

Photo: Sherwood Park



# INTRODUCTION





## Study Purpose

The Comprehensive Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan will serve as a blueprint for parks, open space and natural resource protection and preservation for the next 10 to 20 years.

The Comprehensive Parks, Recreation and, Open Space Plan: examines greenways, trails and sidewalks and recommends enhancements to this connectivity infrastructure; recommends a methodology for open space preservation and acquisition; makes suggestions for improved park facilities, operations, maintenance, and staffing; and suggests options for potential new recreational programs and activities. This plan also provides an implementation and funding strategy.

Park and trail usage has expanded greatly after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic as people sought an escape in outdoor recreation and open space while being quarantined at their homes. Parks act as outlets to connect with nature and reduce mental stress. Moreover, they improve physical wellness and promote healthy lifestyles; reduce time off from work due to health reasons and can help lower health care costs for individuals. In addition to individual benefits, these facilities provide a variety of community benefits as well. Parks, trails and open space promote a sense of community through events and park usage. They also act as high priority items when families decide in which community to purchase a home as a municipality's park and recreation system is often the physical face, or identity, of the community. They also provide small children and teenagers opportunities to engage in after-school activities and organizations.

Along with these individual and community benefits, parks, trail and open space provide environmental and economic benefits. These benefits can also be quantified to show the value they provide to communities. The report, Return on Environment: The Economic Value of Protected Open Space in Southeastern Pennsylvania, released in 2011 and prepared for the GreenSpace Alliance and the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, estimated the economic value created by the open space in Greater Philadelphia. The report found that protected open space in the 5-county Philadelphia region (Philadelphia, Bucks, Chester, Delaware and Montgomery Counties) reduces costs by avoiding \$133 million in expenditures for water supply, water quality, flood mitigation, wildlife habitat protection, air pollution removal and the capture of carbon by trees. In addition, the report found that the activity that occurs in parks and open space results in \$795 million in avoided annual medical expenses as people who are active enjoy a range of physical and mental health benefits.

The report also found that \$566 million is spent annually due to protected open space. This spending includes expenses for the management and maintenance of open space, spending for goods produced on preserved farms and tourism-related spending. Recreational activity on open space in the area also creates an estimated 6,900 jobs which generate about \$30 million in state and local taxes each year. In terms of residential property value, the report found that the total real estate premium credited to living within one mile of protected open space is \$16.3 billion.

Photo: Eskie Park

## Plan Vision

*Enhance the quality, connectivity, and accessibility of the Township's abundant recreational and open space facilities and resources to meet current and future demands for infrastructure and programming and to benefit the health and welfare of the entire community.*

## Plan Goals

*Create a sustainable plan for parks, recreation, and open space;*

*Provide equitable access and opportunities to all residents;*

*Preserve cherished Township characteristics and valued natural resources; and*

*Plan for safe multi-modal connections between various Township park, recreation, and open space resources.*

## Plan Objectives

*Survey area residents to determine current perceptions and needs regarding park, recreation, and open space facilities and programs in the Township;*

*Conduct public meetings to gather information, comments, and suggestions from residents, local organizations, and other stakeholders;*

*Inventory existing parks, recreational facilities, preserved open space, trails, schools, private sector recreation providers and other important recreation destinations within the Township;*

*Compare the existing inventory of park facilities with other similarly sized communities;*

*Analyze current active and passive recreational facility use;*

*Suggest ways to enhance existing and planned trails with additional connections to area recreational, employment, residential, shopping, and other destinations;*

*Develop a phased implementation and funding strategy to make the plan a reality; and*

*Create a diverse list of recommendations that promote social, economic and environmental sustainability.*





