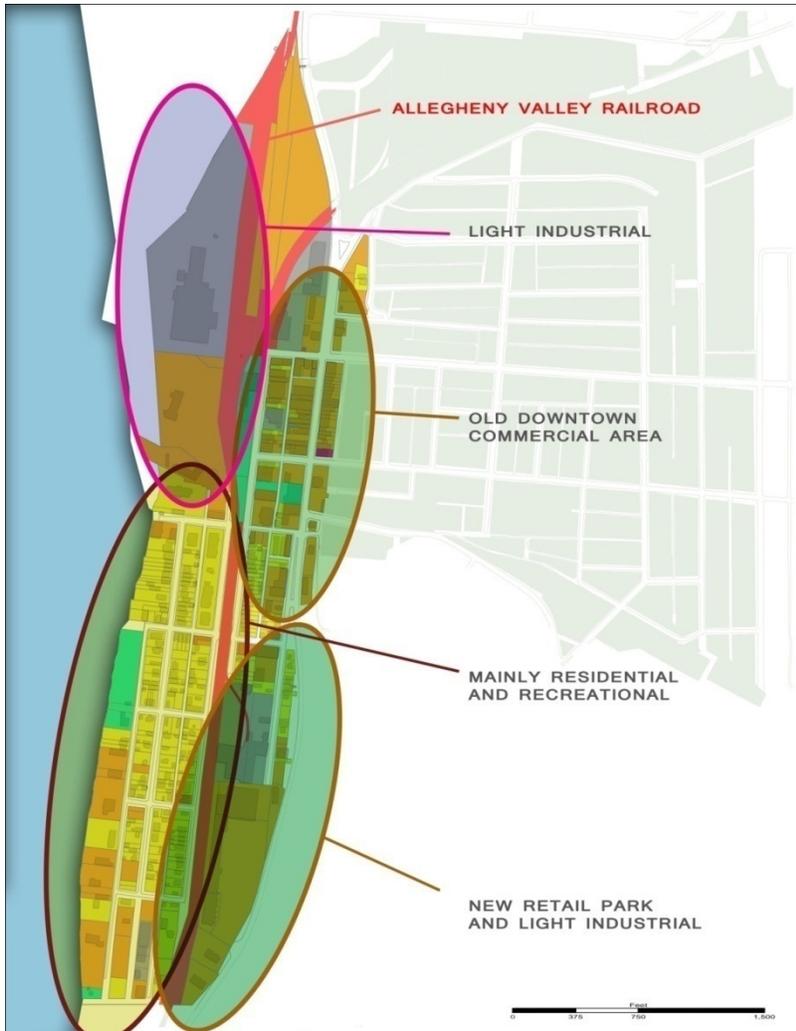
The Eastern area of the borough is located on a hill, with a significant difference in elevation to the level of the Allegheny River. This area is predominantly residential, dominated by single family detached residences. The primary school, which Verona shares with Oakmont, is located in the middle of this zone, together with a large municipal playground and the churches of the borough. The area has a low density. Two main roads, Center Ave. and South Ave. connect this zone to the Downtown area which is located along the river and the Allegheny River Boulevard.



Verona – Zone 3

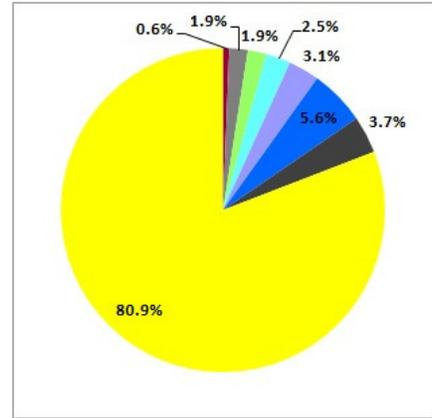
### Zone 3 – Riverfront

The lower area in the west of Verona connects the borough to the Allegheny River and also provides the location for its central business district and municipal buildings. The 1 mi by 0.2 mi zone stretches from north to south between the Allegheny River and the Allegheny River Blvd and includes both the main business area of Verona and its connection to the waterfront. One of the main features of this part of the borough is the presence of a low traffic railroad track, operated by the Allegheny Valley Railroad. While still being operational, the railroad is not used during the day and has a low frequency of traffic during the night. The tracks occupy a wide corridor in the middle of the area and thereby split the riverfront region in two zones with different characters. The zone to the west can be named the “Riverfront” and the one to the east is the Central Business District of the borough. The stretch between the railroad and the Allegheny River Boulevard has a strong commercial character.



*Verona – Riverfront Clusters of Uses*

Four Clusters of Uses can be distinguished in the area along the river. These clusters are each dominated by different types of uses and contribute to a very diverse picture of the entire area. The mixture of uses can be a potential advantage in the effort to revitalize the borough’s business district. While the light industrial cluster to the north, dominated by Bunting Graphics and the world headquarters of Rob Roy, is counterbalanced by the strong residential cluster to the south, there is a strong tension between the old Downtown and the new retail park development around Giant Eagle. The development of the retail park seems to have influenced the prosperity of the old downtown, where many spaces remain vacant.



Verona – Riverfront Area

## 5. The Riverfront Area

The zone to the west of the railroad is a predominantly residential area, with more than 80 % of the lots being occupied by mainly detached single family homes. This zone stretching on the banks of the river can be characterized as the “Riverfront Area” of the borough of Verona. The main feature of this zone is the high concentration of recreational facilities on the side of the river. A total of 9 Boat Clubs and recreational oriented businesses stretch along the river. Furthermore, this usage is complemented by a borough public park and playground. The overall quiet atmosphere of the area between the river and E. Railroad Ave. is in contrast with the busy nature of the Downtown area.

### Recreational Businesses

A total of 8 boat clubs are concentrated in the Riverfront area of Verona. They are located on the banks of the Allegheny River and represent a significant destination for people visiting Verona. Verona is already known across the region for its boating clubs and recreation related activities on the riverfront.



This positive image can be used to promote Verona’s potential as a recreational destination on the banks of the Allegheny River



Verona – Central Business District

## 6. The Central Business District

The zone to the east of the railroad can be regarded as the “Downtown” of Verona and is predominantly business oriented, with 60% of the lots and spaces being occupied and used for commercial or light industrial purposes. The area is defined by the Allegheny River Blvd, as the primary commercial artery, where most of the businesses in the Borough are located. The Allegheny River Blvd and Jones Street, its extension within Verona, parallel to the boulevard, are framed at the northern end by the Get Go gas station and to the south by the Giant Eagle Retail Park. Occupying 30 % of the lots, residential units are located along the E. Railroad Ave., adjacent to the railroad. This street also has some bars and restaurants, but overall a lower concentration of businesses than the Allegheny River Blvd. The



municipal building of Verona, together with the Fire Station and a public park are located close to the old Downtown, in the buffer zone carved by the railroad tracks.

### **Automotive Businesses**

The Automotive oriented businesses in Verona are located in the Downtown area along the Allegheny River Blvd. They represent about 8 % of the total number of units in the Downtown area. Due to their character, automotive businesses occupy a large area and are mainly characterized by detached buildings with surrounding parking areas. Although a relatively small percentage of the overall usage, automotive oriented businesses are a dominant presence in the Downtown area of Verona.

### **Bar/Tavern and Food Service**

The Bar and Food Service oriented businesses account for 7 % of the total units in the Downtown Area. They are mainly located in the northern part of the area along the Allegheny River Blvd. and the E. Railroad Ave. Although there are several food oriented businesses like Niky's Thai Kitchen, Dunkin Donuts and McDonalds, the number of restaurant options in Verona is overall limited.

### **Industrial**

The Downtown area is dominated in the southern part by the Avalotis facility and several storage facilities in the northern part. The business district is fragmented by the light industrial facility of Avalotis between Jones Street and E. Railroad Blvd. This fragmentation has been more apparent after the development of the Giant Eagle Retail Park as a major focal point for retail in the south. The connection between the northern and the newly created southern retail and service

### **Municipal Service**

The Municipal Building and Fire and Police Stations are located in the north of the Downtown area, close to the railroad tracks. The municipal building serves as the gathering place for the community and has in its vicinity a small park area destined for social and community events. Other municipal services include a postal service building and a tax office.

### **Parking**

Currently there are some private parking lots across the Downtown area and the Riverfront area. The lots in the Riverfront area are mainly used for boat storage. Public parking across the whole area is supplied by on street parking spaces and a small public parking area close to the municipal building of Verona. According to the Verona in Progress group, there is a need for public parking across the Downtown area.

### **Retail and Service Businesses**

The Downtown Area has two major concentration areas of retail and service related businesses. The northern part of the area, close to the Verona Municipal Building is located at the intersection of the two main roads in the borough, the Allegheny River Blvd. and Center Ave. This has been the traditional area for business in Verona. The retail sector, amounting to 12.3 % of the total units is dominated by the Giant Eagle Retail Park and the businesses located within. The old Downtown to the north is dominated



by service oriented businesses, mainly cosmetic saloons and financial services. Dirty Harry's Bike Shop is one of the most iconic retail businesses in this area.

### **Vacant Spaces**

There is a large amount of vacant space in the Downtown area of Verona. A total of 12 % of the lots in the Downtown area are either vacant lots or vacant businesses. The vacant businesses are concentrated in the northern part, in the older part of the Verona center. The vacancy rate in the Giant Eagle Retail Park by comparison is limited to just one space. The conclusion would be that the Retail Park is competing with the older retail area and is more successful.

## **7. Assessment of Community Needs**

Building upon our study of several cases during the first part of the semester, we have come to the conclusion that, a successful Sustainable Community Development Plan requires a concentrated effort from a big number of residents. A so-called "Bottom up Approach", where the initiative is taken by the residents in order to put together a plan following their needs has in our opinion the highest chances of success. It was therefore crucial, for us to understand the needs of the people of Verona from the very onset of the study. We have had several meetings with members of VIP, during the course of which they identified the following issues as the most significant in their community:

- Development of a Multi-Purpose Walkway,
- Development of the Riverbank,
- Revitalization of Verona's Riverbank Park,
- Procurement and Clean-up of the Borough Brothers Scrap Metal Yard, and
- Relocation of the Borough Salt Pile and Vehicle Storage Area.

Through discussion and analysis of these issues and after several site visits spent documenting the existing situation, the CMU project team identified companion issues and strategies which are currently in progress or under development. This framework of issues together with the requirements of VIP formed the basis for our conclusions and recommendations.

### **Spatial Planning and Connectivity**

- Desire for riverbank development
- Improper usage of lots in the riverfront area
- Unbuilt lots used for storing boats in the residential riverfront area
- Issue of the salt dump lot

**Discussion:** The residential community bordering the river bank commercial zone has the following issues regarding the use of space: lots are being used for storage of boats, boats are stored during the winter time and may be unclaimed, dumpsters are located in front yards, an existing salt dump is also located in the river front development region. These issues cause an image problem.

- Initiative for the revitalization of the riverfront park
  - improve landscaping of the park
  - make the park safe for children



- promote sporting activities at the park
- promote the park as a community park, not just a neighborhood park

**Discussion:** Community Parks can promote a healthier and active lifestyle for residents and draw neighboring tourism to the area. Community parks may also increase the property value of neighboring properties because people want to live with direct access to nature. This can increase annual tax capture for Verona and help in meeting economic goals. Initiatives that aim at the revitalization of the riverfront park will also go a long way in building a stronger community within Verona.

- Desire to eliminate the scrap yard which divides Verona from Oakmont
  - Multipurpose walkway along the railroad tracks
  - Desire to connect riverfront park with Plum Creek and Future Oakmont residential development
- Discussion: The existing low traffic railroad tracks provide opportunities for increasing regional and community connectivity. In addition to these benefits, eliminating the scrap yard that divides Verona and Oakmont could improve the image of the Borough.

### Transport

- There is an ongoing initiative to provide a Light Rail Transit link to Downtown Pittsburgh using existing rail infrastructure
  - connection for all boroughs on the existing line
  - talks are at a conceptual level
- Parking problem in Verona
  - there are not enough parking spaces in the Downtown area
  - shops suffer because of this issue
- desire to provide vehicular access to the Steel City Rowing Club (public - not for profit organization)

**Discussion:** The identified riverfront area and business district experience a lack of available parking. Any new activity and development will heighten these issues and should be addressed in current and future scenarios. The Light Rail transit, currently in the conception phase, may increase accessibility to the area. Sufficient parking spaces will have to be provided to promote a Park’N’Ride service for the residents of Verona.

### Events and Programs

- Community events program
  - concerts in the park
  - films in the park
  - 1<sup>st</sup> Friday event
- Participation in the Allegheny Together program
  - storefront revitalization program
  - GTECH urban revitalization program – urban farming / sunflower planting
- Ongoing tree planting initiative in Verona
- Neighborhood crime watch program – “be a nebbly neighbor”
- Initiative of “Adopt a street program” – for cleaning up neighborhood streets
- Current community groups in Verona
  - Arts Council – organizing festivals



- Historical Society
- Garden Club
- Newsletter
- Verona in Progress (VIP) – core community group

**Discussion:** The community has been working on variety of activities to engage residents socially. It is important to look at the current locations for such activities and promote them to extend their advantages across the community.

#### **Other**

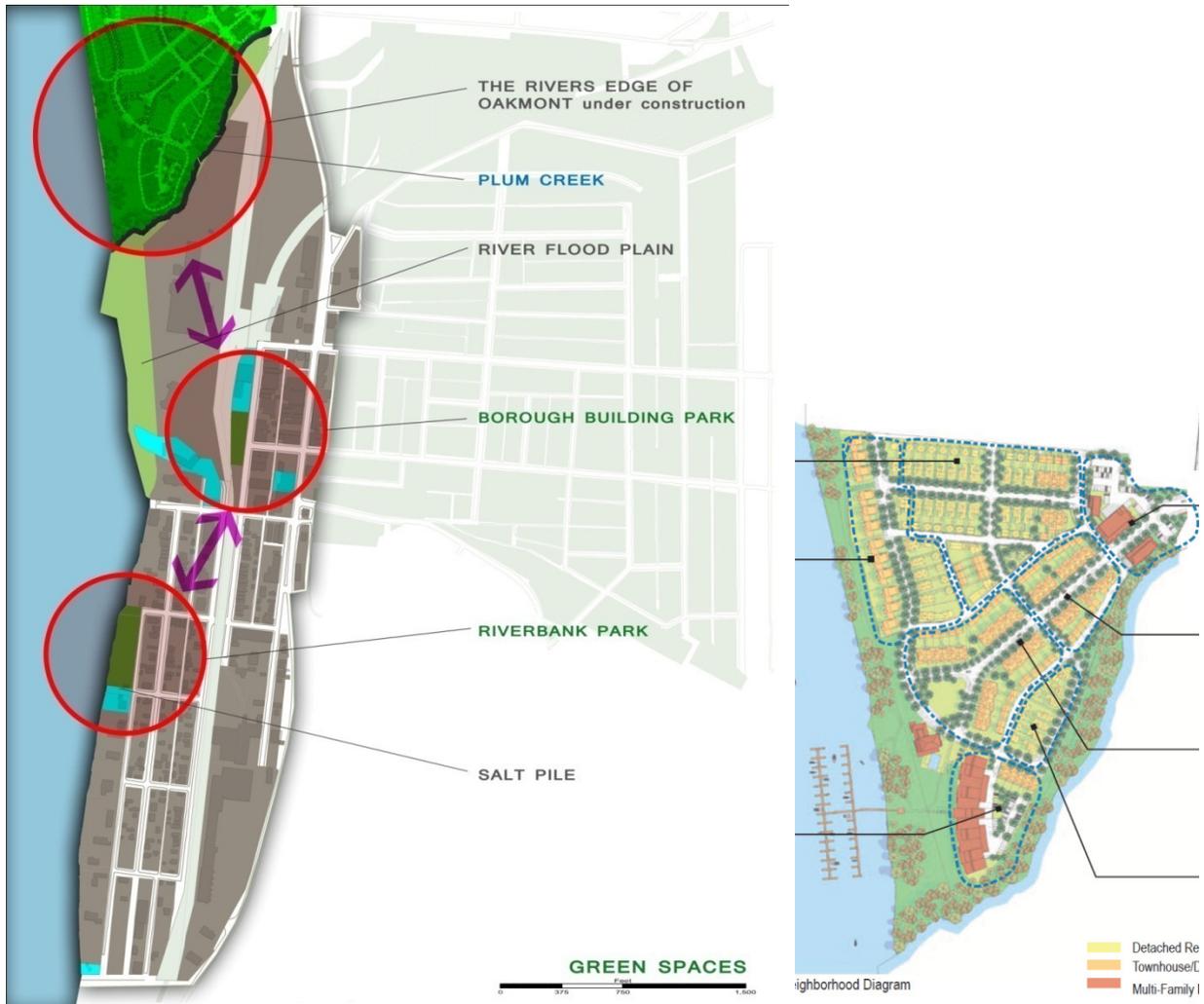
- Communication problems within the community
  - loss of the local newspaper
- Desire to increase the property values in order to increase the tax base
  - Low price of housing in the riverfront area, especially for older properties
  - vacant lots
- The school system of Verona is linked with the school system of Oakmont
  - the elementary school is in Verona
  - the middle and high school are in Oakmont

#### **Documenting Existing Site Conditions**

After conducting a detailed site analyses we have decided to focus our efforts on the Riverfront area. Both the needs of VIP and the preliminary needs assessment identified the Riverfront area as the primary focus point for any future development plan.

In our opinion the biggest asset of Verona is its riverfront location. Any intervention should capitalize on this asset and use it to promote its sustainability. It is thus important to first establish a stronger sense of space within the community about the presence of the river. At present time, the accessibility to the river is limited by several factors:

- the presence of the railroad as an effective barrier which restricts the accessibility to the riverfront area to just 2 access points.
- the public has access to the river through a public dock which is very difficult to access, due to it being located at the southern edge of the borough
- the riverbank park, which is open to the public is designed more as a neighborhood park and accessibility to it is limited for people who do not live in the immediate vicinity
- the topography of Verona allows for only one direct connection between Zone 2 (Residential) and Zone 3 (Riverfront); this connection is represented by South Street. The fact, that South Street is not the main connection to the Downtown region reduces the significance of the direct link.



Verona – Main Hubs of Interest

The Rivers Edge of Oakmont ([www.riversedgeofoakmont.com](http://www.riversedgeofoakmont.com))

Our team identified three distinct zones which need to be integrated in a larger plan in order to promote access to and awareness about the Allegheny River. As the community is already engaged in numerous summer time activities in the small park near the Borough building, like “Concerts in the Park” or “Films in the Park”, it can be inferred that this area has an important significance in the life of the community. Being located in the heart of the community, the Borough Building Park should be used as the primary link in the effort of establishing local and regional connections and increase riverfront awareness.

The second zone, as identified by our team is the Riverbank Park. Its main strengths are the riverfront location, immediate access to the water and public accessibility. Nevertheless its present use as a neighborhood park makes it less present in the life of Verona. A potential connection to the Borough building park could help introduce it into the broader circuit of the borough.

The third zone of interest is the real estate development “The Rivers Edge” in Oakmont. Although this development does not belong to Verona, it represents a huge opportunity for the Borough to connect to neighboring Oakmont. As construction for the future residential estate along Plum Creek is already



under way and as its plans call for a large green public area at its southern tip, there is a great opportunity to establish a physical connection of green spaces. In this respect the River Flood Plain, which stretches along the river's margins should be looked at as a potential area of expanding riverfront access.

Providing riverfront access and awareness and establishing regional connections are beneficial for Verona's efforts for a sustainable development. Building of the idea of the three main areas of interest, a comprehensive plan can be developed in order to increase connectivity and the flow of people within the business district.

## **8. Overview of Proposals**

Capitalizing on the idea of connecting existing zones of interest within and around Verona our team is proposing a step by step development of a series of biking and walking trails. These recreational oriented developments are designed to work together with the existing boat clubs and promote the image of Verona as an important recreational destination for the Pittsburgh region.

### **Trail Connection to Oakmont and Riverbank Trail**

The possibility of connecting Verona to Oakmont has been considered already by VIP, though the concept of connecting to the Oakmont trail along the railroad tracks proved to be difficult to implement. The possibility of an alternative connection arose after analyzing the development plans for the residential neighborhood of Rivers Edge. The new development opens itself towards the river by the means of a large public park area.

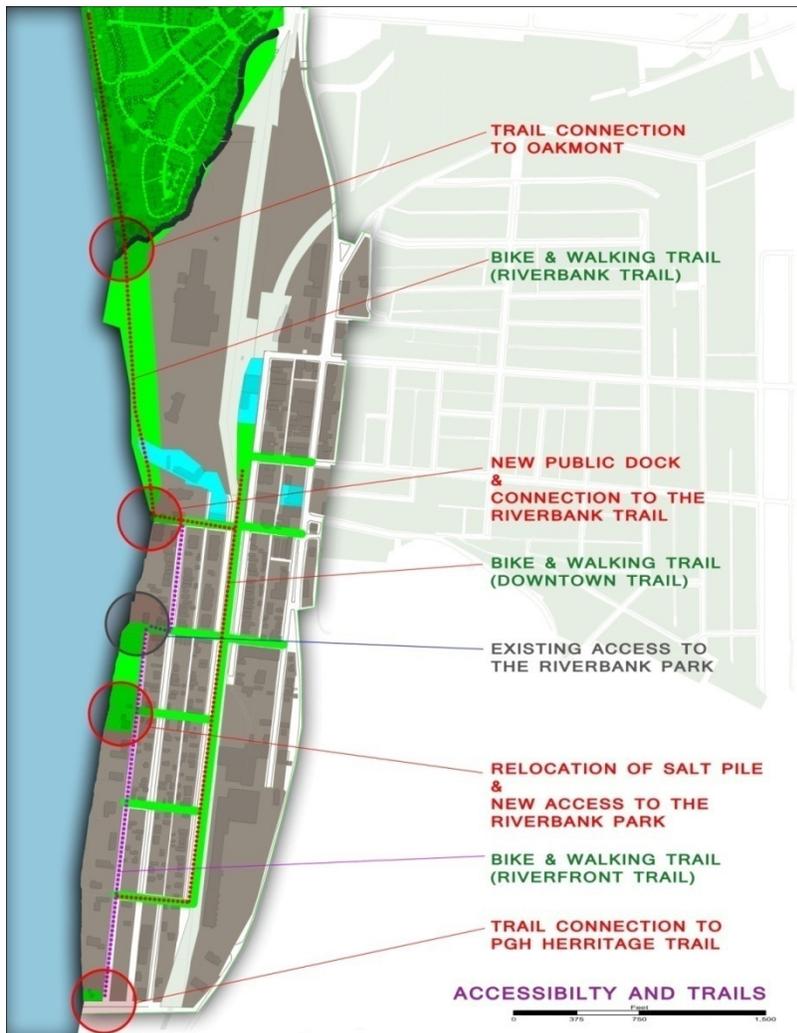
The Flood Plain Area, a stretch of public land along the edge of the Allegheny River extends from James Street to Plum Creek and could be used for the development of a new public park and trail for Verona. The trail would then be connected to the public area within Oakmont. This trail would provide excellent recreational opportunities for both Verona and Oakmont residents. Furthermore, it would attract potential clients for businesses in the Verona Downtown area.

### **New Public Dock and Connection to the Riverbank Trail**

Currently Jones Street does not offer a direct access to the Allegheny River, although such an access is possible. The central location of James St. is perfect for a direct public access point to the Allegheny River. Furthermore, the close proximity to the previously mentioned flood plain makes it the ideal location for a combined Walking, Biking and Boating access point. This point would be the Verona access point to the Riverbank Trail and to the New Riverbank Park. The trail should ultimately connected to the downtown Borough Building Park.



The construction of a public dock in this area would further increase its significance and would make it one of the main attractions for Verona Residents and visitors. Within this context it is important to mention the development of the Sycamore Island on the Allegheny River as a public park and natural reserve. Sycamore Island is located 0.8 mi to the South of the James Street Dock, in the middle of the Allegheny River. The proposed public dock would serve as a launching point for trips to the island, for leisure trips along the Allegheny River and for other recreational activities on the river.



Verona – Overview of Proposals

### Relocation of Salt Pile and New Access to the Riverbank Park

The Riverbank Park is currently accessible from Grant Street. The park serves as a neighborhood park and has public playgrounds and a wide view of the Allegheny River. The borough salt pile is located at the southern edge of the park, posing potential environmental hazards besides the fact that it diminishes the attractiveness of the park as a recreational destination. In our opinion the relocation of the salt pile, as intended by VIP should also be coupled with the creation of a secondary access point to the park. The increased accessibility would reintroduce this important public amenity into the social circuit of Verona.



A system of signage and marked trails should be created in order to establish a connection to the Borough Building and Downtown Area.

### **Downtown Trail and Green Corridor**

The Allegheny River Railroad occupies a wide stretch of land which cuts through the middle of Verona. Due to the nature of the railroad activity this stretch of land cannot be developed for housing or business activities. The Railroad owns the land and reserves it for future railroad development, particularly for the anticipated commuter rail connection to Pittsburgh. Nevertheless the corridor can still be developed from an urban landscaping perspective. Besides its conversion to a green corridor, a biking and walking trail could also be put in place in the area. This trail would provide a connection between the Borough Building Park and the public and recreational amenities along the Allegheny River. The improvement of the rail corridor by means of landscaping and planting trees would reduce the negative impact of the railroad on the area and would diminish the role of “barrier”, the railroad has at the present time.