## Township Profile

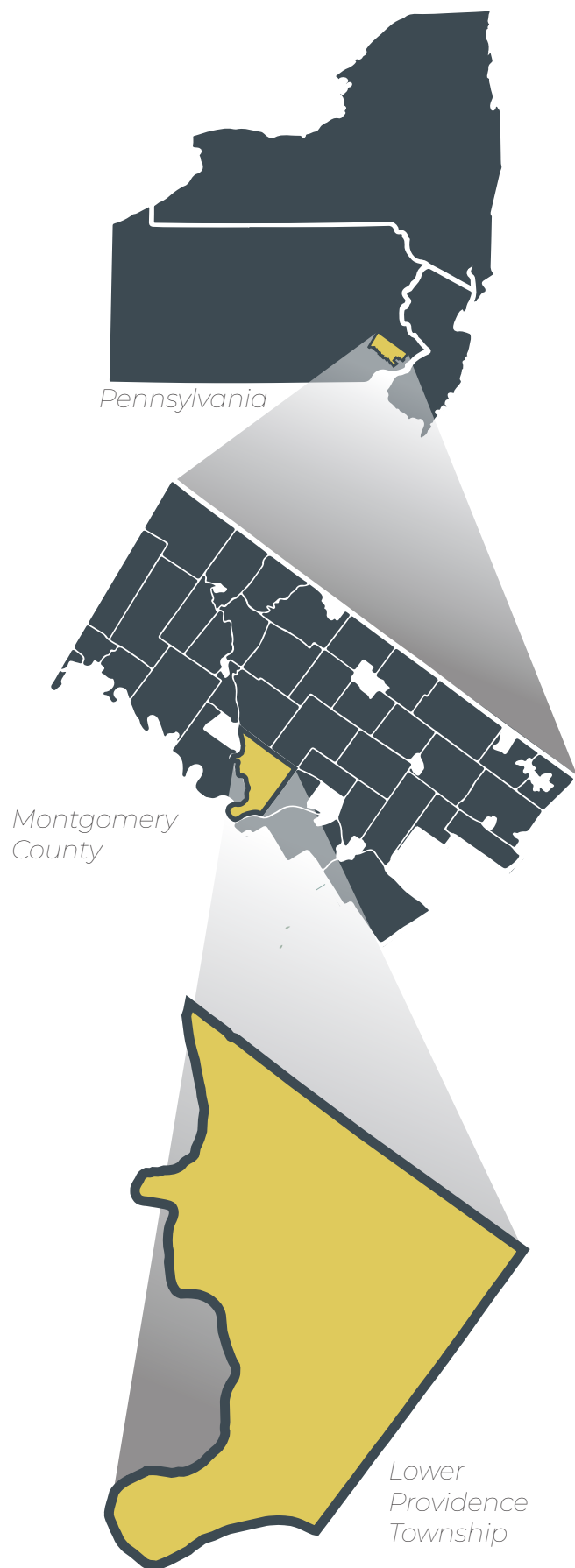
Lower Providence Township is in south-central Montgomery County, at the western border with Chester County. The Township is located approximately 17 miles west/northwest of Philadelphia, and includes areas of Audubon, Collegeville, Eagleville, Evansburg, Trooper, and Yerkes, encompassing 14.77 square miles. Present-day Lower Providence was established on land originally inhabited by the Lenni-Lenape tribe. It then became part of the original lands granted to William Penn and in 1729, the Township of Providence, which included Upper Providence, Lower Providence and the Boroughs of Collegeville and Trappe, was established. Providence Township was split into Upper Providence and Lower Providence in 1805. Today, Lower Providence Township is a growing suburb close to many economic centers and the regional highway network.

Lower Providence is served by the award winning Methacton School District. Schools within Lower Providence Township include Arrowhead Elementary, Eagleville Elementary, Woodland Elementary, and Arcola Middle School.

Lower Providence is governed by a five-member Board of Supervisors. Members are elected at large for six-year staggered terms; positions include Chairman/woman, Vice Chairman/woman, three Supervisors, and one Student Representative. The Board is responsible for appointing the Township Manager, as well as all advisory and regulatory boards.

Residents of Lower Providence Township enjoy a great number of outdoor recreational facilities which include Township parks such as Eagleville Park, Dell Angelo Park, and Francesco A. Mascaro Memorial Field and Community Park; County parks such as the Audubon Wildlife Sanctuary and the Central Perkiomen Valley Park, as well as Evansburg State Park and Valley Forge National Historical Park. Two of Pennsylvania's most significant trails, the Schuylkill River Trail and the Perkiomen Trail, converge in the southwest corner of the Township.





## Regional Context

The regional context map shows the relationship between Lower Providence Township, Montgomery County, and the State of Pennsylvania. The Township is bordered by Collegeville Borough, Perkiomen and Skippack Townships to the north; Worcester and East Norriton Townships to the east; West Norriton and Upper Merion Townships to the South; and Schuylkill Township (Chester County) and Upper Providence Township to the west.

Route 422 runs through the southern portion and immediately to the west of the Township, I-76 runs south of the Township, SR-202 south and west of the Township, and I-476 runs west of the Township.

Lower Providence is in the Schuylkill River Watershed. The Schuylkill River runs along the southern border, and the Perkiomen Creek runs along the western border; the two intersect in the southwest corner of the Township. Skippack Creek runs through the northern portion on the Township, with Eagleville Run and Rock Run serving as tributaries, and outlets into the Perkiomen Creek. Mine Run, another tributary of the Perkiomen, runs through the south-central portion of the Township. Approximately 5 square miles of the Township are within the Perkiomen Watershed.






Photo: Eskie Park

## Lower Providence Township Demographics

The following information focuses on demographics and population information in Lower Providence Township and surrounding municipalities. Demographic and Census data were gathered from the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) and U.S. Census Bureau.

<https://dvrpc.org/webmaps/PopForecast/>

<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>

### *Population and Projections*

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) five-year estimates, Lower Providence Township had a population of 26,187 in 2015, which was an increase of 17.0% from the 2000 Census count. The population in 2020, as projected by DVRPC, is 26,679, which is an increase of 1.9% over the 2015 population estimate. In comparison, Montgomery County experienced a population increase of 9.2% from 2000 to 2015 and is projected to have increased by 2.6% between 2015 and 2020.

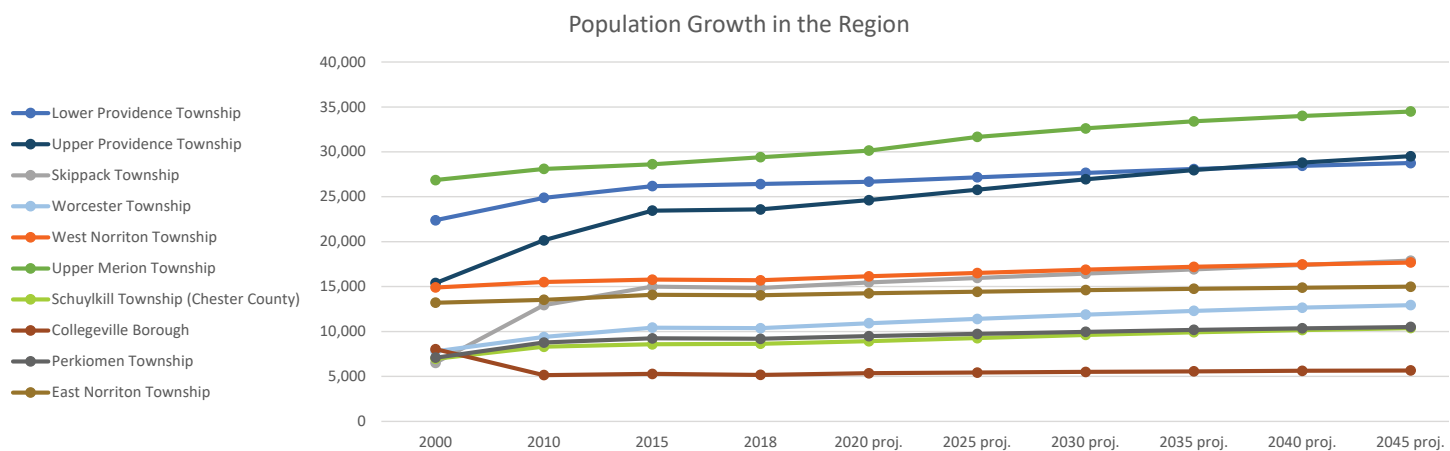
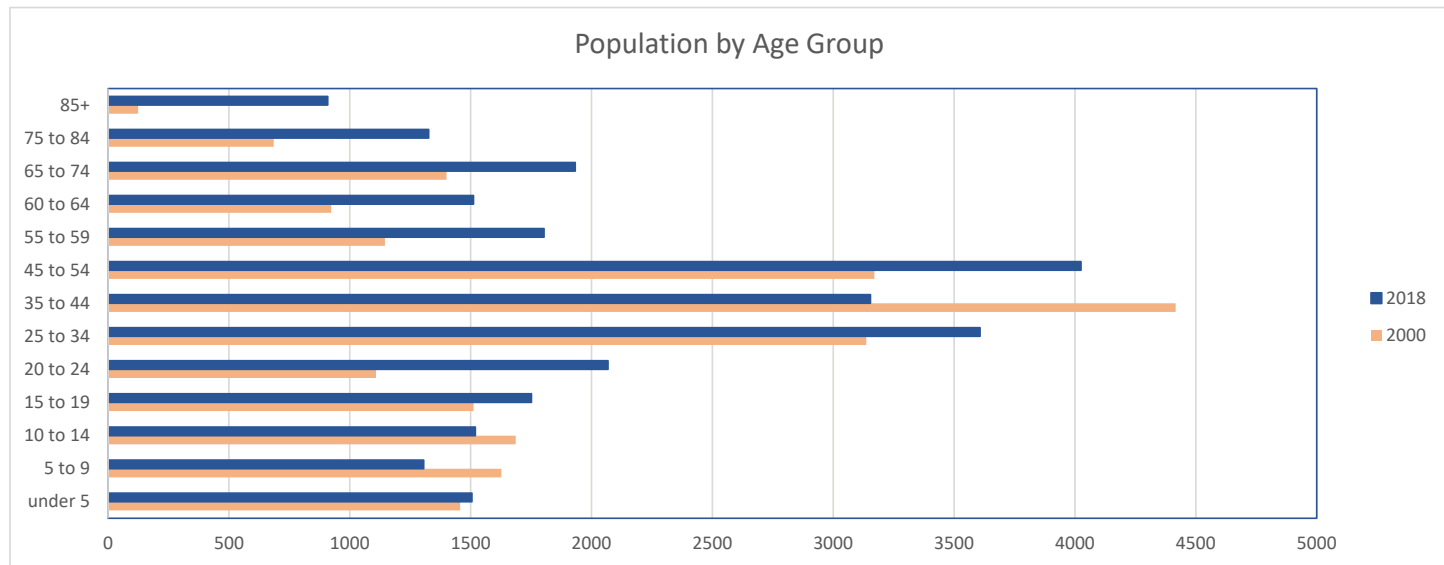
Using the 2018 population estimate of 26,418, and with 14.77 total square miles in the Township, Lower Providence has a population density of 1,789 people per square mile.