### **Trail Connection to Pittsburgh Heritage Trail**

In the context of regional connectivity, the borough of Verona has an opportunity to establish a connection to the Pittsburgh Heritage Trail. The trail is planned by the “Friends of the Riverfront” organization and follows the path of the Allegheny Valley Railroad to downtown Pittsburgh. The development of the trail would directly connect Verona to Pittsburgh and would significantly contribute to its image as a regional recreational destination. In order to secure the implementation of this plan, the Verona community should apply pressure to the various decision bodies in order to speed the implementation process. The system of trails developed within Verona will provide visitors with more than a transit opportunity. A combined system of signage, paved trails and road markings would point recreational visitors in the direction of both the boating facilities and the business district, where restaurants and shops would serve the visiting public. In the context of the Pittsburgh Heritage Trail, Verona could be both a destination and a place for rest.



## 9. Stakeholder Analysis

### A Bottom-Up Approach is Leading Verona into the Future

A number of stakeholders were identified in this Sustainability Needs Assessment for the Borough of Verona, but the most important group appears to be VIP – Verona in Progress, a concerned group of citizens who have dedicated themselves to the revitalization of their community. VIP is working toward the improvement of Verona’s Image to attract new visitors, businesses and residents to the community. They are working on revitalization projects which will help to build the tax base required to maintain and expand Borough services and will increase the Quality of the Environment and the Quality of Life for all Verona residents. They demonstrate the positive effects that the “Bottom-Up” approach to Sustainability Community Development can achieve.

These effects do not come with little effort. This small group of people has tallied an enormous number of volunteer hours and is responsible for all of the current revitalization programs that the Borough is participating in. Several “spin-off” groups have grown from VIP - the Garden Club and the Historical Society - to name a few. They should continue to build community involvement and gain volunteer support by engaging members of the educational community through community service programs for school students; by engaging local volunteer organizations such as boy scouts, girl scouts, religious youth groups and retirement groups; by engaging large and small, local businesses who may be interested in boosting their image in the community to increase their business revenue and property value; by educating the general public about the benefits of Verona that they may be taking for granted; by constructing a new website or by actively participating in updates on the Allegheny Together website; and by maintaining a regular newsletter and perhaps even a radio broadcast on a local station (WDUQ for example). VIP should continue to be the “squeaky wheel” in communication with Community, State and Federal leaders involved in the Mid-Term and Long-Term portions of this study. Community, State and Federal leaders may provide grants, matching grants, technical assistance with grant writing, investigation into environmental violations, lobbying assistance with governmental agencies or uncooperative property owners, and perhaps even advertising within the larger Allegheny Valley Community.

If the dedication exhibited by the members of this community group is encouraged and grows, and if VIP continues to be the key communicator with all stakeholder groups, Verona will move quickly to be a leader in the Allegheny Valley Region. Specific Stakeholder groups are listed below:



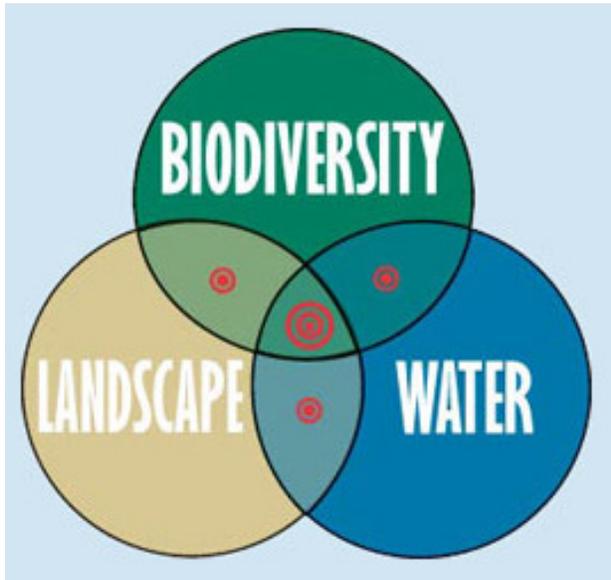
STAKEHOLDER	AGENDA	ROLE
<b>STATE FUNDING AGENCIES</b> PA Fish & Boat, DCNR, DEP	<b>Confidence that Awarded Funding will Further the State Goals – Conservation of Natural Resources for all of PA</b>	<b>Technical Assistance/Matching Grants</b> <b>Investigation of DEP Violations</b> <b>Fundraising – PA FISH &amp; BOAT</b>
<b>STATE GOVERNMENT</b>	<b>Conservation of Natural Resources</b> <b>Increase of Tax Revenue</b>	<b>Technical Assistance</b> <b>Matching Grants</b>
<b>STATE &amp; FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVES</b>	<b>Conservation of Natural Resources</b> <b>Increase of Tax Revenue</b> <b>Re-election</b>	<b>Lobbying Assistance with State &amp; Federal Agencies</b> <b>Communication in State &amp; Community</b>
<b>LOCAL PARTNERS</b> Allegheny Land Trust, Friends of the Riverfront, W PA Conservancy, Boat Clubs	<b>Furthering of Individual Visions</b> <b>Conservation of Natural Resources</b> <b>Furthering of Member Needs</b>	<b>Tech Assistance/Grant Writing Expertise</b> <b>Volunteer Support</b> <b>Lobbying Assistance with Funding Agencies</b>
<b>COMMUNITY PARTNERS</b> VIP, Garden Club, Historical Society, Scouts, Religious Groups	<b>Image Improvement</b> <b>Increased Community Involvement</b> <b>Increased Quality of Life</b>	<b>Volunteer Support</b> <b>Communication within Community &amp; State</b> <b>Coordination with All Stakeholders</b>
<b>BOROUGH of VERONA SCHOOL DISTRICT</b>	<b>Image Improvement</b> <b>Increased Property Values &amp; Tax Revenue</b>	<b>Education &amp; Service Projects</b> <b>Coordinate with All Stakeholders</b>
<b>INDUST &amp; LARGE BUSINESS</b> Giant Eagle, Avalotis, Rob Roy, Daily's	<b>Image to Boost Local Sales/Reputation</b> <b>Increased Property Value</b>	<b>Funding for Image Associated Projects</b> <b>Technical Assistance</b>
<b>SMALL BUSINESSES</b> Dirty Harry's, Thai Restaurant, Dunkin Donuts	<b>Image to Boost Local Sales/Reputation</b> <b>Increased Property Value</b>	<b>Apply for Funding Programs</b> <b>Communication within Community</b>
<b>GENERAL PUBLIC</b>	<b>Increased Property Value</b> <b>Increased Quality of Environment &amp; Life</b>	<b>Volunteer Support</b> <b>Communication within Community</b>



## 10. Potential Partnerships

### Allegheny Land Trust – Sycamore Island Development

*Allegheny Land Trust's mission is to serve as the lead land trust conserving and stewarding lands that support the scenic, recreational and environmental well-being of communities in Allegheny County and its environs<sup>18</sup>.*



This diagram, taken from the ALT website, states three goals that summarize ALT's mission.

Since ALT has limited funds, they focus on conserving land that meets all three goals cited in their mission: biodiversity, landscape character and water management.

[www.alleghenylantrust.org](http://www.alleghenylantrust.org)

The Car Barn Shops  
409 Broad Street  
Sewickley, PA 15143  
412-741-2750

Sycamore Island meets all three goals:

- it is one of the last undeveloped islands in the Allegheny River
- it is close to an urban area, Pittsburgh
- it affords educational opportunities to the surrounding communities
- it is home for rare vegetation and wildlife unique to PA
  - rare hardwood species
  - rare birds, amphibians, reptiles, mussels
- it is threatened by erosion and invasive species
  - Japanese knotweed
  - overuse by humans

The Allegheny Land Trust requires a cooperative community to provide access to the island for their team of conservationists, ecologists and volunteers. They also would like to establish a relationship with a community willing to serve as an access point for conservation programs. Verona currently has a public dock facility which is open to the general public, not just Verona residents. With assistance from the PA Fish & Boat Commission, Verona can develop additional sites for island access and can provide groups of volunteers to work with the ALT in various phases of the Sycamore Island conservation: clean-up, development and maintenance.



## Friends of the Riverfront – Three Rivers Heritage Trail

Mission:

*Increased awareness and engagement with the Pittsburgh region's rivers and riverfronts through activities, stewardship and expansion of water and land trails.*

*...working to protect and restore our region's priceless rivers and riverfronts.*

*...through intense collaboration with community partners, government officials, and diverse volunteer base, our rivers and riverfronts have been transformed from industrial wastelands to international examples of environmental renewal.*

*...reclaim the city's riverfronts for public access and greenway/recreational use.*



This photograph, taken from the Friends of the Riverfront website, illustrates what a powerful partner the Friends of the Riverfront can be. The website states that each year they engage over 1,000 volunteers for 3 or more hours of work each.

[www.friendsoftheriver.org](http://www.friendsoftheriver.org)

Friends of the Riverfront, Inc.  
33 Terminal Way  
Pittsburgh, PA 15219  
412-488-0212

Friends of the Riverfront's Significant Work:

- Development of the Three Rivers Heritage Trail
- Maintenance of an Access Point in Verona
- 2003-Allegheny River Boulevard Rail Trail Feasibility Study
- Institution of Riverfronts Naturally Program
- Negotiation for Verona Shared Rail Trail Use with Railroad Owner
- Intense collaborators

The Friends of the Riverfront will be an important partner aiding Verona in collaboration and negotiation with the current owner of the Allegheny Valley Railroad tracks in Verona. The Friends of the Riverfront is committed to further development of the Three Rivers Heritage Trail in Verona and maintenance and development of additional access points, as part of this trail system, to the river.



## 11. Framing the Process

### General Process

As part of the process of defining issues the team focused on issues identified by Verona In Progress (VIP), as mentioned earlier. These and other issues were framed into four major categories that included a lack of access to financial resources, image improvement, community and regional disconnectedness.

Identifying funding sources and improving the image of the borough had to be addressed in any plan for Sustainable Verona. Allowing for community placemaking by reducing community disconnectedness in terms of transit, zoning, community services also had to be addressed. The final issue, regional disconnectedness with the surround neighborhoods of Oakmont to the North and Penn Hills to the Southeast was also addressed in the proposed plan for Sustainable Verona. The team goal was to define strategies to address these key issues within the framework of already existing projects within Verona.

The theme that came out of this process was a need to highlight Verona’s natural resource - the Allegheny River, which can provide economic added value, improve the image and serve as an anchoring point around the whole community and beyond. The means to accomplish this goal was to enhance the riverfront area through greening strategies and promotion of a rich trail system connecting existing greenspaces within the community.

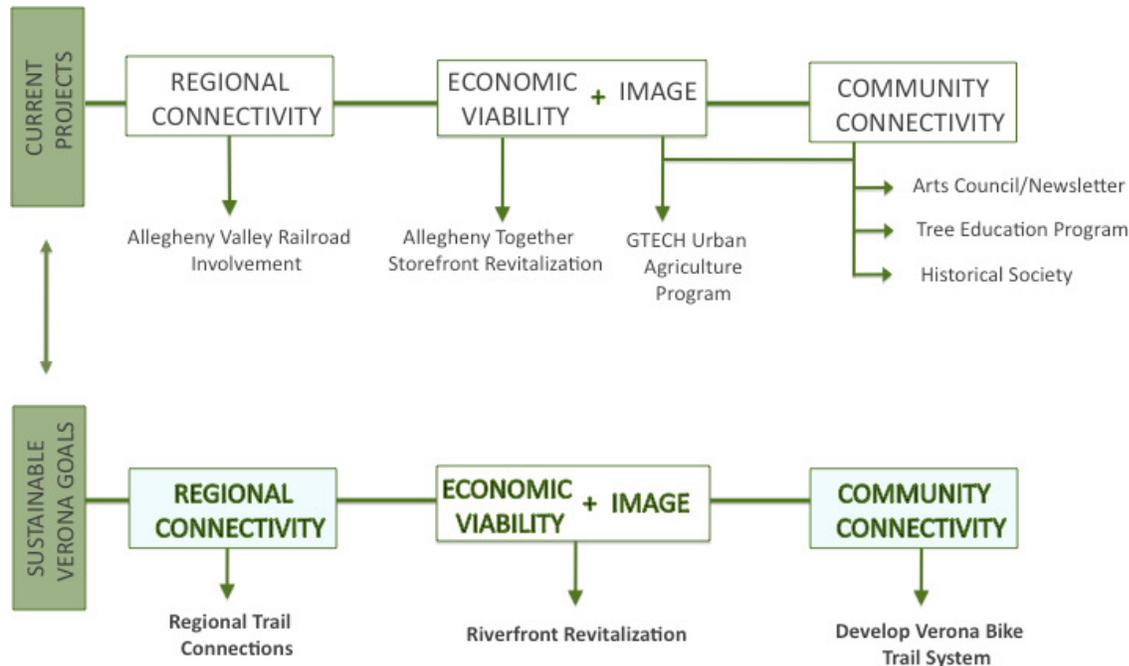


Figure: Overview of how the framing process was established

Going forward, three major strategies can be pursued to promote sustainable Verona. These are **Regional Connectivity**, **Economic Viability + Image** and **Community Connectivity**. The team proposed



short-term goals, which could be accomplished within a year, mid-term goals, accomplished within 5 years and long-term goals, accomplished within a 10-year period.

Verona is already well on the way in addressing these strategies. In Regional Connectivity, Verona is part of the AVR project to get a railcar stop within Verona. To address Economic Viability and Image, Verona participates in the GTECH program, which increases tree planting along streets. Verona is also involved in the Allegheny Together Storefront Revitalization of the business district. Verona addresses Community Connectivity strategies through its participation in the Treevitalize programs, Arts Council, Newsletter disbursement among its residents and the Historical Society.

### Community Connectivity

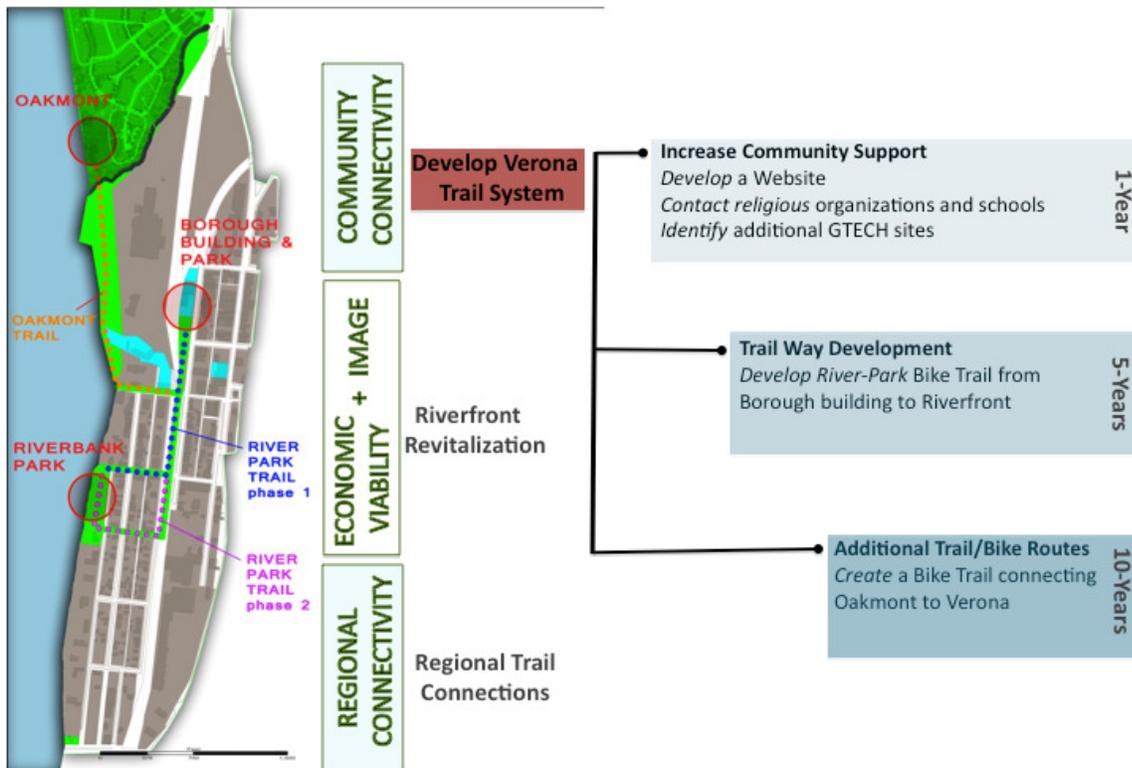


Figure: Community Connectivity Project Time-Lines

### Access to Riverfront

Access to riverfront by residents of a community has been limited as industrial and commercial uses take up roadways and access points to the river.<sup>ii</sup> The loss of public access has diminished the use of riverfront as community rallying sites and boat access to scenic vistas and direct connection to the river. By making the Riverbank Park an attractive destination that is connected to trails and greenways, Verona can increase community involvement of this area.

### Community Connectivity Goals



Increasing community involvement can be accomplished by the establishment of a web site to inform residents of activities that they can participate in. Another way to increase community involvement is by reaching out to local community groups such as churches and schools. These goals can be accomplished within a year and will be critical in getting community support for all future programs. There are three main trail extensions proposed in the medium and long-term planning time frames. Developing the River-Park trail from the borough building to the riverfront will take place in two phases within 5 years and the trail connecting Oakmont's Rivers' Edge development will take place within 10 years.

### Economic Viability & Image

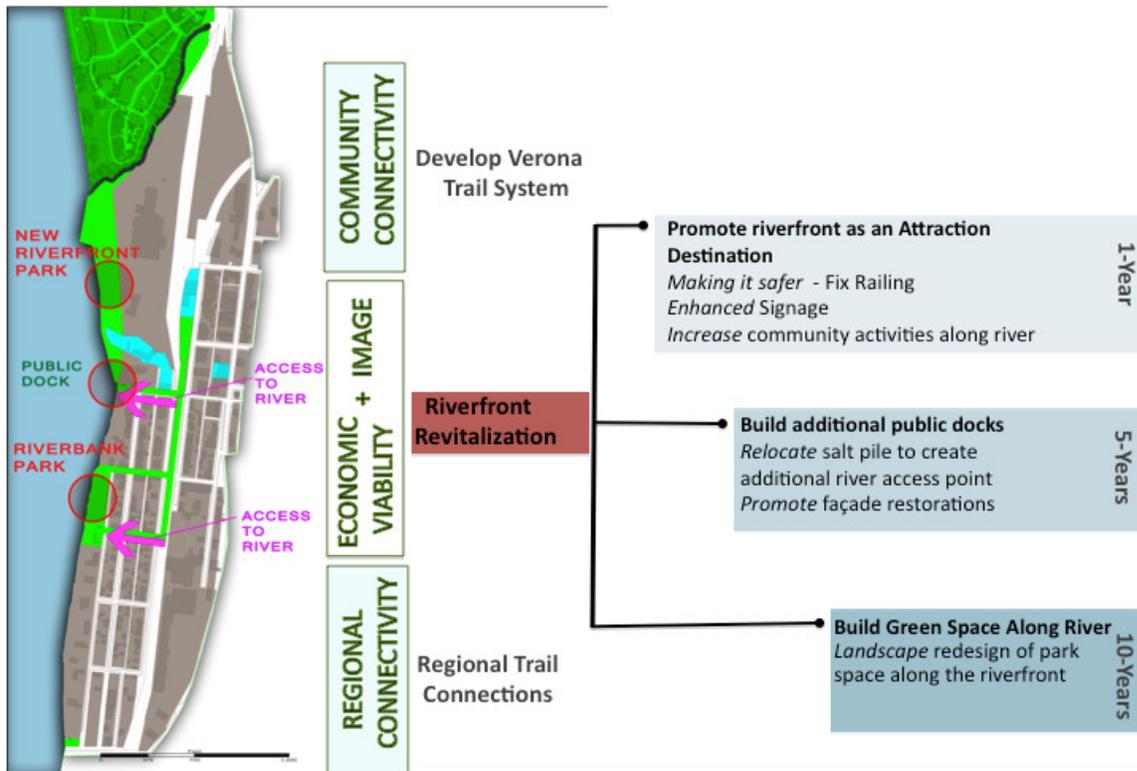


Figure: Economic Viability + Image Project Time-Lines

### Boost to Local Businesses

The business outlook of Verona like many other communities in the region has changed. As industrial development diminishes and is replaced with smaller commercial businesses, the borough of Verona can attract these new businesses by adapting to the needs of these entities without sacrificing the needs of its residents. Small businesses in the US employ about half of all private sector employees and have generated 60% to 80% of new jobs in the last decade.<sup>iii</sup> What draws a small business to a community is its ability to attract and retain employees within that community. Companies often look for open-spaces and parks to attract a highly trained workforce because employees prefer the perceived quality of life derived from being close to a park. In a 1997 study of 157 relocated small businesses in Colorado,



the business decision makers were asked about what motivated the move. Parks, access to open-spaces and other associated amenities such as recreation were ranked high as the most important quality of life factors. In addition to the retention of employees, business becomes attracted to the area because of the increase in property value of commercial properties. A Boston study from the Trust of Public Land showed an increase in property value by 79% within 5 years due to a proposed 1-mile green corridor that at the time had not yet been constructed. By actively planning for green spaces and easy access to trails, Verona can attract new businesses and increase economic viability and increase population.

### **Economic Viability + Image Goals**

The Riverfront Revitalization will increase local access to the riverfront area while also attracting local businesses. Short-term goals are to make the Riverbank Park safer for all members of the community by investigating in an effective rail system that allows access but prevents young children from accessing the river directly. Increase signage along the major roads to promote the river and its amenities will go a long way in attracting residents and tourism to the area. Having community events in the Riverbank Park will also support the goal of revitalizing the riverfront.

The removal of the salt-pile can be accomplished within a year, however it is within the 5-year range due to finding an alternative relocation site. When the salt-pile is removed, an additional public access point along the river can be built. Facade restorations along the riverfront can enhance the streetscape and increase the property value of properties. The 10-year goal of the Riverbank Park is to serve as an attractive, permeable open-space that connects to trails within Verona and beyond. To accomplish this some landscaping will have to go towards “greening” this vital area so that the derived amenities to open spaces can benefit residents and attract tourism to Verona.

### **Regional Connectivity**

Extending the a trail system within Verona to the existing trails such as the Three Rivers Heritage Trail or the Oakmont Arboretum Trail, will increase the region connectivity. Regional connectivity can also be accomplished via waterways. Verona can connect with the region by making Verona a key access point and waterway destination, promoting boating and fishing tourism.

### **Regional Connectivity Goals**

Short-term goals should include continued discussions with the AVR on addition commuter rail stops within Verona so that public transit can be improved in the area while also extending direct access to neighboring communities. The 5-year plan will extend the trail from Riverbank Park to the Three Rivers Heritage Trail system proposed to be along Arch Street or along the railroad depending on AVR space allotments for establishing a trail-way. In the long-term, the scrap metal yard located to the north can be reclaimed as a greenway along the Allegheny River Blvd. This site can also be used for a park n’ ride site for commuters that can use the nearby commuter train stop.

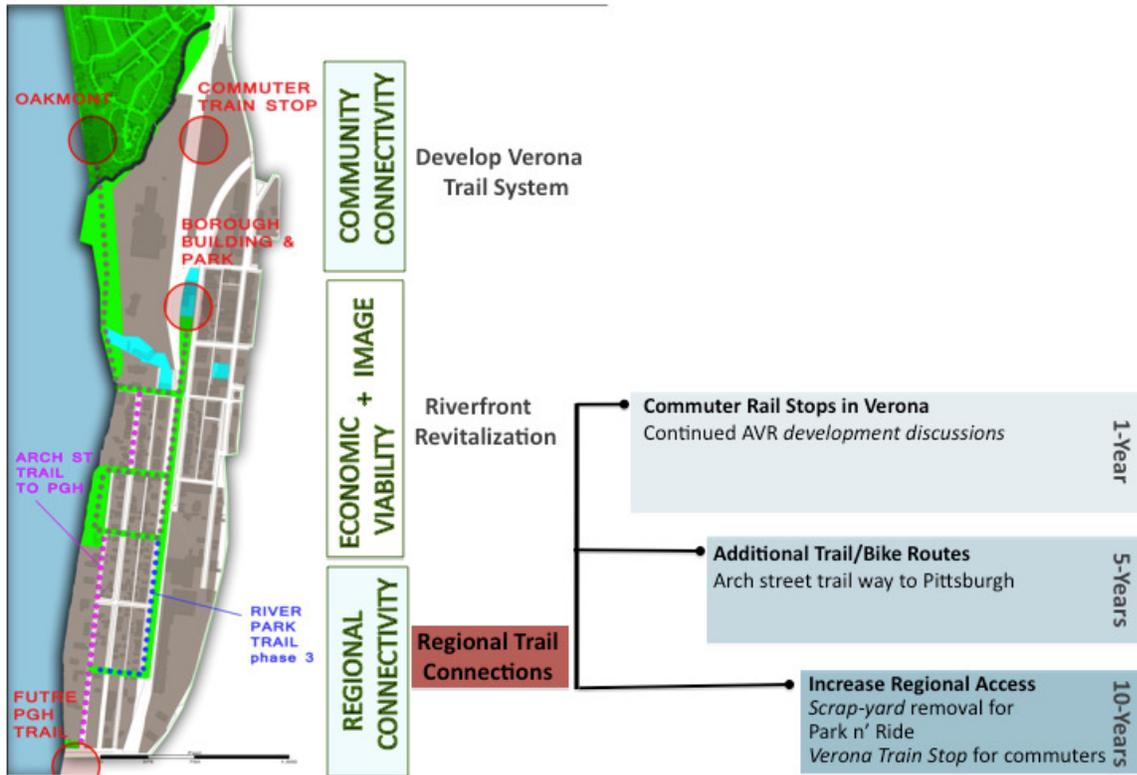


Figure: Regional Connectivity Project Time-Lines

## Discussion

### Clean rivers may increase recreational activity

Having access to clean rivers can increase or decrease river activities depending on water quality. In 2004<sup>2</sup>, the opinion of anglers, boaters and park users within Allegheny County were surveyed to determine the most importance issues affecting recreational use. The top 3 scores issues were: polluted water (93.8%), debris (81.3%) and easy access (57.1%). In addition to increasing river access through public docks, the borough of Verona can benefit from having an unpolluted, debris-free river, increasing public use of the river for recreational activities.