The population of Lower Providence is projected by DVRPC to reach 28,448 by 2040. This reflects a 7.7% increase from the 2018 population. In comparison, Montgomery County's population is projected to grow by 11.9 % to 918,918, with the largest numerical increases in population to occur in Lower Merion, Upper Providence, Horsham, Upper Merion, New Hanover, and Limerick Townships.

## Age

The largest age group in the Township is 45-54 year-olds, followed by the 25-34 age cohort. The largest increase of population by age from 2000 to 2018 was in people who are 85 and older, which increased by a notable 632%, most likely due to the development of the continuing care retirement community at Shannondell. Every age cohort from age 45 to 84 increased between 27 and 94%. The population of people aged 35 to 44 decreased by 29%, 25 to 34 increased by 15%, 20 to 24 increased by 87%, 15 to 19 increased by 16%, 10 to 14 decreased by 10%, 5 to 9 decreased by 20%, and under 5 increased by 3%. In 2018, the median age was 39.7, which is lower than the County's median age of 41.3. This demographic information suggests that the population is aging and that this plan needs to account for recreational needs of both older and younger residents.

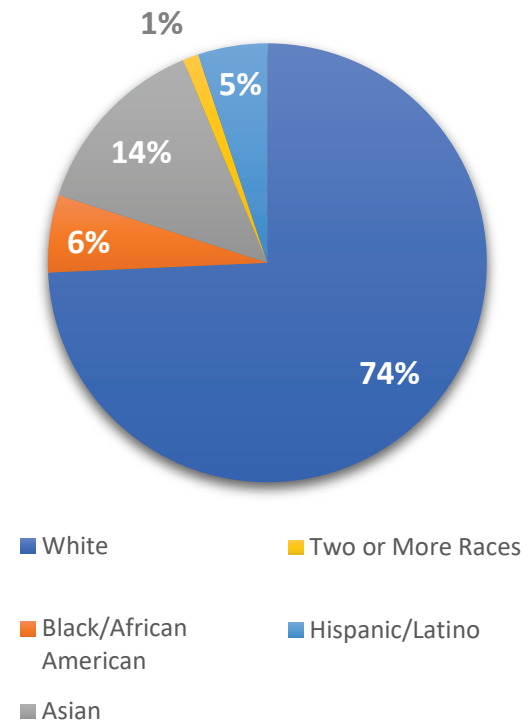
Population by Age Group			
	2000	2018	% of Change
under 5	1456	1505	3%
5 to 9	1627	1306	-20%
10 to 14	1686	1519	-10%
15 to 19	1512	1751	16%
20 to 24	1108	2068	87%
25 to 34	3137	3608	15%
35 to 44	4417	3154	-29%
45 to 54	3170	4025	27%
55 to 59	1145	1803	57%
60 to 64	923	1512	64%
65 to 74	1400	1933	38%
75 to 84	685	1326	94%
85+	124	908	632%
<b>Total Pop.</b>	<b>22390</b>	<b>26418</b>	<b>18%</b>



## Race

While Lower Providence Township and Montgomery County are predominantly white, demographic shifts between 2010 and 2018 in Lower Providence indicate the area is becoming more diverse. Within Lower Providence Township, 74.12% of the population identifies as White. 13.7% identifies as Asian, 5.7% as Black or African American, 5.1% as Hispanic or Latino, and less than 0.1% as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. 0.1% identifies as Some Other Race, and 1.2% of the population identifies as “Two or More Races.”