### What is LID?

Low-impact developments are greening strategies that communities can adopt to improve their local water-quality and reduce surface water runoff into streams and rivers. LID strategies can also be used to mitigate CSO's. The key ideas behind LID projects are to treat the source of water runoff at the site with a combination of programs such as greening streets, rainwater reuse.

### LID (Low Impact Development) Strategies for Storm-Water Retention in Verona

Verona can participate in LID (Low Impact Development) strategies that may prevent river pollution and reduce CSOs (Combined Sewer Overflows) within its community. Every time it rains within Allegheny



county sewage treatment area, CSOs occur resulting in billions of gallons of sewage and storm-water discharge directly into our rivers on an annual basis. These overflows send pathogens and other bacteria, pollutants directly to the rivers, which have negative impact on marine life as well as human health. From May 15 to September 30<sup>th</sup>, the river quality during 50% of this peak summer period is unsafe for recreational activities such as boating or swimming. Alcosan, a non-profit entity that treats sewage within the Allegheny County, is responsible for infrastructure improvement to reduce CSOs. The costs for these upgrades will be passed directly to residents based on treatment quantities. In a news article by Post-Gazette, Alcosan rates rose by 8.5% between 2006 and 2007 to \$2.98 per 1,000 gallons.<sup>iv</sup>

This section of the report examines alternative strategies to reduce capital expenditures and operating costs while improving the quality of life and green-spaces within a community such as Verona.

### Rain Barrel

The simplest solution to CSO's is to prevent storm water from getting into the pipes in the first place. A solution to this is to promote rainwater catchment systems. The 3rivers wet weather have been successful in demonstration projects that divert the storm water from houses to rain barrels that can later be used to irrigate plants.<sup>v</sup> Verona can participate in these programs to improve storm-water reuse.



Figure: Rain barrel

### Rain Gardens

#### Garden Profile

**Garden owner: "Charlene L"**   **Garden name: "S. Vale"**

- 195 Square feet of garden surface area
- 237 Gallons of capacity
- 135 Gallons of rainfall captured by this garden in the past
- 1,923 Gallons of rainfall captured since garden completed (on September 30, 2008)



This garden contains lots of native plants such as Joe Pye Weed, Iron Weed, Great Blue Lobelia, Tall Sunflower, Chokeberries, Coreopsis and many other plants. We also have our yard certified as a Wildlife Habitat. I have been an organic gardener for many years and do not apply chemical fertilizers and herbicides. I use lots of compost and compost tea as well as natural products such as kelp and fish emulsions.

Rain gardens provide another way to mitigate storm-water from reaching combined sewers. The benefits of having rain-gardens within a community is that it can provide an economic benefit; improve community interactions as well as a practical solution to reduce CSOs. An added benefit to their construction for municipalities or private groups is positive publicity through the interactive on-line rain garden initiative sponsored the Three Rivers Rain Garden Alliance, a non-profit organization. With the calibrated radar rainfall system, an estimate of how much storm water is being detained in the garden is recorded after every rainfall event and displayed on the interactive



website. Pictures of the rain garden can also be loaded.<sup>vi</sup>

Figure: Demonstrated Three Rivers Rain Garden Alliance interactive web-site

### Grass Swales

These natural water retention systems can be used to increase green-scapes and serve as one of the best management practices for storm-water abatement in CSO's.

The use of rain-gardens and bio-retention swales for rainwater can save up to \$4,800 per residential lot rather than sending this amount of rainwater to a conventional treatment site.<sup>vii</sup>

### Green-Streets

Planting trees and grasses along the roadways as well as reducing the impervious surface by reducing road width from 32 feet wide to 24 feet wide can be used. The cost-savings in reduced material can be up to \$30 per linear foot.<sup>7</sup>

### Constructed Wetlands

A constructed wetland can increase the wildlife/ecology of the area, increase property value and provide for community space and connection with the natural environment. The function of a wetland is varied: It serves as a buffer between the land and marine ecosystems. It reduces soil erosion, increases wildlife and uptakes Nitrogen, Nitrates, phosphorus and heavy metals.

In small communities, a constructed wetland can be used to treat sewage water while also increasing "green infrastructure" within the community and without the use of hazardous chemicals or piping – "gray" infrastructure. It can be sized to meet the specific needs of a community and would require diverting the existing sewage branch. This strategy may apply to smaller borough such as Verona. Natural hydrology of the region will have to be studied to determine feasibility and location if this approach were taken. But it would be the first of its kind within Allegheny County.



*The figure on the left shows Verona's current waste water detention tanks. The figure on the right shows a possible use of riverfront as greenspace and community learning site.*



### Communities Using LID

Communities that adopted LID strategies have a cost-benefit advantage over conventional storm-water treatment strategies. In Prairie Glen, Wisconsin, the conventional development cost would have been \$1,004,848 while LID costs were \$599,536 – resulting in a 40% cost-savings.<sup>viii</sup> Most gains in costs are from using less “gray” infrastructure, which is more costly than “green” infrastructure. The cost-savings were estimated based on material costs of gutters, piping, curbs etc. A caveat mentioned in the report is that costs of LID projects may be higher because land reforming, site preparation, plant procurement and connections to municipal stormwater systems. Good planning and a good team is a key factor in successful projects.

Community <sup>8</sup>	Prairie Glen Germantown, Wisconsin	Bellingham City Hall Washington	Auburn Hills Southwestern Wisconsin
LID Strategies	Bioretention Cluster Building Reduced Impervious Area Swales Constructed Wetland Vegetated Landscape	Bioretention via use of rain-gardens	Bioretention Reduced Impervious Area Swales Vegetated Landscape Wetlands
Cost-Savings	40%	80%	32%

Community education and participation comes along with these strategies and is an added benefit. By being aware of these strategies the borough of Verona can plan for the combination of strategies to enhance green-spaces and increase stormwater infiltration while maintaining its long terms strategies of regional and community connectivity, economic viability and an improved image.



## 12. Greenspace Benefits

### How Green Space Can Benefit a Community

The Trust for Public Land commissioned a study in 2009 called *Measuring the Economic Value of a City Park System*<sup>10</sup>. This study outlines seven attributes of Green Space Benefits<sup>10</sup>: Increased Property Value, Increased Tax Revenue, Free Use of Recreational Facilities, Increased Health Benefits, Increased Social Capital, Reduced Water Pollution and Reduced Air Pollution. Seven park systems were studied and compared using various methods. Five of the seven attributes are discussed in this Sustainability Needs Assessment which focuses on the Riverfront Area of the Borough of Verona, PA. The remaining two, Reduced Air Pollution and Increased Social Capital, are beyond the scope of this study and will be explored in the future.

### Direct Income

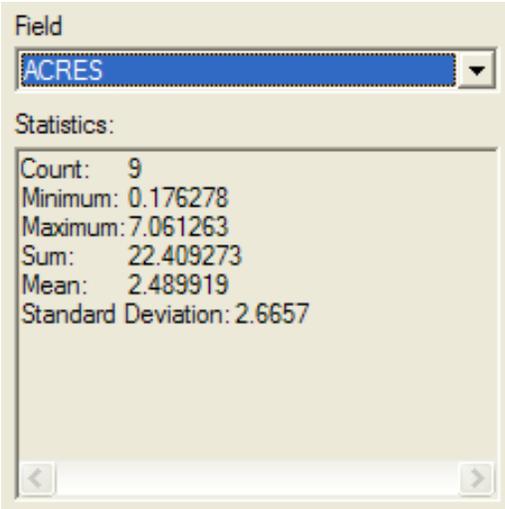
The first two attributes of Green Space Benefits are related to Direct Income<sup>10</sup> to the Community, Residents or Local Businesses. These attributes relate to Increased Property Value and Increased Tourism.

The value attributed to Increased Property Value is referred to as hedonic value by economists<sup>10</sup>. Hedonic value can be described as the willingness for an average person to pay more for a home near a high quality park, public transportation to a metropolitan area, a public swimming pool, a public library, school, etc.<sup>10</sup>.

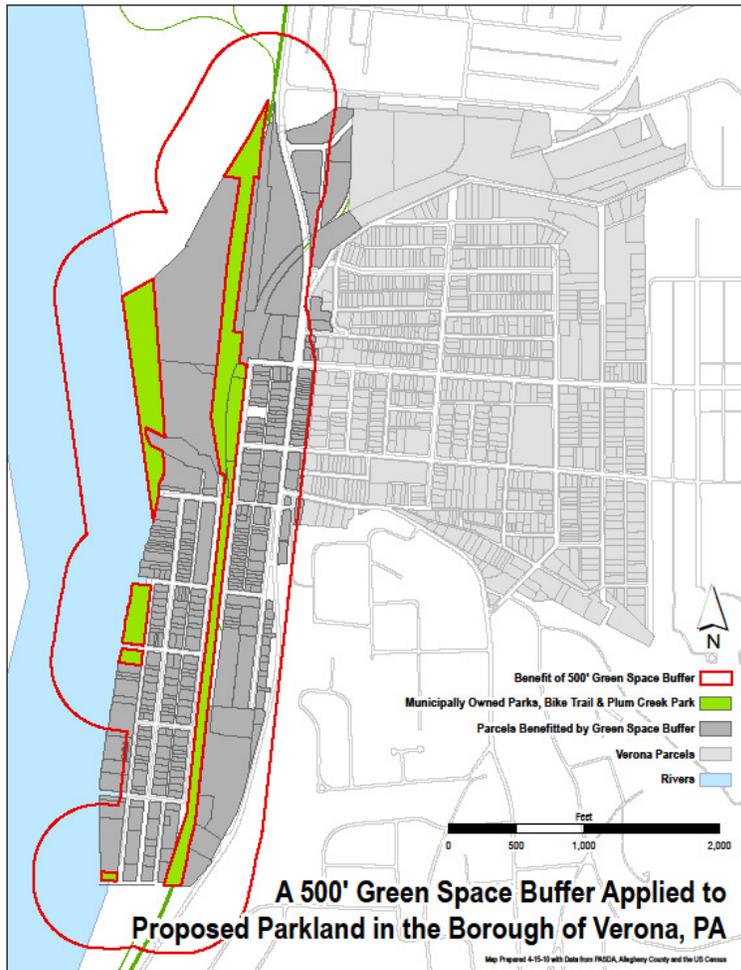
The value of Green Space, or a public park, has been shown to extend as far as 2,000 feet if that park is one acre or more<sup>10</sup>. The greatest value has been shown to occur within the first 500 feet<sup>10</sup>, so 500 feet has been used as the buffer for Green Space's influence on property value in this study. The smallest parks in the Riverfront Area of Verona are less than one acre, but their proximity to the proposed larger parks permits them to be included in the effective 500 foot Green Space Buffer.

There are 3-5 vacant lots in the Riverfront Area which may be appropriately developed into green space or parks to compliment the parks proposed in this Sustainability Needs Assessment. The ownership of these parcels has not been determined. Members of VIP are researching the parcels to determine whether they are owned by the Borough of Verona, a not-for-profit group formed to aid the Borough of Verona or a private entity. Once ownership is determined, it may be possible to develop these parcels to benefit the Riverfront Area as well. The simplest plan would be to permit community partners, such as GTECH, the opportunity to develop these parcels as part of their ongoing program in the Borough.

The following Maps will show the 500 foot Green Space Buffer, the No. of Parcels affected by the Buffer and the Area of the Parcels affected by the Buffer:



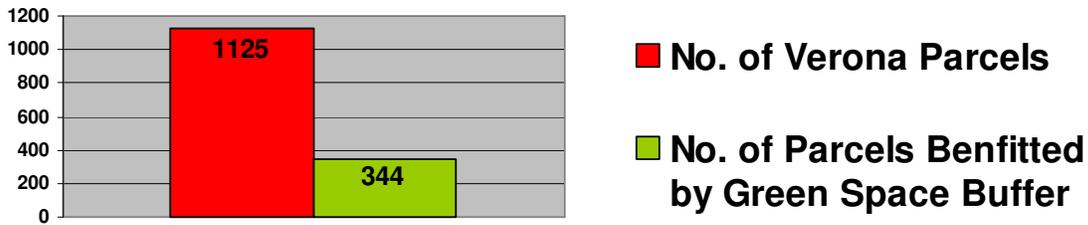
*Statistics for Parks in the Riverfront Area of Verona, PA*



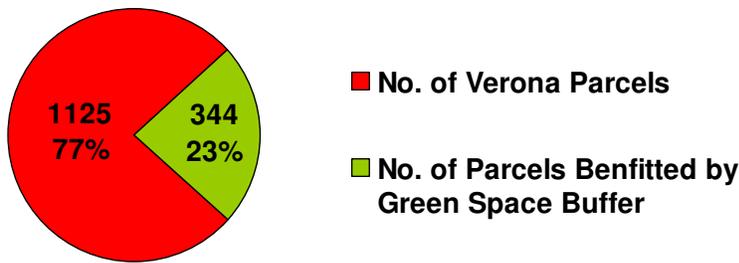
*A 500 Foot Green Space Buffer showing Parcels Affected by the Positive Aspects of Green Space in Verona, PA.*



Of the total 1,125 parcels in Verona, 344 parcels are affected by the Green Space Buffer. These parcels represent 23% of Verona’s Total Parcels and 100 % of Riverfront Area Parcels, where the Green Space is directly located. Future studies may include the Zone 2 – Residential Area to determine the effects of a 500 foot Green Space Buffer in that neighborhood as well. If the same percentages hold true, with long-term planning, perhaps all of Verona’s parcels may benefit from a relatively small investment in improved Green Space.

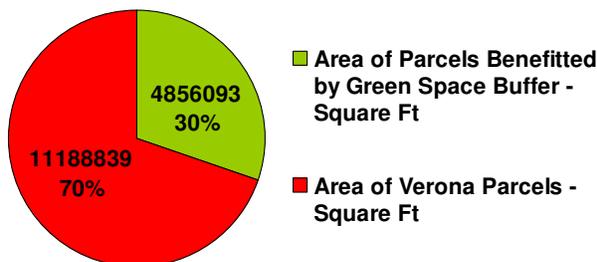


*No. of Parcels affected by Parks in the Riverfront Area of Verona, PA*

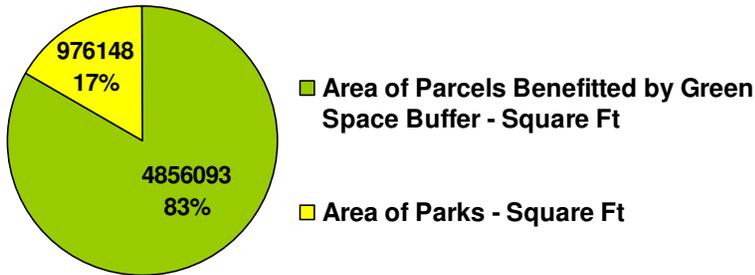


*Chart of No. of Parcels affected by Parks in the Riverfront Area of Verona, PA*

The area of parcels benefitted by the Green Space Buffer is 30% of the Total Parcel Area of Verona and 100% of the Riverfront Area Parcel Area. 17% of parkland in the Riverfront Neighborhood benefits 83% of the Total Riverfront Neighborhood Area or 100% of Riverfront Neighborhood Parcels. The area of parkland required to benefit the community is relatively small compared to the area receiving the benefit.



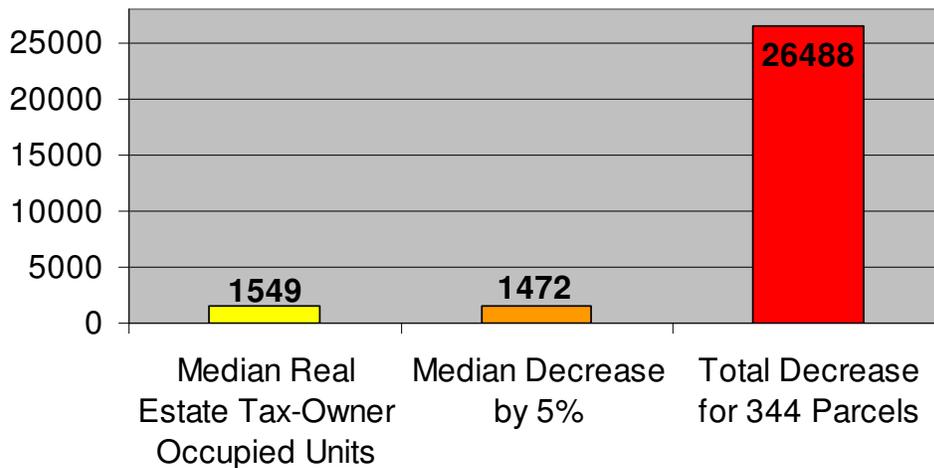
*Chart of Area of Parcels affected by Parks Compared to the Total Area of Parcels in the Riverfront Area*



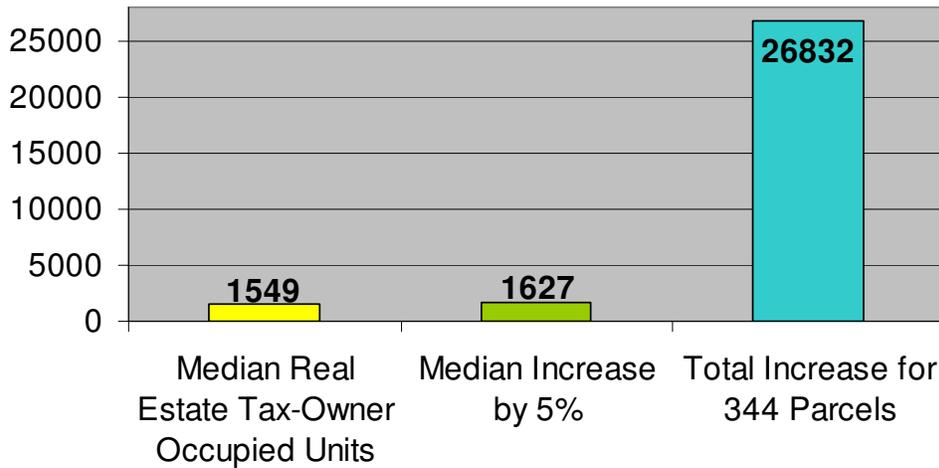
**Chart of Area of Parcels affected by Parks Compared to Area of Parks themselves in the Riverfront Area**

Low Quality Parks can have a detrimental effect on Property Value and Decrease Property Value by 5%<sup>10</sup>. The Median Real Estate Tax for Owner Occupied Properties in Verona is \$1,549. A 5% Median Real Estate Tax Decrease brings the Median Real Estate Tax for Owner Occupied Properties in Verona down to \$1,472. A 5% decrease in Property Values will cost the Borough \$26,488 in total tax revenue in the Riverfront Area. A 5% Median Real Estate Tax Increase brings the Median Real Estate Tax for Owner Occupied Properties up to \$1,627. A 5% increase in Property Value will gain the Borough \$26,832 in tax revenue.

The Riverfront Parks in Verona do not appear to be Low Quality now, by observation, but visitors were not present in the parks during the visits undertaken for this study, either on a winter day or a spring day. The lack of visitors suggests the need for a Park Revitalization Program. If residents and potential property purchasers perceive the parks as Low Quality now, then the potential gain, with a Park Revitalization Program, could be the 5% decrease + the 5% increase, or \$53,320.



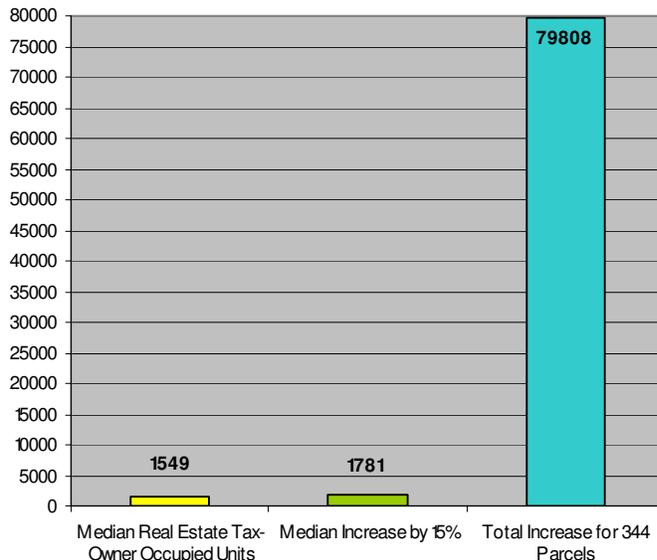
**5% Property Value Decrease due to Park Benefits in Dollars in the Riverfront Area**



**5% Property Value Increase due to Park Benefits in Dollars in the Riverfront Area**

Trust for Public Land study relies on the 5% average increase, but if the quality of the parks in Verona increase significantly and are attractive in all seasons, the increase could rise to as much as 15%<sup>10</sup>. A 15% Median Real Estate Tax Increase brings the Median Real Estate Tax for Owner Occupied Properties up to \$1,781. A 15% increase in Property Value will gain the Borough \$79,808 in tax revenue. Again, if residents and potential property purchasers perceive the parks as Low Quality now, then the potential gain, with a Park Revitalization Program, could be the 5% decrease + the 15% increase, or \$106,296.

The quantified gain in tax revenue from increased property values affected by Green Space ranges from \$26,488 to \$106,296. At the minimum, this increase could fund one part-time Borough employee. At the maximum, this increase could fund two, full-time Borough employees or provide matching funds for a future revitalization project.



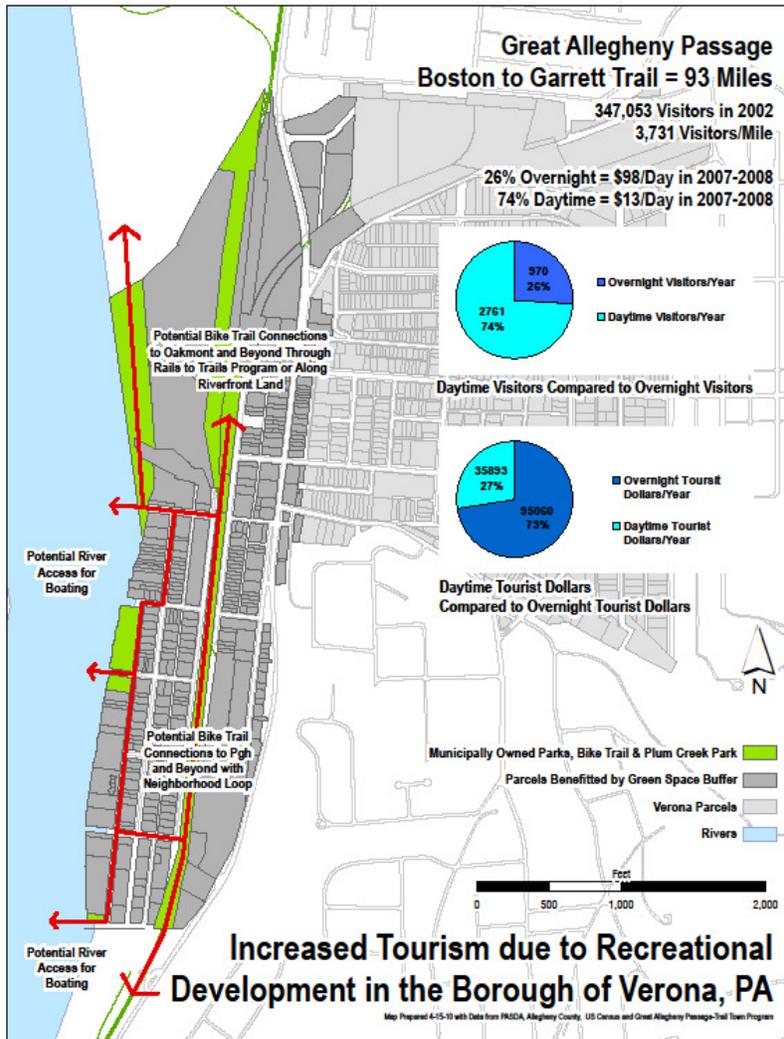
**Graph of 15% Property Value Increase due to Park Benefits in Dollars in the Riverfront Area of the Borough of Verona, PA**



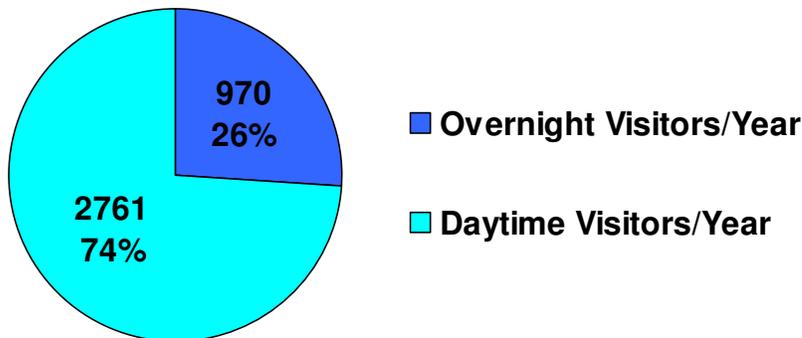
Green Space can also provide the benefits of Increased Tourism in the Borough of Verona<sup>10</sup>. The Great Allegheny Passage is a successful product of the Rails to Trails Program. Portions of the trail began operation in approximately 1998, with additional portions following, and final completion was celebrated in 2006.

Numerous groups are involved with the Great Allegheny Passage, including: The Trail Town Program<sup>12</sup>, The Progress Fund<sup>4, 5, 9 & 12</sup>, government agencies (funding), etc. Studies were performed in 2002, 2006 and 2008 to document user preferences and types of users on the Trail. A 2002 Study of the Boston to Garrett portion of the Trail documented 347,053 Visitors/Mile<sup>6</sup>. 26% of those Visitors stayed overnight on the trail, camping, B & B, hotel, or cabin<sup>6</sup>. 74% were Daytime visitors and probably lived in the area<sup>6</sup>. Overnight Visitors have been shown to spend as much as \$98/Day in 2007-2008<sup>5</sup>. Daytime Visitors have been shown to spend \$13/Day in 2007-2008<sup>5</sup>. Due to the one mile length of Verona's proposed trail, Verona could expect 3,731 Visitors in one year<sup>6</sup>. This translates into \$95,060 in spending for Overnight Visitors and \$35,893 in spending for Daytime Visitors. The benefits of Increased Tourism in the Borough of Verona could be as much as \$130,953/Year, in Verona.

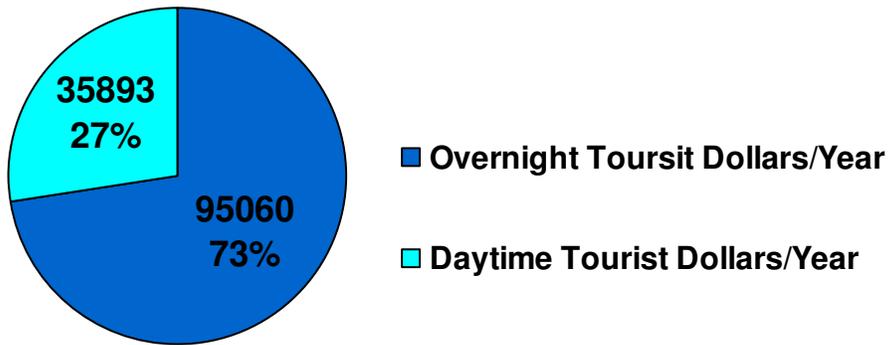
Due to the larger percentage of spending attributed to Overnight Visitors compared to the smaller percentage of Overnight Visitors, it would be prudent to develop more opportunities for overnight stay in the Riverfront Neighborhood. A historic hotel building located along West Railroad Avenue could be developed into a Bed & Breakfast, perhaps private boat clubs could begin to rent rooms, or other historic homes could be developed into Bed & Breakfast opportunities. Amenities to support Overnight Visitors (restaurants, coffee shops, entertainment, etc.) should be explored as well.



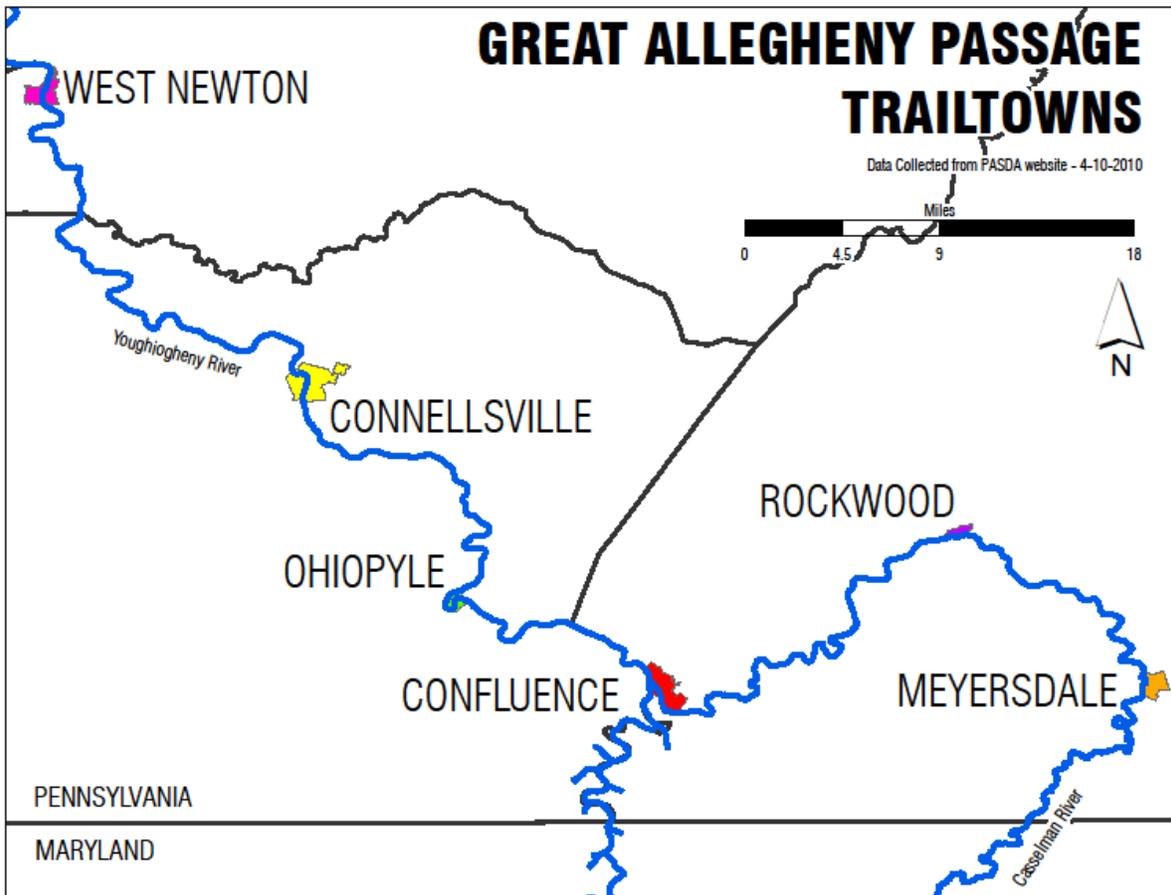
*Potential Spending due to Increased Tourism in the Riverfront Area of Verona, PA*



*Chart of Potential Types of Visitors due to Increased Tourism in the Riverfront Area of Verona, PA*



*Chart of Potential Types of Visitors due to Increased Tourism in the Riverfront Area of Verona, PA*



*Map of Trail Towns studied in The Progress Fund Reports<sup>4, 5, 6, 9 & 12</sup> to be discussed in the Contrast Case Portion of this Sustainability Needs Assessment*



## Direct Savings

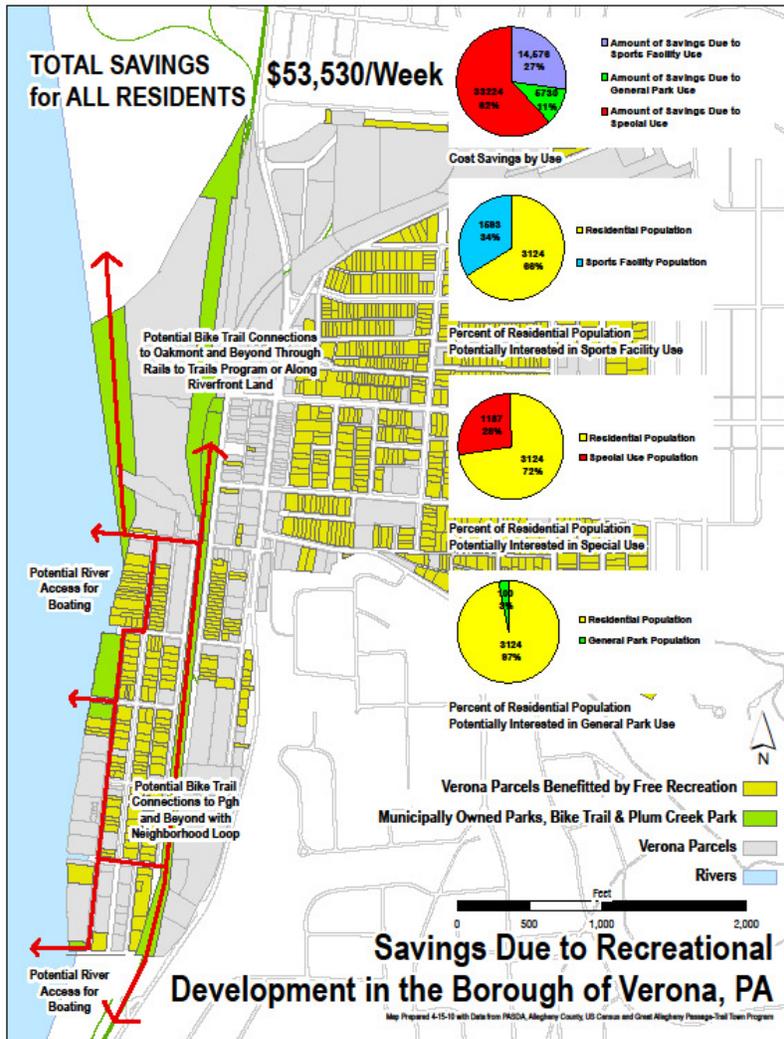
The second three attributes of Green Space Benefits are related to Direct Savings<sup>10</sup> to the Community, Residents or Local Businesses. These attributes relate to Free Use of Recreational Facilities, Increased Health Benefits (Medical Cost Savings) and Increased Social Capital. Increased Social Capital is beyond the scope of this study and will be explored in future projects.

Residents from the entire Borough of Verona will benefit from increased access to parkland and recreation. Not only will this access improve their quality of life due to increased exercise and enjoyment of the outdoors, but it will provide savings due to the fact that the residents will not be required to pay for the activities. Economists describe this benefit as “willingness to pay”<sup>10</sup>.

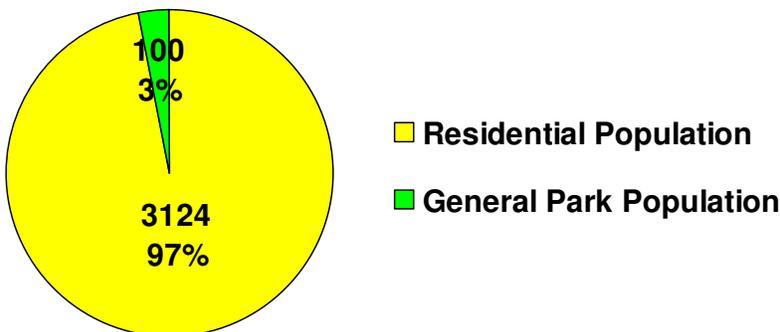
General Park Use Benefits are defined as the use of playgrounds, walking, picnicking, etc. These Uses can be quantified at \$1.91/Visit<sup>10</sup>. More specialized Uses that one might find in a Sports Facility are defined as the use of tennis courts, basketball courts, other team sports facilities, bicycling, swimming, skating, running, ice skating, etc. These Uses can be quantified at \$3.05/Visit<sup>10</sup>. If the parks are programmed for more than seasonal activities (bicycling to ice skating) these benefits may be achieved year-round. Special (or Outdoor) Uses can be defined as golfing, gardening, festivals, concerts, special attractions, etc. Several of these Uses are currently provided in Verona parks (farmers market, outdoor film festivals, etc.).

The Progress Fund studies to aid development along the Great Allegheny Passage states that 32% of the population can be expected to use the recreational facilities for General Park Use, 51% can be expected to use the recreational facilities for Sports Facilities Use and 38% can be expected to use the recreational facilities for Special Uses<sup>5</sup>.

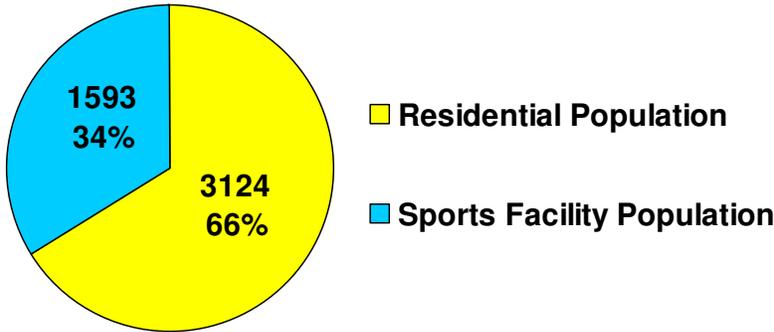
If 32% of the population uses the recreational facilities for General Park Use (3,000 uses), the savings totals \$5,730. If 51% of the population uses the recreational facilities for Sports Facilities use (4,780 uses), the savings totals \$14,579. If 38% of the population uses the recreational facilities for Special Use (3,561 uses), the savings totals \$33,224. The total savings expected for all of Verona’s residents may be \$53,530/Total Population/Week or \$17.14/Person/Week. This savings can be reinvested in the community, develop a healthy lifestyle for residents and attract new residents and visitors to the community.



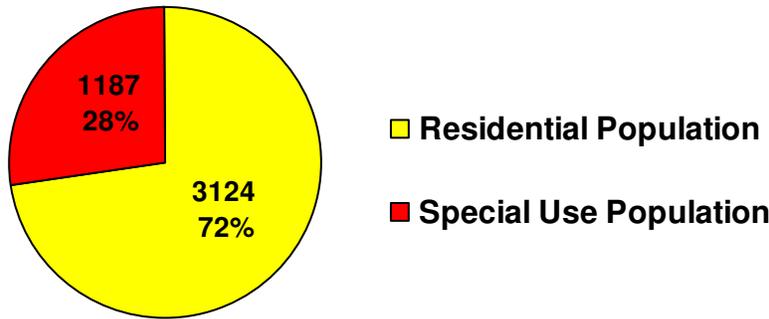
*Potential Recreational Cost Savings for Verona Residents due to Green Space Development*



*Chart comparing the Total Population in Verona to the Population who will typically use Green Space for General Park Use as described in The Trust for Public Land study<sup>10</sup> and The Progress Fund studies for the Great Allegheny Passage<sup>4, 5, 6, 9 & 12</sup>.*



*Chart comparing the Total Population in Verona to the Population who will typically use Green Space for Sports Facility Use as described in The Trust for Public Land study<sup>7</sup> and The Progress Fund studies for the Great Allegheny Passage<sup>5, 6, 9 & 12</sup>.*



*Chart comparing the Total Population in Verona to the Population who will typically use Green Space for Special Uses as described in The Trust for Public Land study<sup>7</sup> and The Progress Fund studies for the Great Allegheny Passage<sup>5, 6, 9 & 12</sup>.*

Green Space provides the added benefit of Increased Health Benefits (Medical Cost Savings). Active users are defined as those who engage in moderate, vigorous or strenuous activity for 30 minutes, 3 times/week<sup>10</sup>. For residents under the age of 65, this activity can save \$250/Year, while for those over 65, this activity can save \$500/Year. The Total Population of Verona is 3,124 persons. The population breakdown in Verona is 82% under 65 years of age (2,574 persons) and 18% over 65 years of age (550 persons).

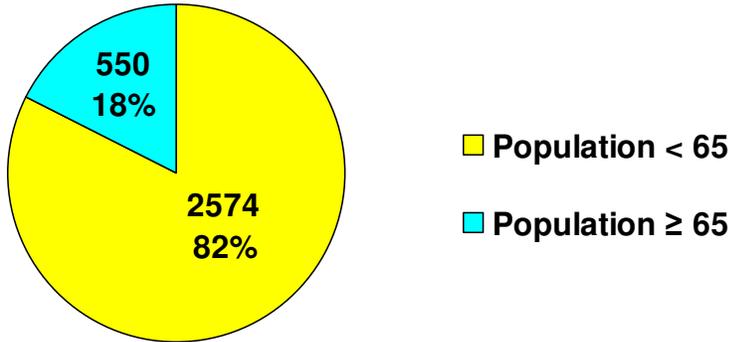
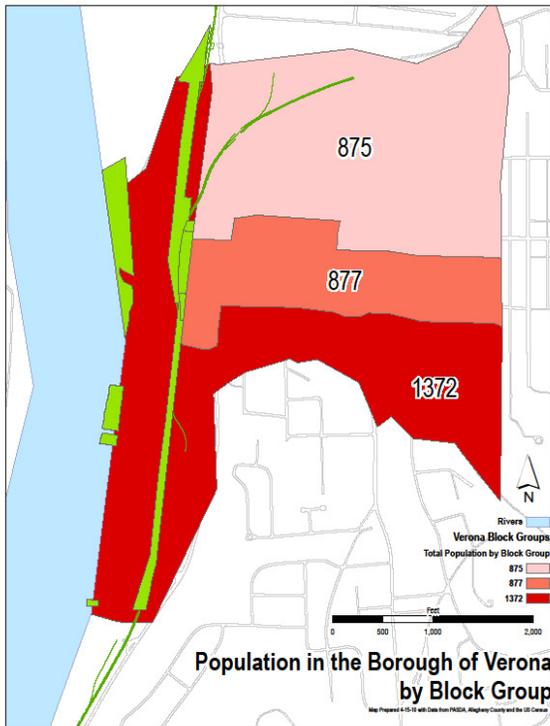
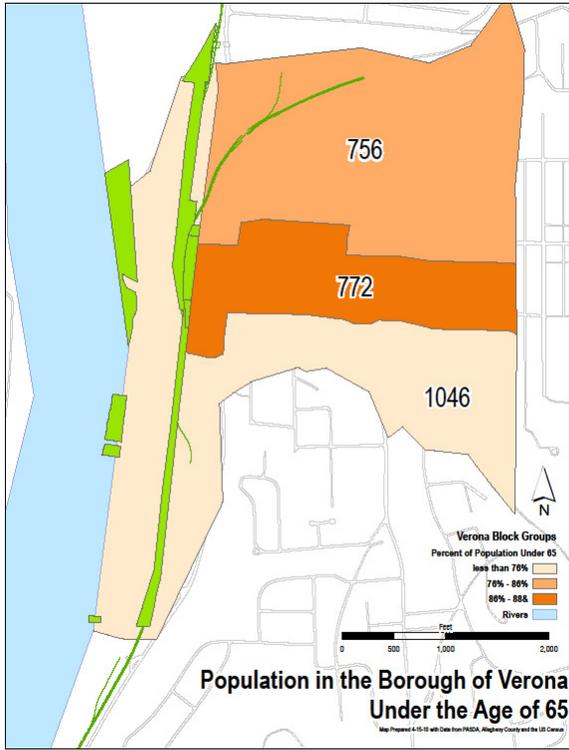


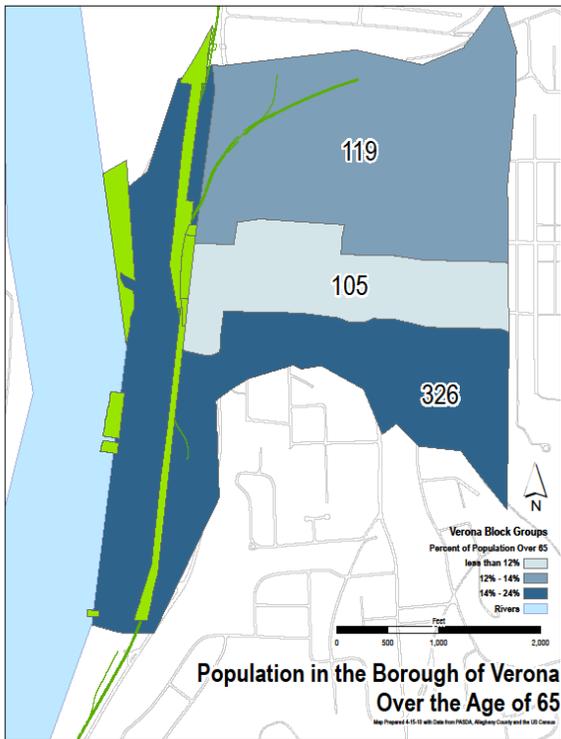
Chart comparing Population Age Groups in Verona, PA



Total Population in Verona, PA by Block Group



*Population Under the Age of 65 in Verona, PA, by Block Group*

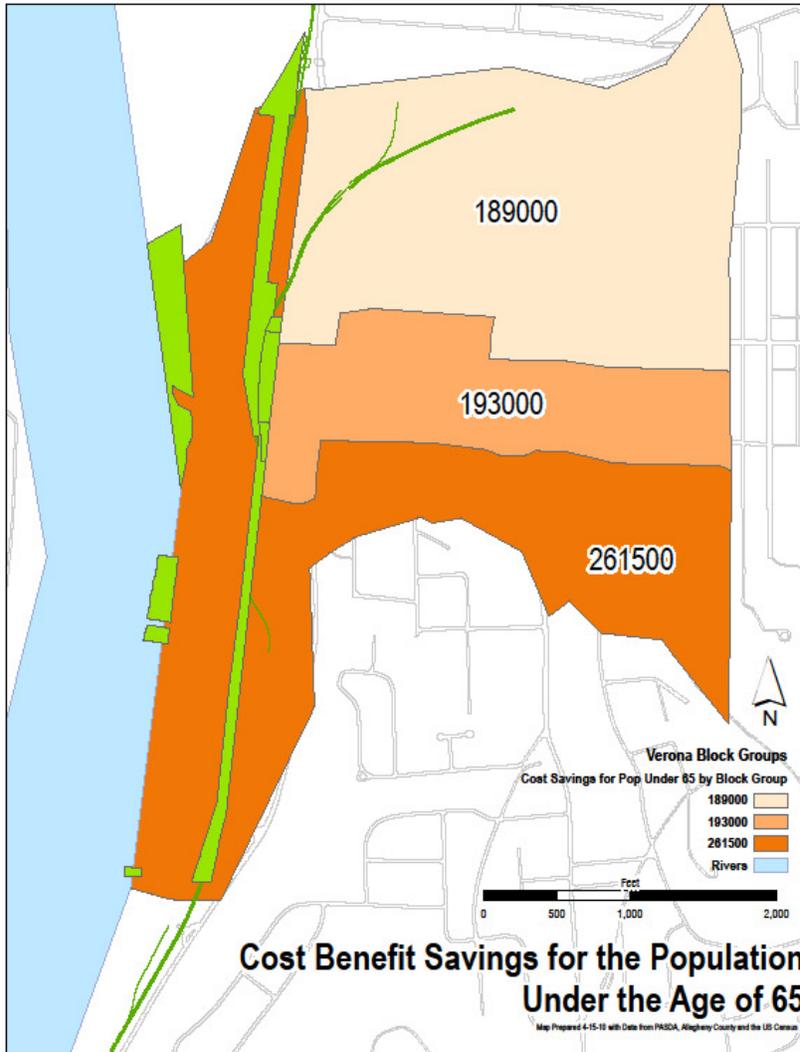


*Population Over the Age of 65 in Verona, PA by Block Group*

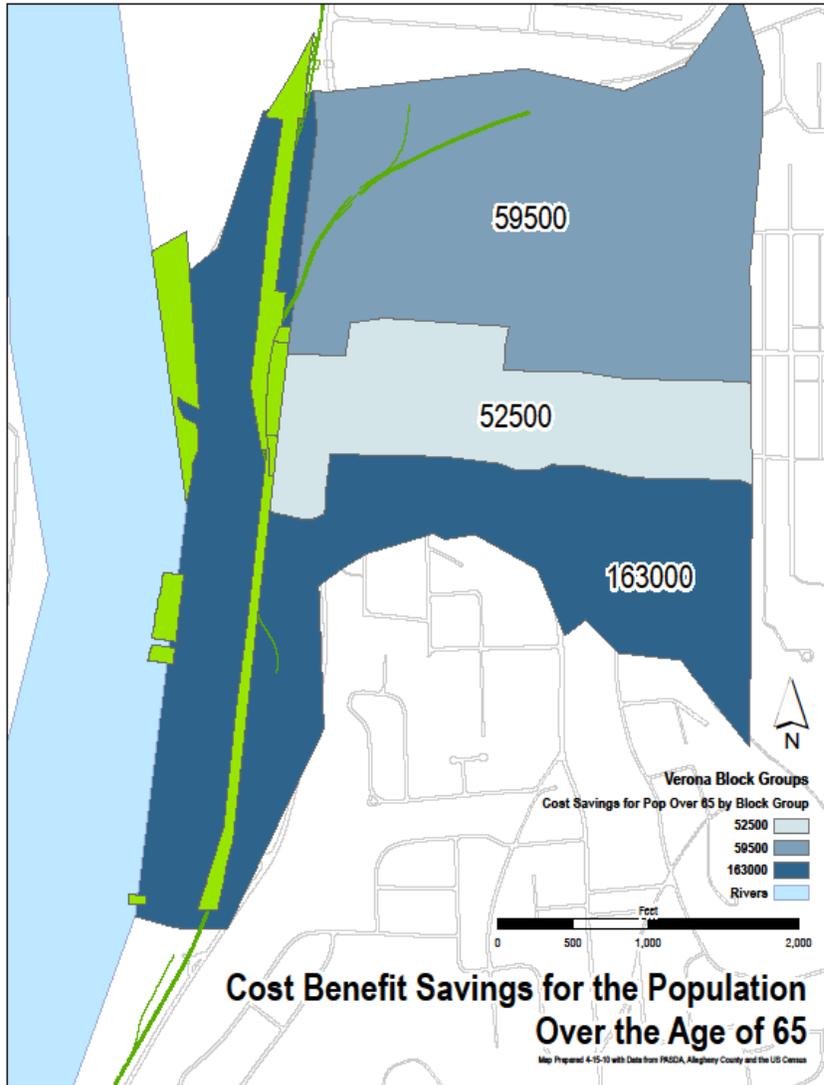


The majority of the population is under the age of 65 (2,574 persons). The minority of the population is over the age of 65 (550 persons). Age appropriate programs should be developed for each age group. Attention should be directed at developing more programs for the larger, under 65 age group; however, the over 65 age group may be retired and able to contribute volunteer hours to the community for park and other revitalization programs.

The Medical Cost Benefit Savings for each age group, by block group, is illustrated in the following maps.

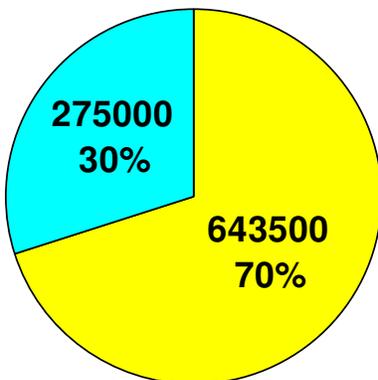


*Potential Medical Cost Benefit Savings for the Under 65 Age Group in Verona, PA*



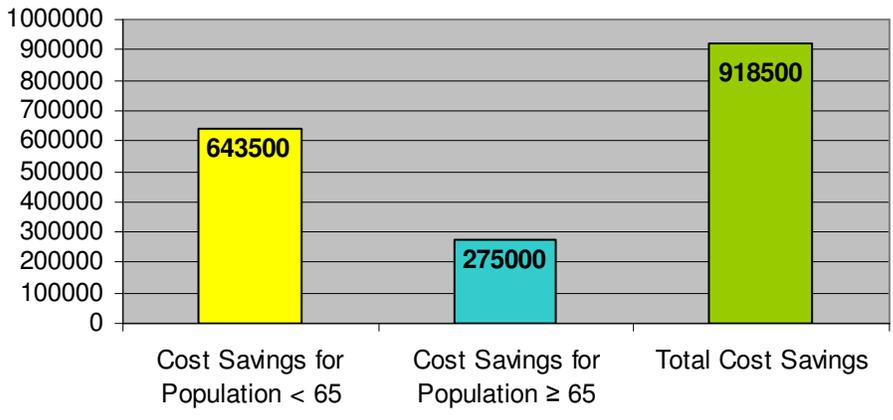
*LEFT - Potential Medical Cost Benefit Savings for the Over 65 Age Group in Verona, PA*

*BELOW - Medical Cost Benefit Savings Compared between Age Groups in Verona, PA*

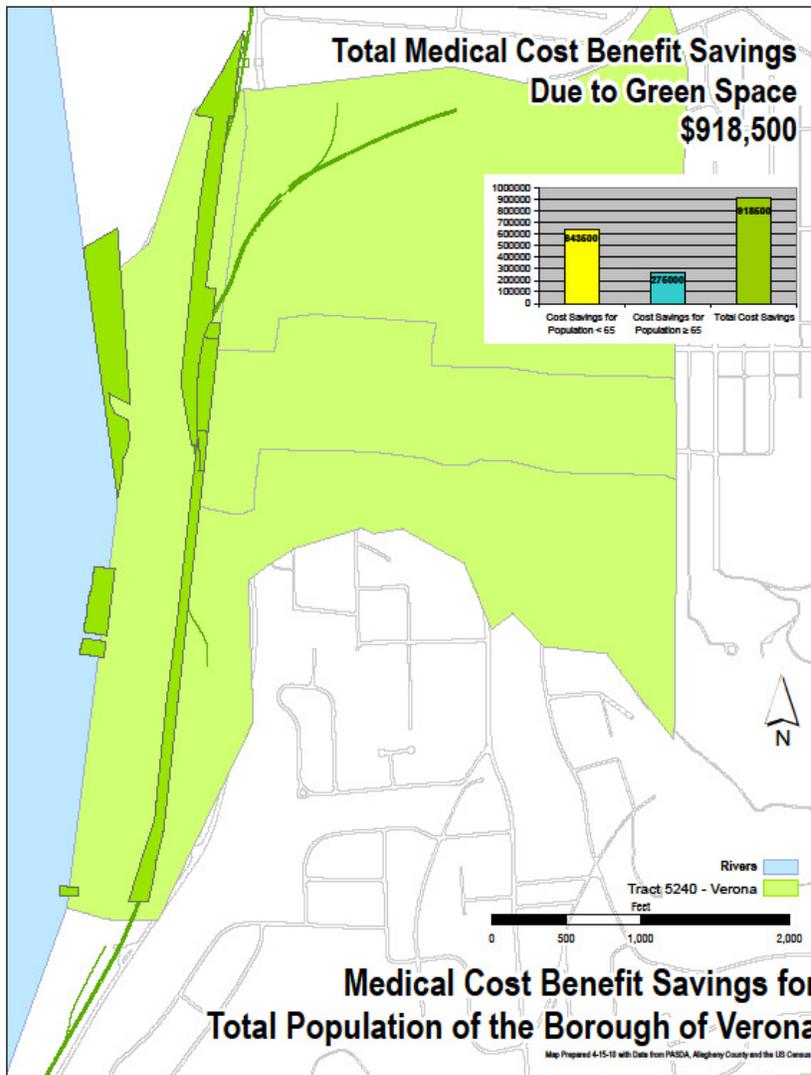


■ Cost Savings for Population < 65

■ Cost Savings for Population ≥ 65



*Graph Illustrating the Medical Cost Benefit Savings for each Age Group and the Total Population in Verona, PA*



*Medical Cost Benefit Savings for Total Population in Verona, PA*

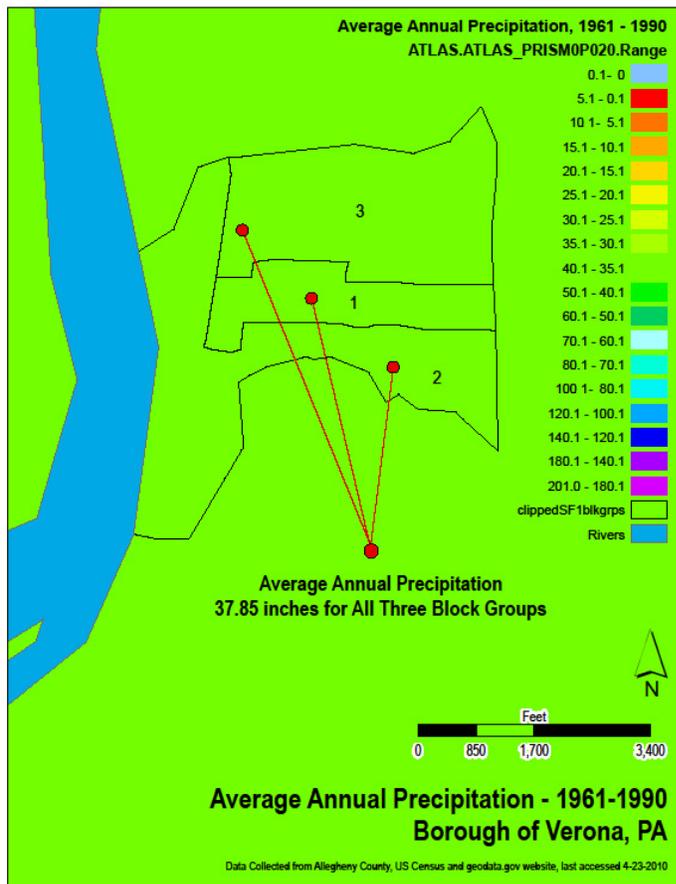


## Environmental Savings

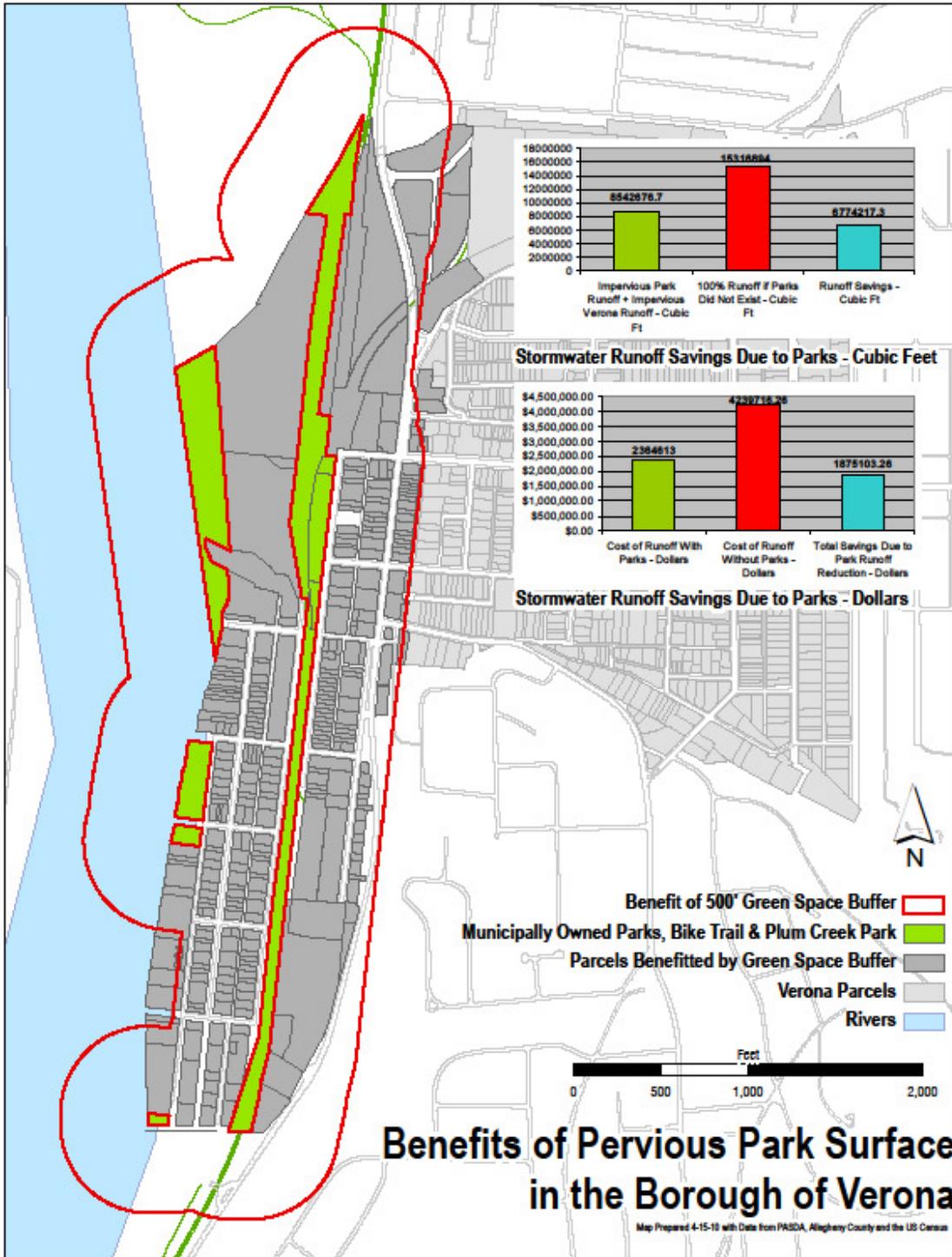
The final two attributes of Green Space Benefits are related to Environmental Savings<sup>10</sup> to the Community. These attributes relate to the Reduction of Water Pollution and the Reduction of Air Pollution. Reduction of Air Pollution is beyond the scope of this study and will be explored in future projects.

The Reduction of Water Pollution benefits the community by permitting water to percolate into the soil to filter pollutants from the water and to recharge local aquifers. Percolation reduces the amount of water, thus the amount of pollutants, which directly run-off into the river ecosystem. Percolation also contributes to the reduction of combined overflow into the river ecosystem<sup>10</sup>. Combined overflow permits raw sewage to flow into the river during periods of excessive rain in the Allegheny County area. The river ecosystem in the Verona area is unique and worth protecting, as illustrated by the restoration and preservation of Sycamore Island by the Allegheny Land Trust<sup>17</sup>.

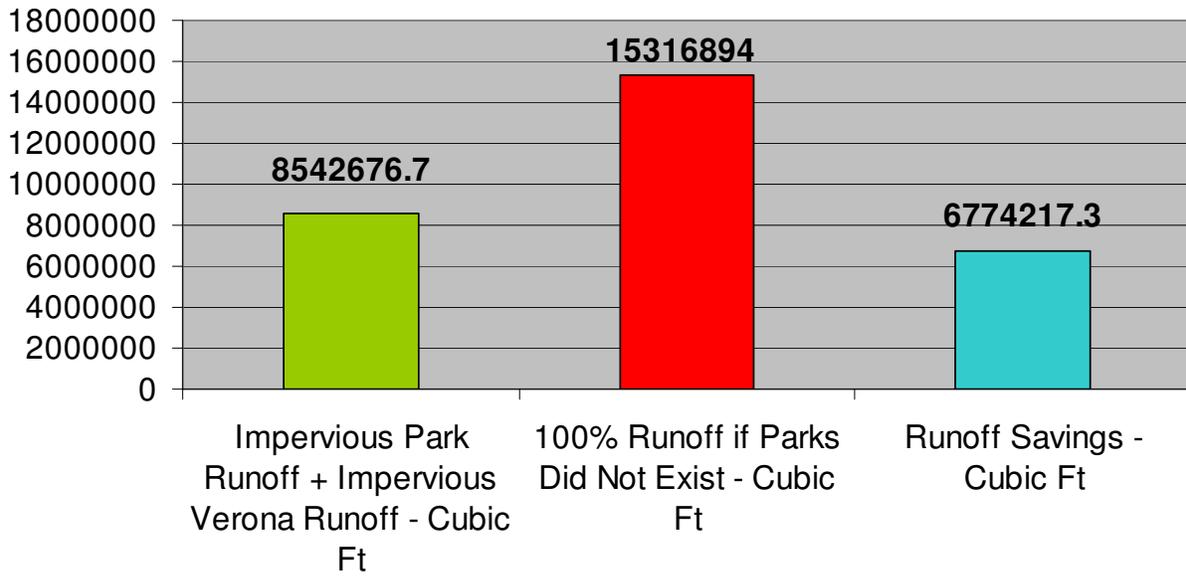
The Reduction of Water Pollution can be quantified in reduced water treatment costs. The following maps illustrate the Average Annual Precipitation, and significant Stormwater Runoff Savings in Cubic Feet and Dollars.



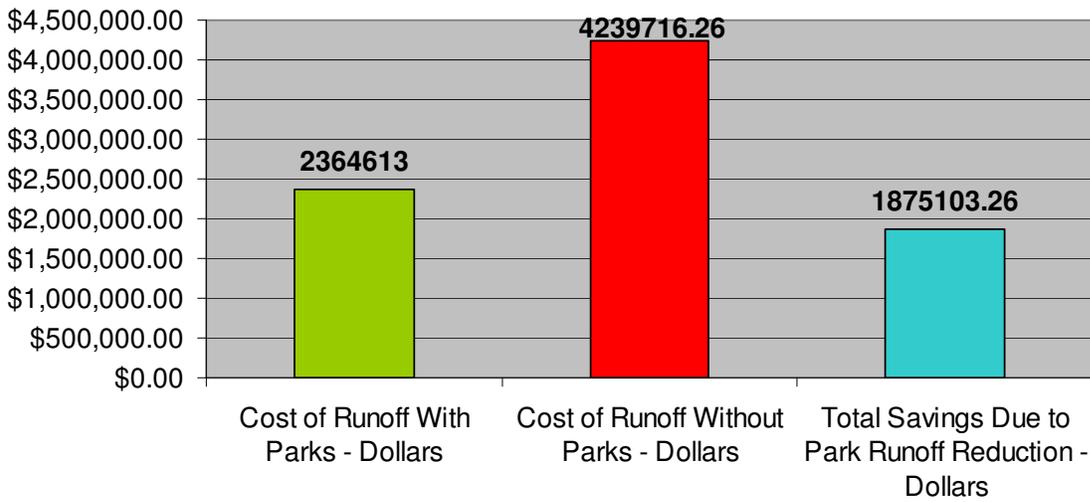
*Average Annual Precipitation in Verona, PA*



Stormwater Runoff Benefits in Cubic Feet and Dollars in the Riverfront Area of Verona, PA



**Graph Illustrating Stormwater Runoff Benefits in Cubic Feet in the Riverfront Area**



**Graph Illustrating Stormwater Runoff Benefits in Dollars in the Riverfront Area**

The Cost Savings from Stormwater Runoff Reduction are significant: 6,774,217 Cubic Feet which translates into \$1,875,103. This savings may be reinvested into the community to increase municipal service, hire additional employees, provide matching grants for revitalization programs or be invested for long-term interest benefits to the community.



## Greenspace Benefit Summary

The cumulative Benefits of Green Space add up to a Sustainable Future for the Borough of Verona:

- The Property Tax Increase Benefit due to the location of property within 500 feet of a high quality park provides a tax revenue increase ranging between \$26,488 and \$106,296. This increase in property value will not only provide an immediate increase in tax revenue; it will also build the tax base for the future.
- Increased Tourism will sustain existing businesses and attract new businesses with an increased spending in Verona of \$130,953/Year. The Borough should incorporate new businesses uses which will encourage tourism, overnight facilities, restaurants, coffee shops, entertainment options, etc. This revitalization will attract visitors and new residents to the community.
- Green Space will provide local residents with increased access to parkland and recreation, thus promoting a Healthy Life Style and increased Quality of Life, along with Medical Cost Benefit Savings. The total savings due to free recreational benefits may be as high as \$53,530/Total Population/Week or \$17.14/Person/Week. The total savings due to reduced Medical Costs may be as high as \$918,500/Year.
- Increased Social Capital has not been quantified in this study. The Trust for Public Land study indicates that increased Green Space generates volunteer interest in a community, and reduces crime and the need for fire protection. These benefits certainly strengthen a community by uniting residents and attracting new residents due to the safety and stability of the community.
- The reduction of Stormwater Treatment and Infrastructure Costs provide another significant savings (\$1,875,103) which can be reinvested in the community. Though the quantification of the environmental benefits of stormwater runoff and water pollution prevention are beyond the scope of this study, it is obvious that the preservation of the unique river ecosystem will benefit the Borough of Verona by providing opportunities to explore Sycamore Island and Verona's own shoreline.
- Reduction of Air Pollution has also not been quantified in this study. The Trust for Public Land study also indicates that Reduced Air Pollution will benefit residents' Quality of Life and reduce water pollution. Further studies might include a Climate Action Plan which could quantify air pollution and energy use in the Borough, and recommend strategies to reduce energy use and air pollution.
- By increasing and improving the quality of the Green Space for increased riverfront access and recreation, the Borough of Verona may capitalize on its greatest strength, the Borough's riverfront location, to sustain itself and propel itself into the future.



### 13. Current Programs

#### Allegheny Together – Allegheny RESTORES Program

Mission:

*Allegheny Together endeavors to encourage well-planned, well-designed and geographically-focused investment in the established, urban commercial districts of Allegheny County while respecting the unique history, character, and built environment of each. The program aims to help organize and empower each community to fulfill its collective vision<sup>20</sup>.*



This map, taken from the Allegheny Together website, highlights the priority area of the Verona Central Business District targeted for the Allegheny RESTORES Program.

[www.towncenter.info/downtown/allegheny-together](http://www.towncenter.info/downtown/allegheny-together)

Town Center Associates  
One Oxford Center  
301 Grant Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15219  
412-577-7447

The Allegheny Together website provides a Downtown Database for each town in their network, Verona included. The Downtown Database includes: available properties & photos; a vacancy report; a downtown profile, which lists the percentage of business types; and a demographic report. The website also publishes a list of meeting reports from the Verona Business District Advisory Council (BDAC), a group that meets monthly to work closely with members of the local business community and VIP to expand revitalization programs for the Borough, and a calendar of Verona events. Allegheny Together also lists references to resources for Architecture & Design, Business Development, Organization, Promotion, Historic Preservation, a Recognition Program (for business and community leaders to encourage continued participation in community revitalization), Allegheny RESTORES, and News & Updates. This website appears to be updated on a regular basis and provides an invaluable tool for community education.

The Borough of Verona is currently participating in the Allegheny RESTORES program and the GTECH Program. Thirteen area businesses have applied for funding for façade renovation in the Central Business District. The revitalization funds include funding for architectural services as well as



construction costs. Free interior design services are offered in a one time consult to target window displays, merchandising and space planning.

Allegheny Together does not publish the names of the businesses which have applied for façade revitalization. It would seem that these businesses should be recognized for their achievement and thanked by the local community for their efforts. Businesses which are interested in revitalization would be valuable partners in the move toward sustainability. If local businesses are approached, they may be willing to volunteer information related to their participation in the Allegheny RESTORES Program. If so, members of VIP would be able to identify their allies in the revitalization process.

The BDAC report for April 2010 indicates that the first GTECH project for the BLONDIE'S restaurant, located at the corner of Center and Allegheny River Blvd., will move forward. It is important that this project receives support from community members. If it is successful, it could be expanded to include vacant lots in the Riverfront Area and possibly even vacant lots in the Zone 2 – Residential Area. Perhaps one or two of the Borough's larger or industrial businesses would be willing to participate in an "adopt a garden" type program where they might fund an additional GTECH site. These sites could be maintained by school children and local scout groups as part of an educational program.

The BDAC report for April 2010 also indicates that a new Street Revitalization Program is in the development stages. VIP may be required to develop a scope of work in which they would state their goals and needs. Allegheny Together would assist with design and engineering studies. The BDAC indicated that Funding for this program may depend on determining additional sources of funding as well as Allegheny Together funding. Again, perhaps one or two of the Borough's larger or industrial businesses would be willing to supply matching funding for such a program, if their participation was listed, to increase their presence in the community.

Allegheny Together has developed a new program called Downtown First which allows local businesses to develop their own website on the Allegheny Together, Verona site, which can be independent or link to an existing website. These websites are illustrated as colorful, "up-to-the-minute" listings of contact information, photographs, special offers, special features and events, designed to attract new clients. Local businesses should be encouraged to take advantage of this free offer. An network of local business websites will present an integrated and sophisticated image which will invite existing residents to "Put Your Money Where Your House Is!"<sup>20</sup> and attract new visitors to Verona.



## TreeVitalize

### Mission:

*Responding to an alarming trend of the loss of trees in Pennsylvania's metropolitan areas, TreeVitalize is a public-private partnership to help restore tree cover, educate citizens about planting trees as an act of caring for our environment, and build capacity among local governments to understand, protect and restore their urban trees<sup>21</sup>.*



TreeVitalize partners with the Western PA Conservancy and Friends of the Urban Forest in the Pittsburgh area with the goal of planting 1 Million trees and of training 10,000 volunteer TreeTenders in PA by 2012. The Western PA Conservancy reports the planting of 4,500 trees in Allegheny County, to date.

[www.treevitalize.net](http://www.treevitalize.net)

[www.paconserve.org/216/treevitalize](http://www.paconserve.org/216/treevitalize)

[www.pittsburghforest.org](http://www.pittsburghforest.org)

TreeVitalize Pittsburgh  
Project Director Jeff Bergman  
Western PA Conservancy  
800 Waterfront Drive  
Pittsburgh, PA 15222  
Phone (412) 586-2396

Members of VIP successfully convinced the Borough Council not to authorize the destruction of existing trees in the Central Business District. Instead, one member has registered with TreeVitalize for TreeTender training and will spearhead the institution of the program in Verona. TreeVitalize will provide grants available to initially plant 100 trees<sup>20</sup>. This funding will include assistance with pavement removal, if required, and will provide stakes, ties, mulch and water buckets<sup>20</sup>.

TreeVitalize lists the following benefits of tree planting in a Central Business District<sup>20</sup>:

- Increased Property Values – 10% - 15%
- Increased Business – 11%
- Increased Social Capital – decreased crime and need for fire prevention

TreeVitalize lists the following benefits of tree planting in a riparian buffer<sup>20</sup>:

- Reduction of nutrient and pesticide runoff into water bodies by 50% or more
- Reduction of sediment deposits in streams by up to 75%



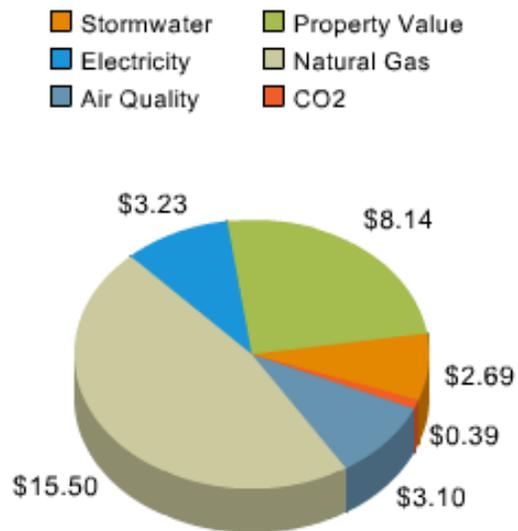
- Reduction of disease causing organism deposit in streams by up to 60%
- Control of soil erosion by wind and rain
- Improvement in water quality
- Improvement of water infiltration into groundwater
- Reduction of downstream flooding
- Reduction of stream temperatures
- Improvement of fish habitat

Verona will benefit from tree planting in both of these contexts, the Central Business District and Riparian Buffers. TreeVitalize provides a rebate of \$1/tree for trees planted in riparian buffers<sup>20</sup>. Many of the benefits of trees coincide with Green Space Benefits analyzed as part of The Trust for Urban Land Study<sup>10</sup>. Other benefits are demonstrated by the National Tree Benefit Calculator.

According to the National Tree Benefit Calculator<sup>23</sup>, a common, 6" maple seedling will provide \$33/Year in benefits due to decreased stormwater runoff and treatment, decreased electricity use, increased air quality, increased property value and decreased CO2 production. If the tree matures to an 11" diameter, the tree will provide \$72/Year in the same benefits. These benefits do not include the gain in social capital and overall human health, although these benefits are included in The Trust for Urban Land Study. These benefits do not include the cost of long-term care and maintenance, although those costs will be reduced by collaboration with TreeVitalize's TreeTender Program.

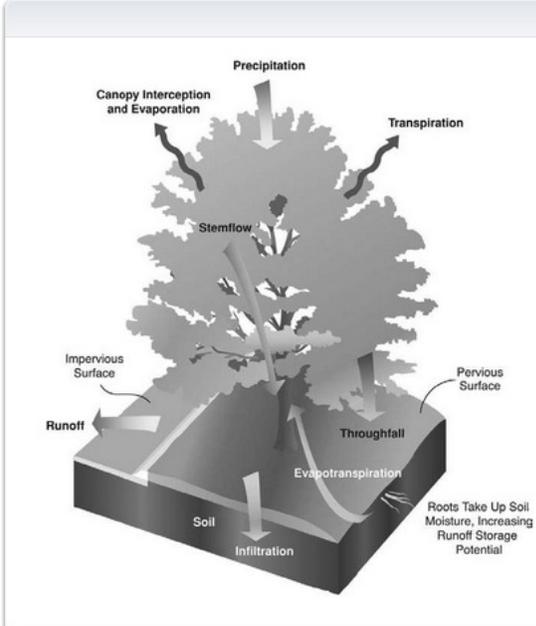


*Photo and Chart courtesy of the National Tree Benefit Calculator.*





Overall Benefits **Stormwater** Property Value Energy Air Quality CO2 About the model



**Your 6 inch Maple will intercept 336 gallons of stormwater runoff this year.**

Urban stormwater runoff (or "non-point source pollution") washes chemicals (oil, gasoline, salts, etc.) and litter from surfaces such as roadways and parking lots into streams, wetlands, rivers and oceans. The more impervious the surface (e.g., concrete, asphalt, rooftops), the more quickly pollutants are washed into our community waterways. Drinking water, aquatic life and the health of our entire ecosystem can be adversely effected by this process.

Trees act as mini-reservoirs, controlling runoff at the source. Trees reduce runoff by:

- Intercepting and holding rain on leaves, branches and bark
- Increasing infiltration and storage of rainwater through the tree's root system
- Reducing soil erosion by slowing rainfall before it strikes the soil

For more information visit: [The Center for Urban Forest Research](#)

*Data related to Reduced Stormwater Runoff courtesy of the National Tree Benefit Calculator.*

Overall Benefits Stormwater **Property Value** Energy Air Quality CO2 About the model



**Located in front of a park or other vacant land, this 6 inch Maple will raise the property value by \$8 this year.**

Trees in front of single family homes have a greater property value benefit than those in front of multi-family homes, parks or commercial properties. Real estate agents have long known that trees can increase the "curb appeal" of properties thereby increasing sale prices. Research has verified this by showing that home buyers are willing to pay more for properties with ample versus few or no trees.

This model uses a tree's Leaf Surface Area (LSA) to determine increases in property values. That's a researcher's way of saying that a home with more trees (and more LSA) tends to have a higher value than one with fewer trees (and lower LSA). The values shown are annual and accumulate incrementally over time because each tree typically adds more leaf surface area each growing season. The amount of that increase depends on the type of tree – some add more, some less.

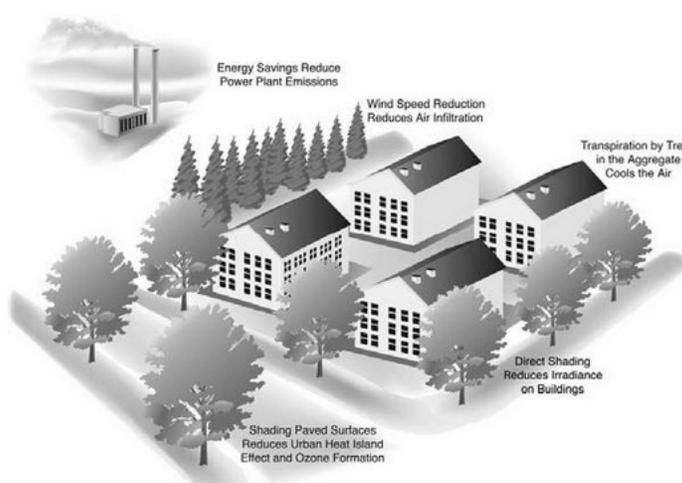
**The 6 inch Maple you selected will add 34 square feet of LSA this year.** In subsequent years it will add more, and the property value will increase accordingly.

For more information visit: [The Center for Urban Forest Research](#)

*Data related to Increased Property Values courtesy of the National Tree Benefit Calculator.*



Overall Benefits | Stormwater | Property Value | **Energy** | Air Quality | CO2 | About the model



**Your 6 inch Maple will conserve 23 Kilowatt / hours of electricity for cooling and reduce consumption of oil or natural gas by 11 therm(s).**

Trees modify climate and conserve building energy use in three principal ways (see figure at left):

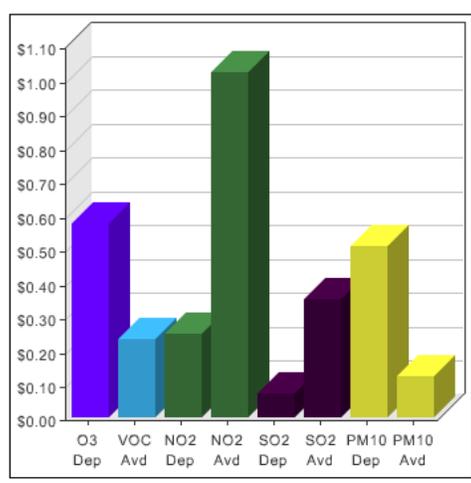
- Shading reduces the amount of heat absorbed and stored by buildings.
- Evapotranspiration converts liquid water to water vapor and cools the air by using solar energy that would otherwise result in heating of the air.
- Tree canopies slow down winds thereby reducing the amount of heat lost from a home, especially where conductivity is high (e.g., glass windows).

Strategically placed trees can increase home energy efficiency. In summer, trees shading east and west walls keep buildings cooler. In winter, allowing the sun to strike the southern side of a building can warm interior spaces. If southern walls are shaded by dense evergreen trees there may be a resultant increase in winter heating costs.

For more information visit: [The Center for Urban Forest Research](#)

**Data related to Decreased Energy Use courtesy of the National Tree Benefit Calculator.**

Overall Benefits | Stormwater | Property Value | Energy | **Air Quality** | CO2 | About the model



**Air quality benefits of your 6 inch Maple shown in the graph at left.**

Air pollution is a serious health threat that causes asthma, coughing, headaches, respiratory and heart disease, and cancer. Over 150 million people live in areas where ozone levels violate federal air quality standards; more than 100 million people are impacted when dust and other particulate levels are considered "unhealthy." We now know that the urban forest can mitigate the health effects of pollution by:

- Absorbing pollutants like ozone, nitrogen dioxide and sulfur dioxide through leaves
- Intercepting particulate matter like dust, ash and smoke
- Releasing oxygen through photosynthesis
- Lowering air temperatures which reduces the production of ozone
- Reducing energy use and subsequent pollutant emissions from power plants

It should be noted that trees themselves emit biogenic volatile organic compounds (BVOCs) which can contribute to ground-level ozone production. This may negate the positive impact the tree has on ozone mitigation for some high emitting species (e.g. Willow Oak or Sweetgum). However, the sum total of the tree's environmental benefits always trumps this negative.

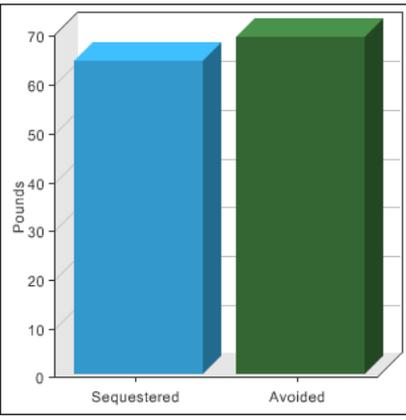
For more information visit: [The Center for Urban Forest Research](#)

"Dep" stands for deposition. This is your tree absorbing or intercepting pollutants. "Avd" stands for avoided. This is your tree lessening the need for creation of these pollutants in the first place by reducing energy production needs.



**Data related to Increased Air Quality courtesy of the National Tree Benefit Calculator.**

Overall Benefits Stormwater Property Value Energy Air Quality **CO2** About the model



**This year your 6 inch Maple tree will reduce atmospheric carbon by 134 pounds.**

How significant is this number? Most car owners of an "average" car (mid-sized sedan) drive 12,000 miles generating about 11,000 pounds of CO2 every year. A flight from New York to Los Angeles adds 1,400 pounds of CO2 per passenger. Trees can have an impact by reducing atmospheric carbon in two primary ways (see figure at left):

- They sequester ("lock up") CO2 in their roots, trunks, stems and leaves while they grow, and in wood products after they are harvested.
- Trees near buildings can reduce heating and air conditioning demands, thereby reducing emissions associated with power production.

Combating climate change will take a worldwide, multifaceted approach, but by planting a tree in a strategic location, driving fewer miles, or replacing business trips with conference calls, it's easy to see how we can each reduce our individual carbon "footprints."

For more information visit: [The Center for Urban Forest Research](#)

**Data related to Decreased CO2 Production courtesy of the National Tree Benefit Calculator.**

Overall Benefits Stormwater Property Value Energy Air Quality CO2 **About the model**



The Tree Benefit Calculator allows anyone to calculate a first-order approximation of the benefits individual street-side trees provide. This tool is based on i-Tree's street tree assessment tool called STRATUM. With minimal inputs of location, species and tree size, users will get an understanding of the environmental and economic value trees provide on an annual basis.

The Tree Benefit Calculator is intended to be simple and accessible. As such, this tool should be considered a starting point for understanding trees' value in the community rather than a scientific accounting of precise values. For more detailed information on urban and community forest assessments, visit the i-Tree website.

**Credits:**

- The National Tree Benefit Calculator was conceived and developed by [Casey Trees](#) and [Davey Tree Expert Co.](#)
- This tool is powered by i-Tree; the data generating the results comes from the i-Tree Tools CD ROM: <http://www.itreetools.org/>
- Significant text and graphical content was originally published by the USDA Forest Service's Center for Urban Forest Research through their Tree Guide series of publications. Credit should be given to authors of these publications.
- Facts about personal carbon production based on driving and flying courtesy of [Conservation International](#)
- For questions about this tool, contact [Mike Alonzo](#) (Casey Trees) or [Scott Maco](#) (Davey Tree Expert Co.)

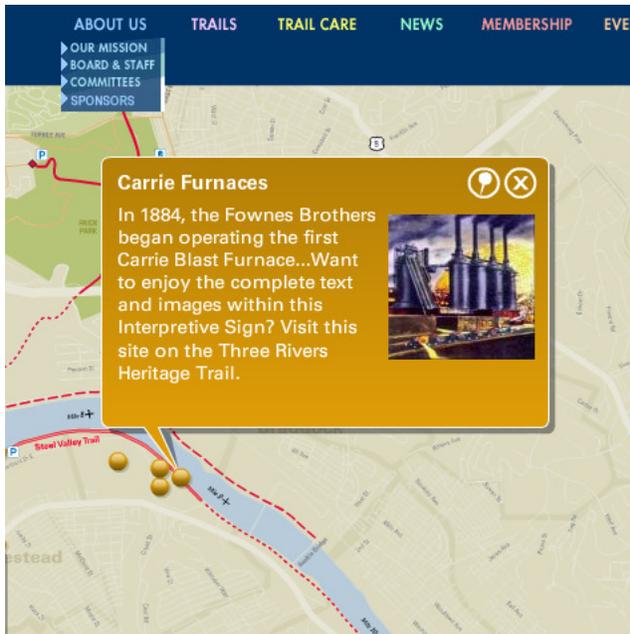
**Credits related to the National Tree Benefit Calculator**



## 14. Mid-Term Programs

### Bringing Trails to Verona

The Friends of the Riverfront visited Verona in early April to renew their commitment to further development of the Three Rivers Heritage Trail, a biking/hiking trail which runs for 21 miles along the east and west sides of the Allegheny, Monongahela and Ohio Rivers in and around Pittsburgh, PA, through Verona. They have recently incorporated a signage program called the Three Rivers Heritage Trail Signage Guide into the Three Rivers Heritage Trail map. This innovative program will teach Trail Users about the history of Pittsburgh and introduce some of its more colorful citizens (Mr. Rogers to Andy Warhol). The Friends of the Riverfront partnered with six other rails-to-trails groups to organize and construct the Great Allegheny Passage. Their experience as active collaborators and negotiators make them excellent partners in pursuit of uniting the disparate interests involved in connecting segments of the Heritage Trail. They have already begun negotiations with the current owner of the Allegheny Valley Railroad tracks and hope to be able to locate portions of the Heritage Trail along the railroad line.



*Excerpt from the Three Rivers Heritage Trail interactive Map accessed on the Friends of the Riverfront website, 5-2-2010, illustrating the Signage Guide<sup>15</sup>*

*The vision of Friends of the Riverfront is that trails and rivers will become an integral part of economic development and a valued and respected natural resource for the communities and citizens of the three rivers region<sup>15</sup>.*

Their mission is to connect trails in the Pittsburgh region in order to provide water and land associated recreation, and public access to greenways and the riverfront for all residents<sup>15</sup>.



*The Friends of the Riverfront's strategic plan significantly enhances our capacity to bridge stewardship of our rivers and adjoining lands into the mainstream of the region's strategy for sustainable economic, quality of life, and environmental renewal<sup>15</sup>.*

### **What Are Rail Trails/Greenways/Linear Parks**

Rail Trails are railway easements converted into multi-use paths for walking, biking or even horse-back riding. Shorter trails are called Greenways or Linear Parks. Working railways often require a separation between the active rail line and the Rail Trail path. The process of converting rails to trails began as long ago as 1965 in Wisconsin with the Elroy-Sparta State Trail <sup>27-32</sup>. Development was possible due to the collapse of the US Rail System beginning in 1960 and continuing into the 70's <sup>27-32</sup>. These types of programs are being developed all over the world. Even New Zealand began the Cycle Trail Project in 2009 <sup>27-32</sup>.

Rail banking preserves the railroad's right-of-way for future or emergency use. Rail banking does not require removal of tracks, bridges or other infrastructure. The Trails Act of 1983 is a Federal Rail Banking Program which permits the rail carrier to lease, rent or donate the use of their rail easement to a public or private entity which is willing to assume the financial responsibility and liability for use and management of the right-of-way. This program appears to be beneficial for the railroad owner as it removes the financial responsibility of long-term maintenance and liability from the owner's hands and places it in the hands of the Rail Trail management group. There is funding available for the use of shared Rail Trail paths through ISTEA and TEA-21<sup>27-32</sup>. The Friends of the Riverfront would be an entity willing to take this type of responsibility in the case of the Three Rivers Heritage Trail.



***Photograph of the Rt. 28 section of the Three Rivers Heritage Trail, taken from Friends of the Riverfront website***



***Photograph of the Burke-Gilman Trail, a 27 mile long Rail Trail, rail banked in 1998 as part of the Trails Act of 1983, in Washington State<sup>27</sup>***



### General Practices and Lessons Learned from Rail Trail Contrast Cases

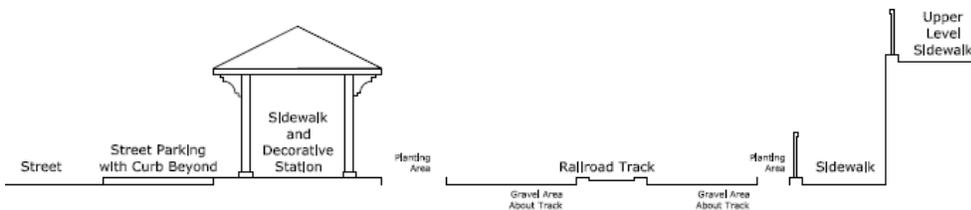
The Burke-Gilman Trail Extension in Washington State<sup>27-32</sup> illustrates the following features: the City of Seattle owns and manages the right-of-way; the setback required for trail use is 10'-12' from the center of the rail section; the physical separation between Rail Trail and Rail varies depending on the site conditions; and the freight train operates at 10 mph, two to three times per week.

The Five Star Trail in Southwestern PA<sup>27-32</sup> only maintains a 3-4 foot clearance from the center of the active railroad track and locates parking, but the Three Rivers Heritage Trail – Baldwin Borough Segment provides a 6 foot high chain-link fence between the Rail Trail and the active railroad track. This may be due to the fact that the train travels at 40-50 mph over this segment even though the train only passes once/day.

The Oakmont Arboretum Trail<sup>27-32</sup> extends through the Borough of Oakmont all of the way to Kittanning. The Garden Club of Oakmont raised \$3 million for trail construction, landscaping, corridor renovation and long-term maintenance of plantings. This Sustainability Needs Assessment includes a comparison of a section through the Arboretum Trail with a section through the Verona railroad easement, which is shown below.



*Photograph and Section Drawing of the Oakmont Arboretum Trail by Sustainability Assessment Team Members.*

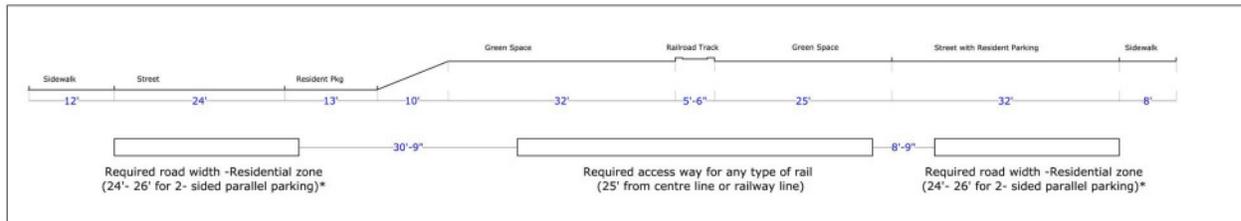


### Oakmont Trail Section at Railroad Tracks



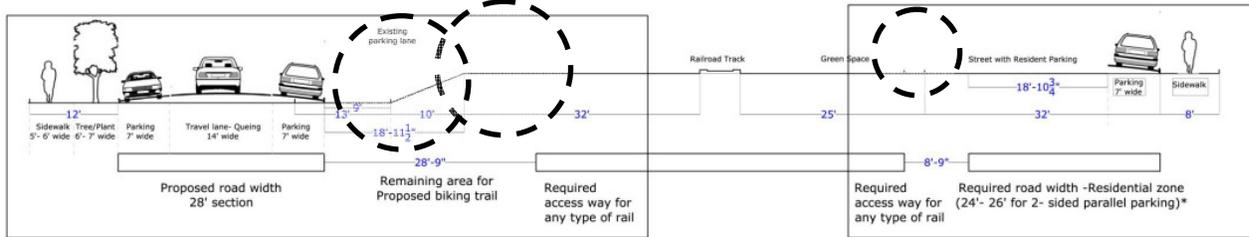
These Contrast Cases vary in their design and complexity. Aspects of design which are important to consider are: the set back from the Rail Trail to the active rail; the topography; various fencing/separation techniques; Rail Trail surface finish; visibility along the Rail Trail and at crossings, particularly at night; the need for traffic signals and crossing gates; landscaping; drainage; construction costs; maintenance costs; and liability costs.

Through the study of the Contrast Cases, particularly the Oakmont Arboretum Trail, it is clear that a shared Rail Trail path is feasible along the Allegheny Valley Railroad easement. The tracks are only used once per day, always during the night and at the low speed of 10 mph. If the AVR Commuter Line is developed the speeds could be as high as 70 mph, so landscape or fenced type screening between uses should be included. A typical cross-section of the easement shows land available for a shared Rail Trail path. The Friends of the Riverfront indicate that the owner of the Allegheny Valley Railroad may be amenable to a shared plan.



Potential Verona Trail About Railroad Tracks

\*Policy on Geometric Design of Highways - "Green Book"



**Scenario 1**  
**(9' wide trail**  
**along West**  
**Railroad Ave)**

**Scenario 2**  
**(9' wide trail)**

**Scenario 3**  
**(8'-9' wide trail**  
**along East**  
**Rail Road Ave)**

There are three options for Rail Trail location along the AVR Commuter Rail Line. A combination of Scenarios is also possible where one-way Rail Trails could be located on opposite sides of the railroad easement.

Scenario 1 would require street revision at West Railroad Avenue where parking might occur on both sides of a one-way street to replace the current parking perpendicular to the railroad easement. This Scenario may be more desirable for residents because it would permit parking on the residential side of



the street and eliminate the need to cross the street to access vehicles parked at the easement. The one-way street may also slow traffic in the area. The Rail Trail would be located along the street level, not along the railroad easement.

Scenario 2 would not require street revision and would locate the Rail Trail along the railroad track with over 15 feet from the edge of the Rail Trail to the centerline of the active track section. This would permit planting or other types of fence separation between the active rail and the Rail Trail.

Scenario 3 would require street revision on East Railroad Avenue to accommodate the Rail Trail at the street. This Scenario may eliminate some street parking for residents.

Further study is required to survey residents, to coordinate the survey results with the Friends of the Riverfront to gain their expertise in determining the correct path of action, and to ascertain construction costs for each Scenario. After further study, a design proposal may be presented for adoption by the community.

Rail Trail Programs provide benefits to communities which are similar to the benefits discussed in the Green Space Summary<sup>27-32</sup>. The specific benefits are discussed below:

#### Community Benefits

- Increased Property Value
- Green Corridors which Provide Improved Access to Recreation and to the Riverfront
- Increased Health and Quality of Life
- Opportunity for Future Development of Public Transportation
- Increased Revenue from Tourism
- Improved Community Image

#### Railroad Company Benefits

- Removal of Responsibility of Long-term Maintenance Costs
- Removal of Liability for Accidents Along Their Property
- Decrease of Trespassing and Vandalism

#### Railroad Customers

- State Governments may have an Interest in Funding New Services

#### Adjacent Land Owners

- Increased Property Value

#### Trail User Groups



- Recreation for Members
- Volunteer Opportunities for Members
- Social Activity

Environment

- Reduction of Stormwater Runoff
- Reduction of Water Pollution
- Reduction of Floods
- Reduction of Air Pollution

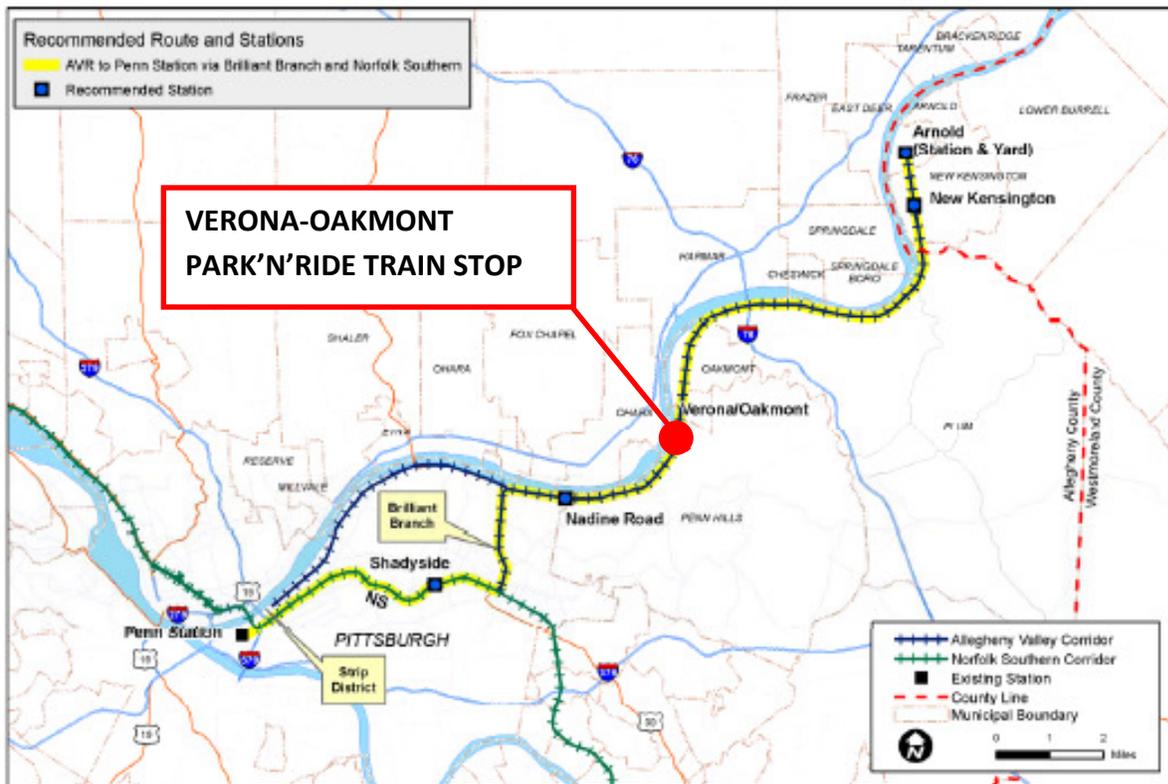


## 15. Long-Term Programs

### Commuter Rail Study

The Westmoreland County Transit Authority performed a Commuter Rail Study in 2009, exploring and refining several options for the development of a commuter rail line along the Allegheny Valley Railroad and the Norfolk Southern Railroad in Southwestern PA. This study was an expansion of previous studies performed by a partnership between the Westmoreland Transit Authority (WT), the Southwestern PA Commission (SPC) and Pittsburgh’s Port Authority Transit (PAT). The expansion study focused on the development of the Allegheny Valley Railroad Line and the Norfolk Southern Line because they were two of the highest scoring lines in a performance rating system based upon transit travel time reduction compared to highway travel times, capital costs, operation and maintenance costs, use of existing facilities, potential for Transit Oriented Development (TOD), and community cooperation, among others.

The WT Commuter Rail Study – 2009 added the option of a connection between the two Lines along the Brilliant Branch in the Homewood area of Pittsburgh. This Brilliant Branch connection attracted the most riders due to its ability to pick up riders in the Oakland area and its ability to connect directly to Penn Station in downtown Pittsburgh, a station closer to Pittsburgh’s Central Business District and not requiring bus shuttle service to Pittsburgh’s Central Business District as would be required by termination of the AVR in Pittsburgh’s Strip District.

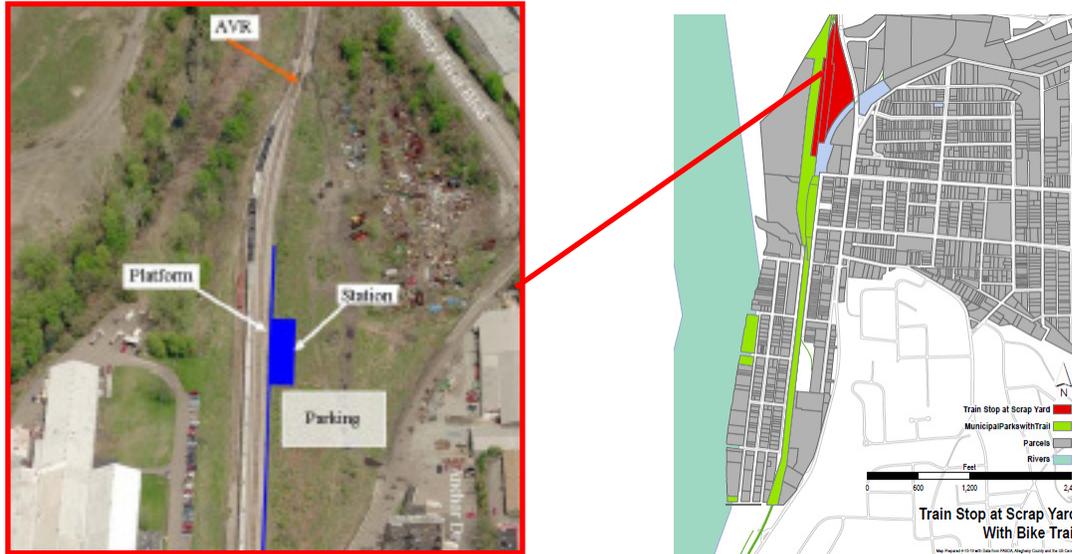


AVR corridor map courtesy of the WT Commuter Rail Study – 2009



The Daily Ridership of each Railroad Line with the Brilliant Branch connection is:

- Norfolk Southern – 1,500
- Allegheny Valley Railroad – 2,700
- Total – 4,200

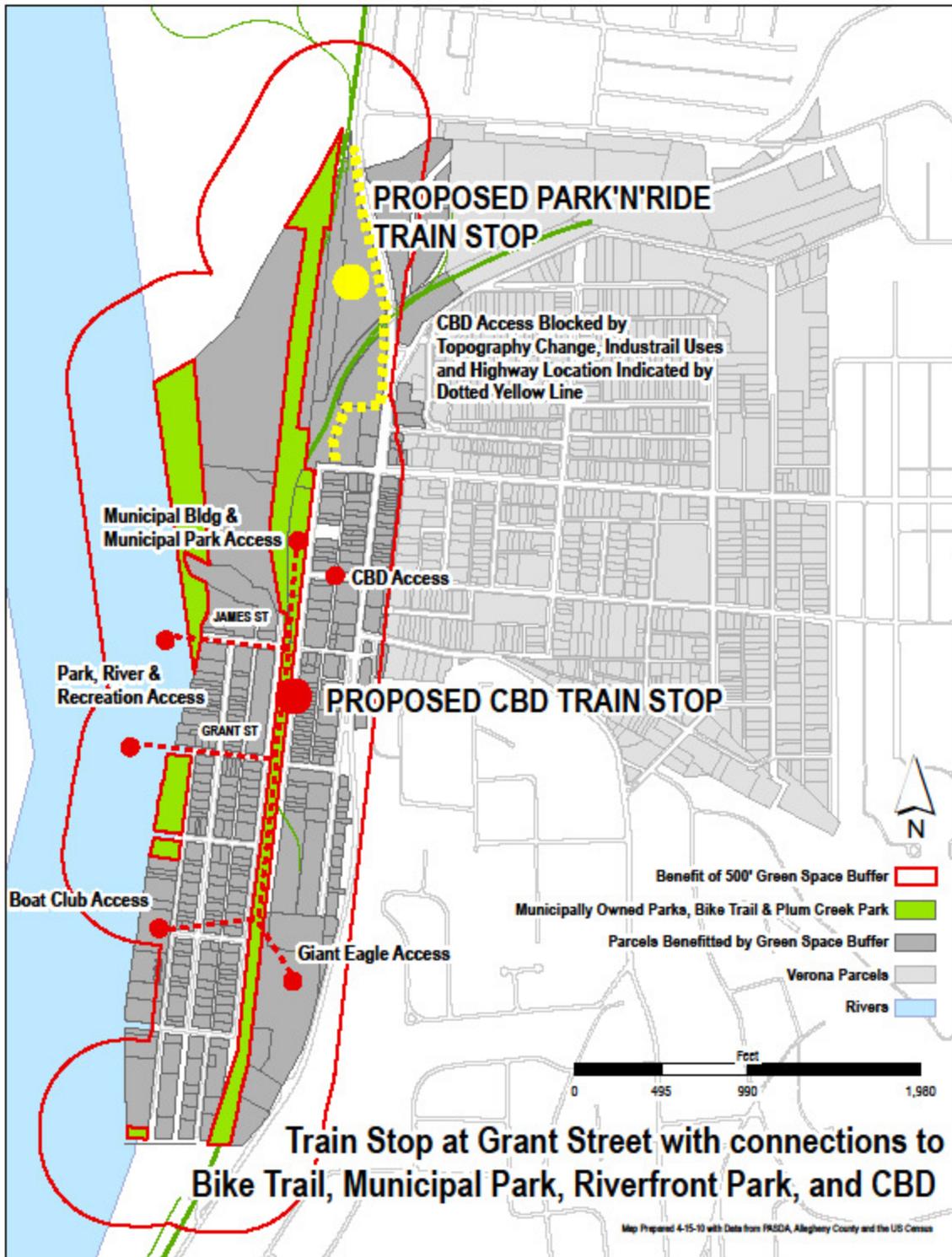


***AVR photo courtesy of the WT Commuter Rail Study – 2009***

The WT Commuter Rail Study – 2009 recommends a Park’N’Ride Stop in Verona, located on the site of the existing scrap yard on the Oakmont border, with the potential for parking for 500-1,000 cars. This stop is intended to serve both Verona and Oakmont with the advantage of picking up walking riders from the new River’s Edge Development in Oakmont. This could serve the Borough of Verona well as it may also pick up driving riders from Penn Hills who may access the site via Center Avenue, which is a direct connection to Penn Hills.

This train stop may also be a disadvantage to the Borough. There is a pronounced elevation change from the level of the proposed train stop to the Central Business District. The elevation change will not encourage a walking connection to Verona’s CBD. The elevation change may encourage a walking connection to Oakmont’s River’s Edge Development across a landscaped park in the Plum Creek area, but, if a future Oakmont stop is developed, the Oakmont stop would be more convenient for Oakmont residents. These residents may change their pattern and begin to frequent the Oakmont stop instead.

The Park’N’Ride nature of the proposed facility will not encourage visitors to stay in the Borough. It may actually drain the Central Business District of visitors who might contribute business to the CBD due to quick car access to home and other locations. This Sustainability Needs Assessment recommends the careful consideration of a second train stop in Verona, located closer to the CBD to encourage riders to frequent Verona businesses.



Proposed AVR Train Stop in Verona Central Business District between James and Grant Streets



An AVR Train Stop between James and Grant Streets in the Borough of Verona would provide access to a number of Borough uses and activities and would complement the Park’N’Ride component by providing for both the needs of quick access by car from remote suburbs and the needs of maintaining a CBD to serve residents and visitors to the community. This proposed stop would not preclude the development of parking on the scrap yard site. It would simply require a walk of approximately ¼ mile from the parking to the train station facility. This length of walk is not uncommon at Park’N’Ride facilities. This proposal can be compared to a suburb in the South Hills of Pittsburgh, Mt. Lebanon. The community of Mt. Lebanon has a total of 4 light rail transit stops within its boundaries. One stop is directed at the CBD, where riders stop for coffee at several flourishing coffee shops before boarding, frequent flourishing shops in the CBD at various times during the day and stop for dinner after disembarking on their way home. Two stops are directed at serving residential districts, where riders walk directly to the train and directly home from the train. One stop, near the Castle Shannon Border is a Park’N’Ride, where riders primarily walk directly to their cars and drive home. It appears that this Park’N’Ride has not attracted businesses to the Castle Shannon CBD. In fact, since the businesses have decreased in the years since the Park’N’Ride was constructed, one could speculate that the Park’N’Ride has decreased business in the area. The only businesses that appear to thrive in this area are large facilities which also provide their own parking lots: Shop’n’Save and Ice Castles (an ice-skating, hockey, gymnasium facility).

The Park’N’Ride appears to make better use of a site which is currently occupied by a scrap yard. This scrap yard may contain environmental hazards in the Plum Creek Watershed and should be investigated for mandatory clean-up by the current owner. A large portion of the scrap yard exists as unpaved space; therefore, it is contributing to some percolation of stormwater runoff. If a large portion of the area is paved as a Park’N’Ride facility, care should be taken to include pervious paving, rain gardens, swales and other landscape features that will decrease stormwater runoff from existing levels. Borough Garden Club members have suggested that a portion of the site be preserved for their use in beautifying Verona and for growing plants in a greenhouse structure. This site would provide them with a location accessible to the Plum Creek revitalization and bike trail areas for ease of transporting plants and maintenance equipment. A previously identified partner, GTECH, may be interested in partnering in such a project.

As development for the AVR light rail transit line develops, this Sustainability Needs Assessment encourages further study of the proposed Park’N’Ride in Verona to ensure that it will not produce negative effects in the Borough’s Central Business District and increase stormwater runoff. This Assessment also suggests careful analysis of an additional stop between James and Grant Streets to better serve the CBD and riverfront recreation opportunities in the Borough.



## 16. Contrast Case – Trail Towns

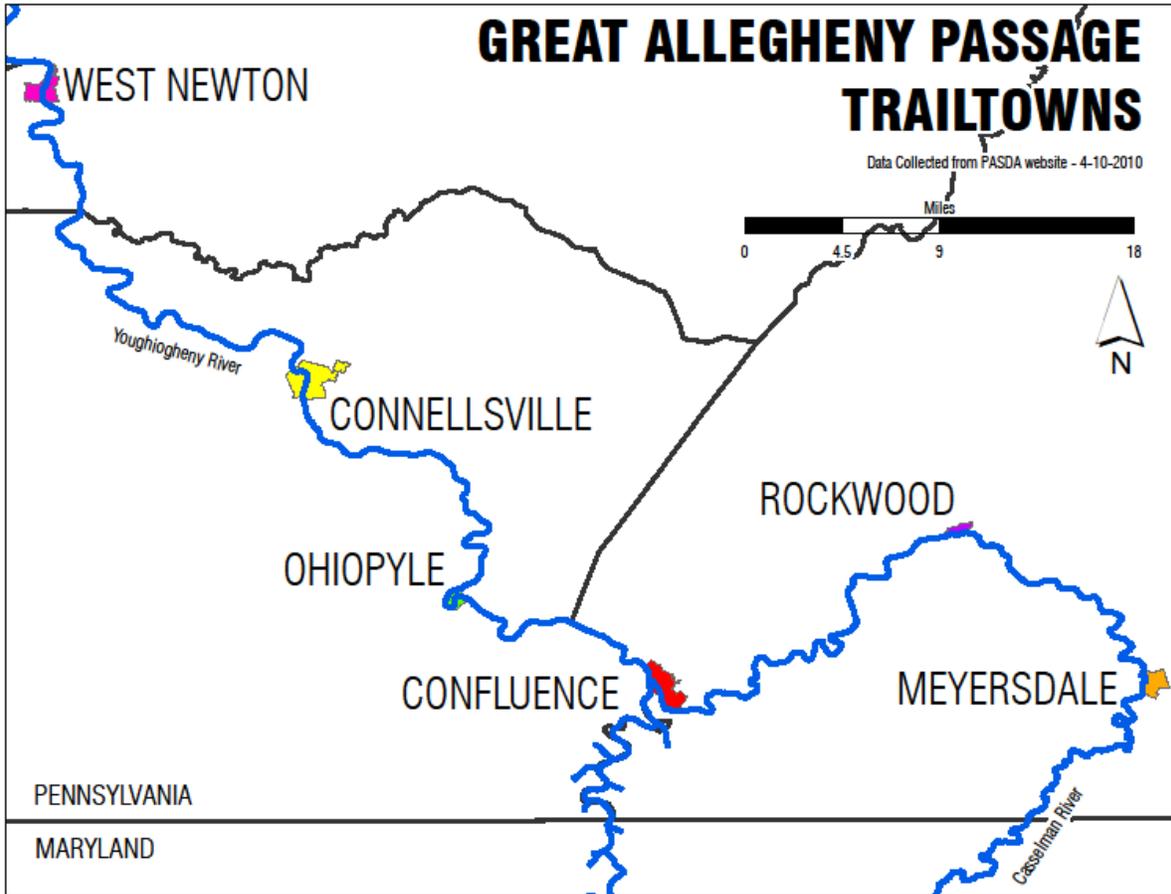
### The Great Allegheny Passage

*The Allegheny Trail Alliance (ATA) is a coalition of seven trail organizations in southwestern Pennsylvania and western Maryland, building the Great Allegheny Passage, a 150-mile multiple use rail-trail system between Cumberland, Maryland and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and the 52-mile Montour Trail to provide a connection to the Pittsburgh International Airport. The Passage is now connected to the 184.5 mile C & O Canal Towpath in Cumberland and provides a non-motorized, nearly level trail system between Washington, DC and McKeesport, PA. The Great Allegheny Passage is a segment of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail, one of eight nationally designated scenic trails<sup>15</sup>.*

The Allegheny Trail Alliance has a number of partners, the Friends of the Riverfront, being an important and active participant in the Pittsburgh region. The experience that Friends of the Riverfront gained in developing portions of the Great Allegheny Passage will be invaluable as Verona moves forward with plans to further develop the Heritage Trail.

Another partner, the Progress Fund has been instrumental in developing the Trail Town Program, an organization of towns along the Great Allegheny Passage, similar to those towns involved in the Allegheny Together Program. These groups work closely together. The website formats for the Trail Town Program and the Allegheny Together Program are very similar and were perhaps developed by the same consultants. Accessibility to the biking, hiking, boating community could be enhanced if these websites are linked, connecting the developing Heritage Trail to the Great Allegheny Passage constituency.

The Progress Fund and the University of Pittsburgh Center for Social and Urban Research have been instrumental in preparing economic impact and use studies on portions of the Great Allegheny Passage between 2002-2008<sup>4,5&6</sup>. Studies of six Trail Towns along the Great Allegheny Passage - West Newton, Connellsville, Ohionyle, Confluence, Rockwood and Meyersdale – showed an increase of trail related revenue of \$7.26 million in 2002 to \$32.6 million in 2007<sup>4,5&6</sup>. Even though the year 2008 was a difficult year, economically, the Trail Towns still showed an increase of revenue to \$40.7 million in 2008<sup>4,5&6</sup>. Due to these positive economic benefits, study of the Trail Town Program Goals, trail uses, interests of trail users, and trail user requested services will clearly benefit the Borough of Verona as it moves forward with recreational and riverfront development.



**Map of Trail Towns studied in The Progress Fund and U of Pgh Reports and websites<sup>4, 5, 6, 9 & 12</sup>.**

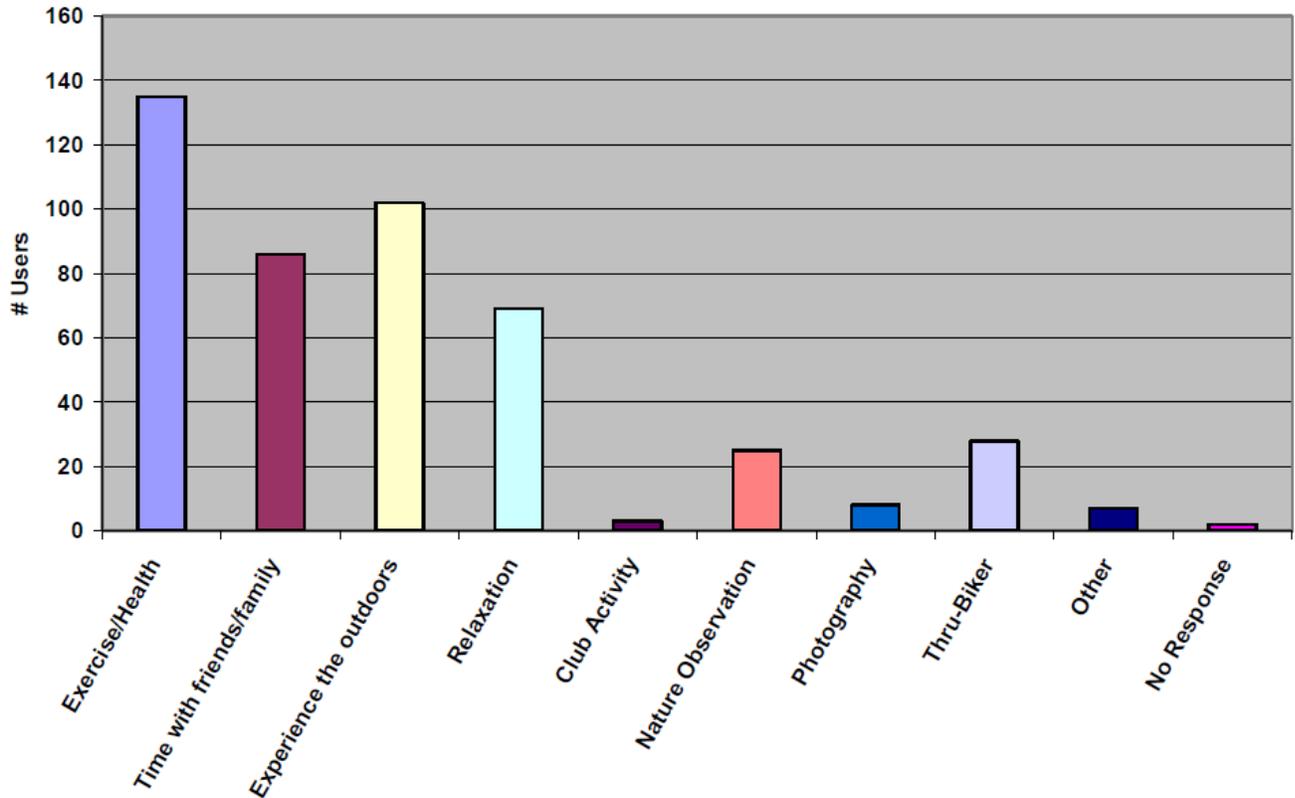
The Trail Town Program clearly states its goals to be:

- Expand & Increase Existing Business Revenue for Stability
- Attract Sustainable New Businesses
- Incorporate the Vision of a Visitor Friendly Environment in all Community Planning

The Progress Fund and University of Pittsburgh economic and use studies pursue these goals. In order to understand how to increase and expand existing businesses, and attract sustainable new businesses, a community must understand why visitors use the trail.



**Table 2.2**  
**Primary Motivation for Trail Use**



***Graph of Primary Motivation for Trail Use from The Progress Fund Report<sup>5</sup>***

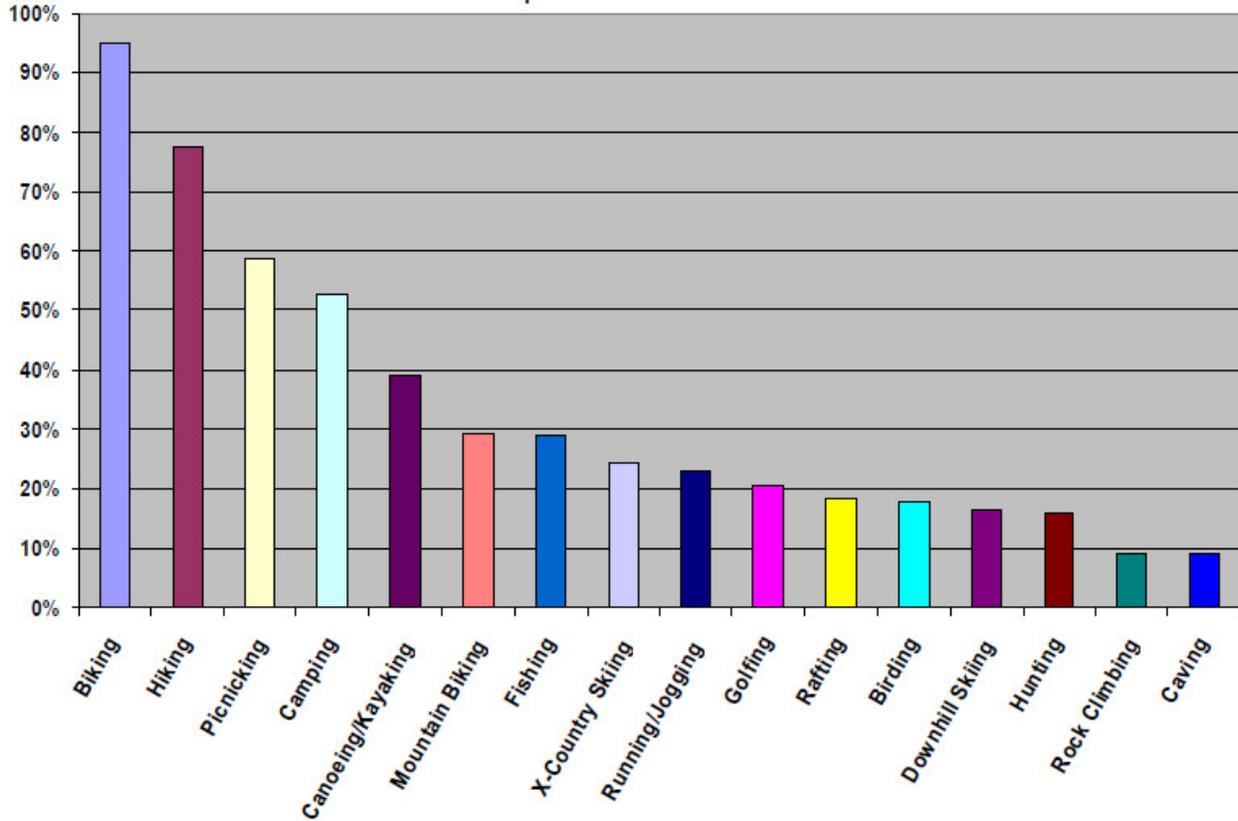
The Top 5 Motivations for Trail Use studied in the Trail Town Program are:

- Exercise/Health
- Experience the Outdoors
- Time with Friends and Family
- Relaxation
- Nature Observation

All of the Motivations illustrated in the graph above are attainable in the Borough of Verona. The development of the Heritage Trail and increased river access will provide for the Exercise/Health Motivation. Use of any of the parks or trails will provide for the Experience the Outdoors, Time with Friends and Family, Relaxation and Nature Observation Motivations. Partnership with the Allegheny Land Trust will provide a unique opportunity for a specific type of Nature Observation which is accessible only by boat, so will serve two Motivations, Nature Observation and Exercise/Health.



Table 2.1  
Participation in Outdoor Activities



*Graph of Reasons for Trail User Participation in Outdoor Activities - from The Progress Fund Report<sup>5</sup>.*

The Top 5 Interests of Trail Users are:

- Biking
- Hiking
- Picnicking
- Camping
- Canoeing/Kayaking

It is no surprise that the primary use of the Great Allegheny Passage preferred by Trail Users is biking. The Great Allegheny Passage was developed primarily as a bike trail, but the great interest in biking illustrates the fact that, if the Heritage Trail is further developed through Verona, the biking interest will increase in Verona as well.

It was interesting to see that canoeing/kayaking was also an important use along the bike trail – a use that Verona has a unique opportunity to develop due to the riverfront location. Motor boating was not identified as a Motivation for use along the Great Allegheny Passage. Motor Boating may attract a

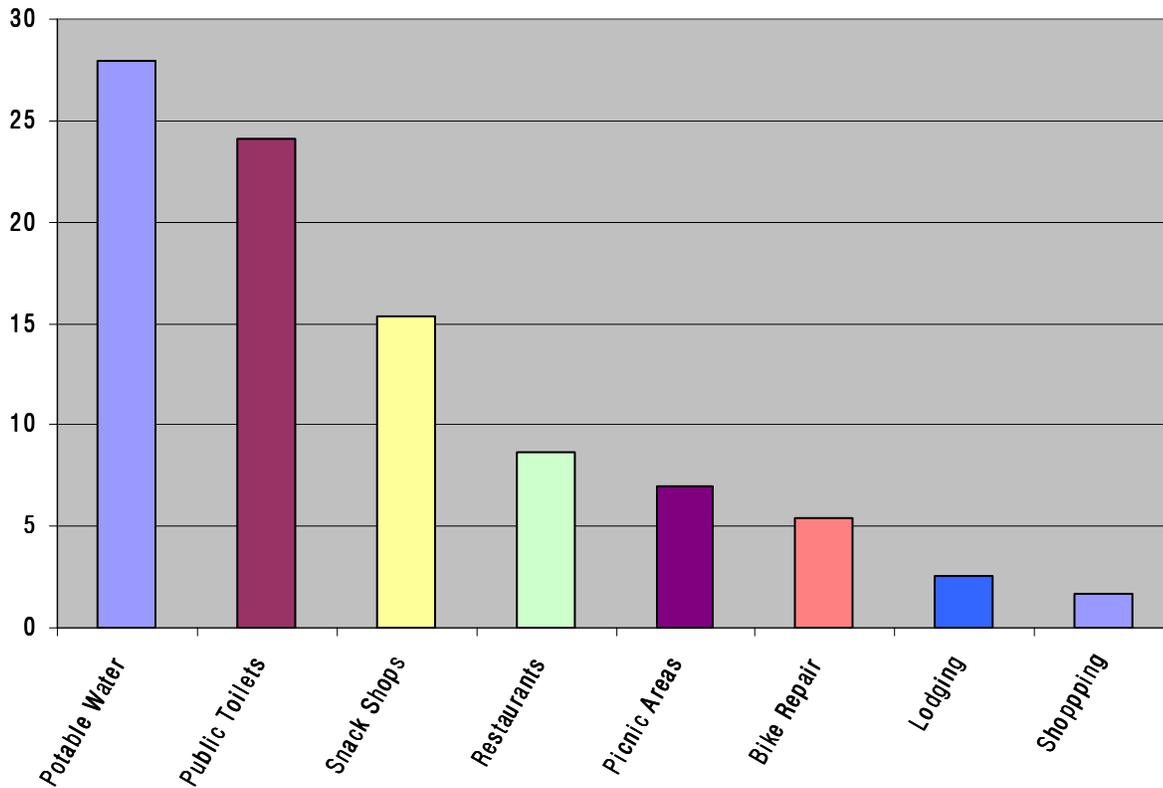


different type of recreational user and may discourage the quieter experience of canoeing/kayaking. Existing motor boat facilities cannot be eliminated from the Riverfront Area but motor boat storage facilities could be relocated to the industrial zones of the Riverfront Area and to the northern industrial zone in order to remove unsightly boat storage from the residential and recreational areas. In this way, canoeing/kayaking may be encouraged and may eventually replace motor boating as a primary Motivation for river use in Verona. Eliminating more polluting motor boats will benefit the environment as well.

The more passive use of picnicking can easily be accommodated in quieter portions of the Riverfront Park and around boat access points to the River. Camping may not be as simple to accommodate in Verona due to the lack of large expanses of vacant land, but overnight uses should be developed. Quaint Bed & Breakfast locations could be established in many of the historic residential properties in the Riverfront Area as a substitute for camping. Boat Clubs could be encouraged to rent rooms to river enthusiasts. The existing historic hotel along West Railroad Avenue at Grant Street could also be developed as a Bed & Breakfast location, particularly because it adjoins the proposed train stop location. Young people traveling from the City of Pittsburgh by train could plan their stay here for access to the Heritage Trail, Sycamore Island and Allegheny River canoeing/kayaking opportunities. This type of train travel for weekend excursions is common in the Hudson River Valley of New York State, where New York City residents travel along the Hudson River Line Railroad to Poughkeepsie, New Paltz and beyond for cross country ski opportunities in the Catskill Mountains.

The cost benefits of increasing tourism are discussed in detail in the Green Space Benefits portion of this Assessment. In summary, increased Tourism could increase spending in Verona by \$130,953/Year, including daytime and overnight visitors, overnight visitors spending the most even though they represent a smaller percentage of the visiting population.

The Progress Fund studies surveyed Trail Users along the Great Allegheny Passage for requested services in two different time periods - in 2002, shortly after the trail opened, and in 2008, after the trail had been established for some time. The responses were quite different in each time period. A comparison of both surveys will help the Borough of Verona to understand which services may be required in Short or Mid-Term trail development and which services can follow in Long-Term trail development. Please see the graphs below for requested services.



**Graph of Requested Services in 2002 - from The Progress Fund Report<sup>5</sup>.**

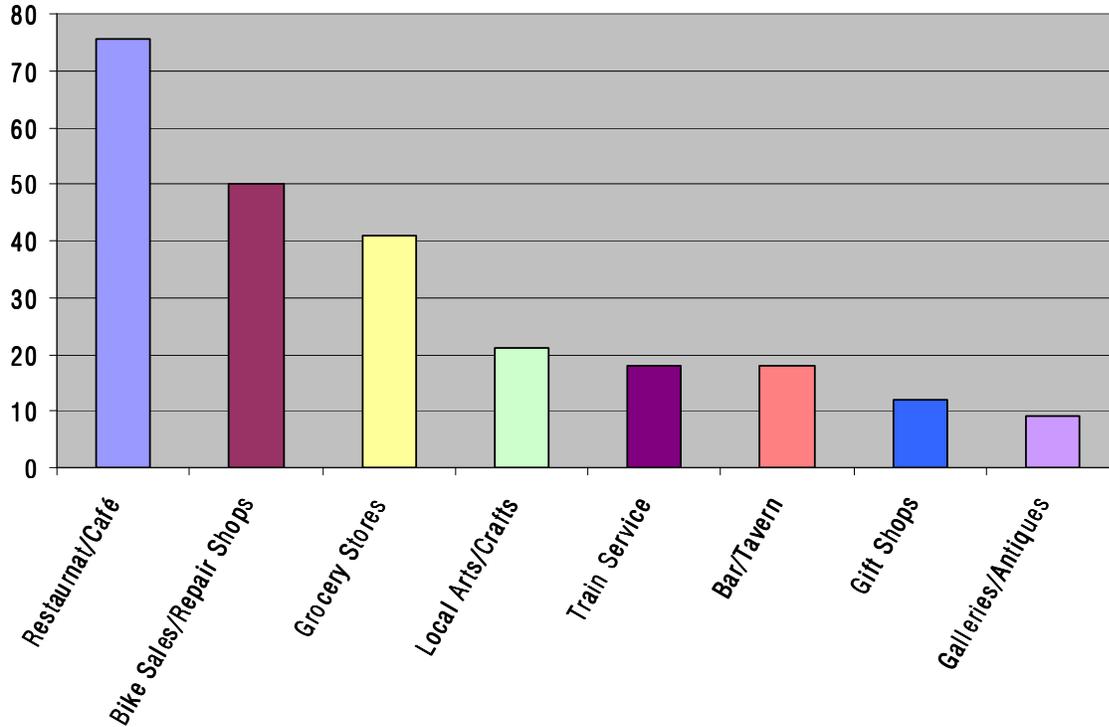
The Top 5 Requested Services in 2002 were:

- Potable Water
- Public Toilets
- Snack Shops
- Restaurants
- Picnicking

Potable water and toilet facilities are the top two requested services but they may be the most costly and most difficult to develop. In the short-term, perhaps the municipal building could be opened for these types of services. As Riverfront Park develops and as new boat access points develop, perhaps additional water and toilet facilities could be developed with grants from the PA Fish & Boat Commission. Retail snack shops and a small number of local restaurants exist. The development of additional, high quality, snack shops and restaurants, perhaps serving users who are exercise and health



oriented, should be developed. Picnicking can easily be accommodated in a revitalized Riverfront Park, at the Municipal Building Park or along with new boat access point facilities.



**Graph of Requested Services in 2008 - from The Progress Fund Report<sup>5</sup>.**

The Top 5 Requested Services in 2008 were:

- Restaurants/Cafes
- Bike Shops and Repair Shops
- Grocery Stores
- Local Arts and Crafts
- Train Service

Early Great Allegheny Passage Trail Users seem to have basic needs and Early Trail Users were documented to visit from shorter distances so that more advanced needs could be met by traveling back to a home base<sup>5</sup>. If we can assume from The Progress Fund studies that, as Trail User basic needs are met and as positive trail publicity draws Trail Users from a broader geographic area, requested services



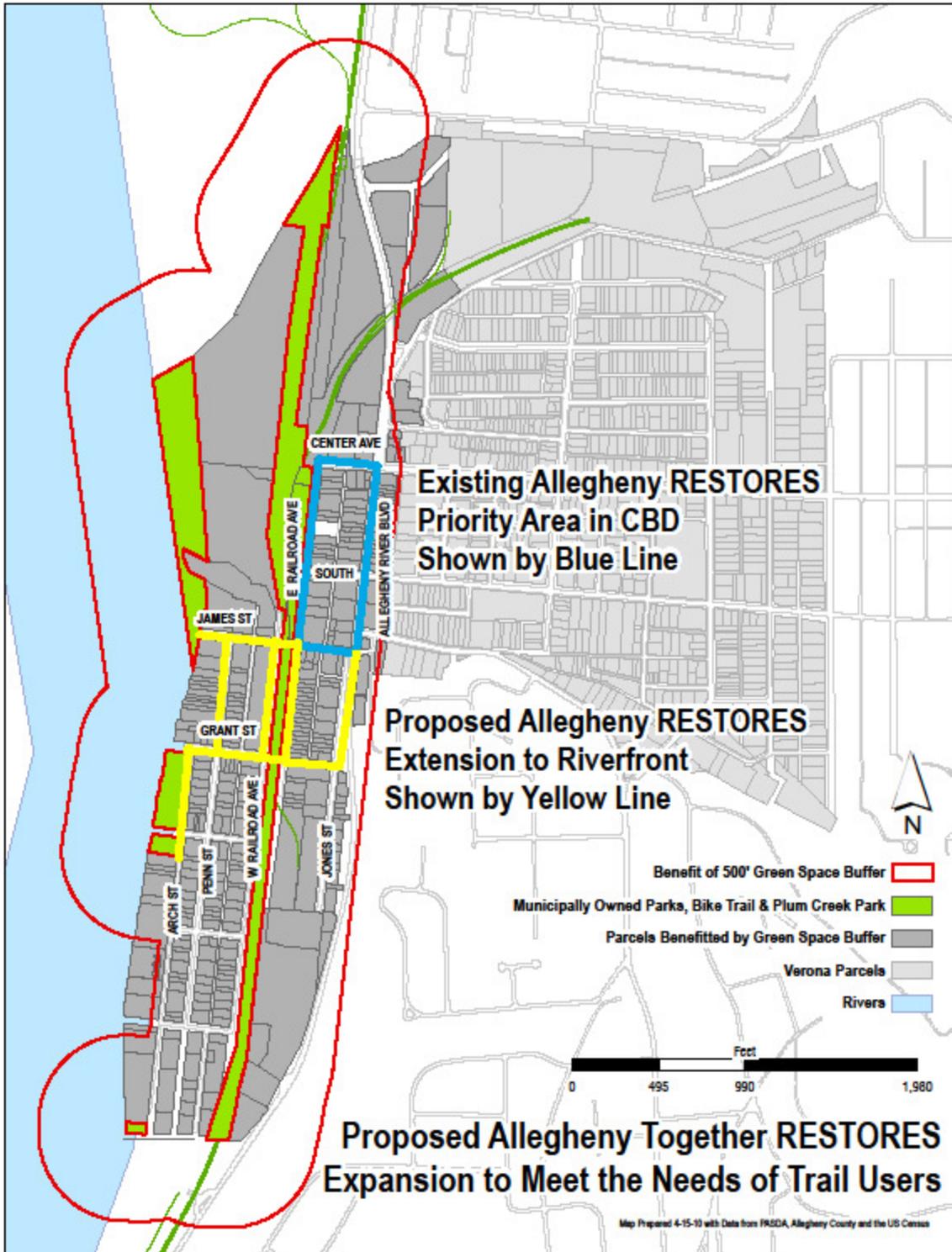
change, the revised list of requested services from 2008 can guide Verona’s long-term planning efforts to meet the needs of future Trail Users.

### Recommendations for Verona Based Upon Trail Town Program Studies

These planning efforts can be incorporated with the goals of the Allegheny Together RESTORES Program and interconnected website development. The Allegheny RESTORES Program prioritizes the revitalization of the Central Business District in the East/West direction from Allegheny River Boulevard to East Railroad Avenue and in the North/South direction from Center Avenue to James Street.



*This map, taken from the Allegheny Together website, highlights the priority area of the Verona Central Business District targeted for the Allegheny RESTORES Program.*



Map highlighting a proposed extension of the Allegheny Together RESTORES Program in Verona, PA



This Sustainability Needs Assessment proposes an extension of the Allegheny Together RESTORES Program to follow the outlines of proposals for increased Parkland and Recreation in the Borough of Verona as discussed in detail in the Overview of Proposals portion of this Assessment. This Allegheny RESTORES extension should include both East and West Railroad Avenues to Grant Street where access to the riverfront would be encouraged along James and Grant Streets. This extension could also include the portion of Jones Street which is between James and Grant, and the portion of Arch Street which is South of Grant along Riverfront Park. The location shown by the Blue Line, shown in the map above, indicates the extent of the existing Allegheny RESTORES Program. The location shown by the Yellow Line, shown in the map above, indicates the Proposed Extension of the Allegheny RESTORES Program.

A complete recommendation for the percentage of businesses recommended is beyond the scope of this study. We can interpolate from The Progress Fund 2008 studies<sup>5</sup> that approximately 75% of Trail Users would prefer additional restaurants, that approximately 50% of Trail Users would prefer additional bike shops and repair shops, that approximately 40% of Trail Users would prefer additional Grocery Stores, that approximately 21% of Trail Users would prefer additional Local Arts & Craft Shops, and that approximately 19% of Trail Users would prefer Train Service<sup>5</sup>. These numbers relate to percentage of Trail Users, not numbers of businesses, so we cannot make complete recommendations on the exact numbers of businesses that should be developed in the Riverfront Area, but we can recommend the types of businesses and their general locations based upon analysis to date.

This Yellow line, shown in the map above, follows the outline of proposed bike trails and riverfront access and would be an ideal location for restaurants, cafes, snack shops, small grocery stores, local arts & crafts shops and the proposed train stop for the Verona CBD. Overnight stay opportunities, such as Bed & Breakfast style hotels, could be developed here as well. These Bed & Breakfast facilities, restaurants and shops will be able to open onto the green spaces of the parks and trails, have views of the River and serve the needs of Trail Users.

The Riverfront Area is predominantly low scale residential. Many of the properties are in disrepair. The Borough has a unique opportunity to increase their tax base by renovating existing residential structures into new commercial uses along this proposed path. This Sustainability Needs Assessment would only recommend “tear-downs” where absolutely necessary. Due to the mixed-use, low scale nature of the types of businesses recommended in The Progress Fund studies, low-scale residential buildings may meet the needs of the commercial uses.

The Proposed Extension of Allegheny RESTORES would be anchored by the original CBD RESTORES Program, the Municipal Building Park and the new Floodplain park connection to Oakmont at the northern end, and by Riverfront Park and the Heritage Trail at the southern end. Once the original CBD RESTORES Program and this Extension are complete, the next step could be to connect a similar plan to the Giant Eagle and the Boat Clubs at the extreme southern end of Verona.

Development in the direction suggested by The Progress Fund Trail Town Program Studies<sup>5</sup> where the Borough of Verona stresses: Exercising for Health and the benefits of Green Spaces or Parkland;



Experiencing the Outdoors while partnering with the Allegheny Land Trust in the development of Sycamore Island, the Friends of the Riverfront in developing the Heritage Trail, and the Allegheny Trail Alliance in linking Trail Programs; Expansion of the Central Business District to meet the needs of Trail Users while partnering with Allegheny Together and the Allegheny Trail Alliance; Coordination and Collaboration with all Stakeholders involved in the AVR Light Rail Development; and Meeting Current Program, Mid-Term Program and Long-Term Program goals will encourage sustainable development along the new Trail Town of Verona, PA.



## 17. Funding Sources

### PA Fish & Boat Commission

The PA Fish & Boat Commission aids local communities with matching grants related to boating and fishing. Their Boating Facility Grants relate to the planning, acquisition, development, expansion and rehabilitation of Public Boating Facilities. Their Pump Out Grants are related to the construction, renovation and maintenance of Pumpout & Dumpout Stations.



This photograph, taken from the PA Fish & Boat website, illustrates the large scale boat access constructed in Sharpsburg, PA with a PA Fish & Boat matching grant<sup>24</sup>.

[www.fishandboat.com](http://www.fishandboat.com)

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814-445-3497 Cell

[dtubbs@state.pa.us](mailto:dtubbs@state.pa.us)

Both of these programs are matching grant programs which require the municipality applying to provide a 25% match to the grant amount. This match can be in the form of additional grants, donated materials and labor, or, in kind, volunteer hours from community members. Many facilities have been completed with grants from PA Fish & Boat, including the new facility in Sharpsburg. The Sharpsburg grant was achieved by accepting donations of materials and labor from local excavation and electrical unions who used the construction opportunity to train their apprentices. This type of training occurs, at least, on a yearly basis, so opportunities for donations from local labor unions may exist for the Borough of Verona.

PA Fish & Boat may also be able to assist the Borough with fundraising. The agency offers free educational programs on boating safety for which they permit municipalities or non-profit organizations to charge up to \$15/person. These programs may be beneficial for boy scouts or girl scouts as they pursue merit badges. They may also be beneficial for boat club members and residents of Verona concerned with boating and water safety.



## PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (PA DCNR)

### Mission:

DCNR's mission is to conserve and sustain Pennsylvania's natural resources for present and future generations' enjoyment<sup>25</sup>.



These photographs, taken from the Great Allegheny Passage website and the PA DCNR website, illustrate the varied type and scale of projects funded by the PA DCNR .

[www.dcnr.state.pa.us](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us)

See below for various contacts for specific grant opportunities.

### Wild Resource Conservation

These grants may be some of the only opportunities available for this year. They are specifically designed to protect unique ecosystems in PA. Since Sycamore Island has been identified as a unique ecosystem by the Allegheny Land Trust, portions of Verona's Allegheny River and Plum Creek shorelines probably contain the same vegetation and wildlife characteristics. The Allegheny Land Trust may be willing to work with the Borough to document these characteristics and provide technical assistance in grant writing for this program. The application for these grants is June 30, 2010. Please contact:

[curban@state.pa.us](mailto:curban@state.pa.us) 412-359-5113

### C2P2 – Community Recreation & Conservation

The Community Recreation and Conservation Grants (C2P2) closed for 2010 on Wednesday, April 21, 2010. They do require careful planning and preparation, so the opportunity for 2011 still exists. The website provides an opportunity to register for notification when the grant program becomes available.



There are a number of Grant Programs in the C2P2 system: Keystone, Recreational Trails, Land & Water Conservation and Growing Greener. The Borough of Verona may be able to take advantage of several of these opportunities, and combine them to serve matching grant requirements, when the programs become available. Please contact:

[kfrankel@state.pa.us](mailto:kfrankel@state.pa.us) 412-800-0486

**PA Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP)**

**Mission:**

*The Department of Environmental Protection’s mission is to protect Pennsylvania’s air, land and water from pollution and to provide for the health and safety of its citizens through a cleaner environment. We will work as partners with individuals, organizations, governments and businesses to prevent pollution and restore our natural resources.*



These photographs, taken from the PA DEP website, illustrate the varied type and scale of projects funded by the PA DEP.

[www.dep.state.pa.us](http://www.dep.state.pa.us)

See below for various contacts for specific grant opportunities.

**Stormwater Management Plans Grants**

There may still be funding available for these programs. The Green Space proposed in this study in the area of the Borough Boat Dock, the Railroad Tracks, Riverfront Park, Revitalization of Plum Creek and the Floodplain area connecting Verona to the River’s Edge Development in Oakmont, may qualify for funding from this program. Please contact:

[bnewman@state.pa.us](mailto:bnewman@state.pa.us) 412-772-5661



### **Household Hazardous Waste & Composting Infrastructure and Recycling Coordinators & Expenses Grants**

There is still funding available for these programs. Even though this type of project is not specifically mentioned in our proposal, the opportunity to create a more sustainable community through increased recycling and disposal of hazardous waste programs is always a good idea. Please contact:

[csscheidler@state.pa.us](mailto:csscheidler@state.pa.us) 717-787-7382

### **Environmental Education Grants**

Funding opportunities may still exist in this realm. These opportunities can enrich any of the revitalization programs discussed in this study. Educating school children often brings the message home to parents. Educating parents will build community involvement and perhaps volunteer hours from the community. The Borough or the School District may apply. Please contact:

[Ra-elearningcenter@state.pa.us](mailto:Ra-elearningcenter@state.pa.us) 717-772-8945

### **Growing Greener Grants**

This funding opportunity is currently closed, but the website provides an opportunity to register for notification when the grant program becomes available. Please contact:

[growinggreene@state.pa.us](mailto:growinggreene@state.pa.us)

### **PEDA – PA Energy Development Authority and PA Energy Harvest Grants**

This funding opportunity is currently closed, but the website provides an opportunity to register for notification when the grant program becomes available. Please contact:

[gwiskeman@state.pa.us](mailto:gwiskeman@state.pa.us)

### **Non-Point Source Implementation Grants**

The PA DEP defines nonpoint source (NPS) pollution as pollution that is “caused by rainfall or snowmelt moving over and through the ground. As the runoff moves, it picks up and carries away natural and human-made pollutants, finally depositing them into lakes, rivers, wetlands, coastal waters, and even our underground sources of drinking water<sup>26</sup>.” Funding opportunities may still exist in this realm for the relocation of the salt pile. Stormwater runoff over the area of the saltpile and saltpile storage area may carry pollutants from the salt into the Allegheny River. Please contact:

[ruwagner@state.pa.us](mailto:ruwagner@state.pa.us) 717-772-5802



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