In Montgomery County, 76.1% identify as White, 8.9% as Black or African American, 7.4% as Asian, 5.0 % as Hispanic or Latino, 0.1% as American Indian or Alaska Native, less than 0.1% as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 0.2% as Some other Race, and 2.2% as Two or More Races.



Race & Ethnicity				
	Lower Providence Township		Montgomery County	
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
Total	26,418	100.0%	821,301	100.0%
White	19,602	74.2%	625,341	76.1%
Black/African American	1506	5.7%	72,945	8.9%
American Indian/Alaska Native	0	0.0%	695	0.1%
Asian	3626	13.7%	61,174	7.4%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	9	0.0%	188	0.0%
Some Other Race	23	0.1%	1,589	0.2%
Two or More Races	305	1.2%	18,207	2.2%
Hispanic/Latino	1,347	5.1%	41,162	5.0%

Lower Providence Racial/Ethnic makeup					
	2010		2018		% change
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent	
Total	24,883		26,418		6.2%
White	20,020	80.5%	19,602	74.2%	-6.3%
Black/African American	1373	5.5%	1506	5.7%	0.2%
American Indian/Alaska Native	40	0.2%	0	0.0%	-0.2%
Asian	2705	10.9%	3626	13.7%	2.9%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0	0.0%	9	0.0%	0.0%
Some Other Race	60	0.2%	23	0.1%	-0.2%
Two or More Races	160	0.6%	305	1.2%	0.5%
Hispanic/Latino	525	2.1%	1,347	5.1%	3.0%



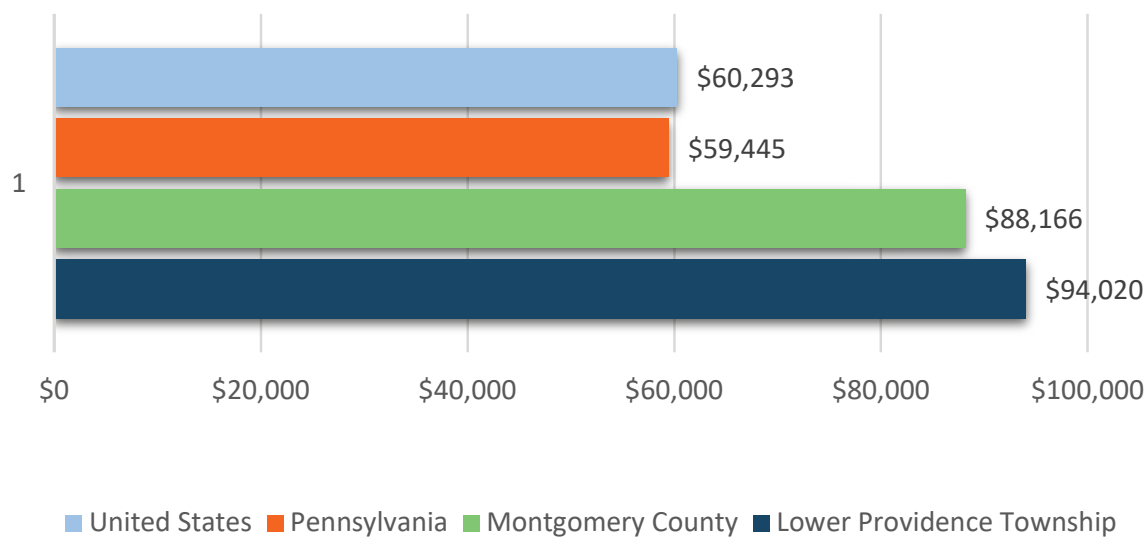
Income

The median household income in Lower Providence was \$94,020 in 2018. This is roughly 6.6% more than the Montgomery County median household income of \$88,166. Montgomery County’s median household income is considerably higher than the state average of \$59,445 and national average of \$60,293.

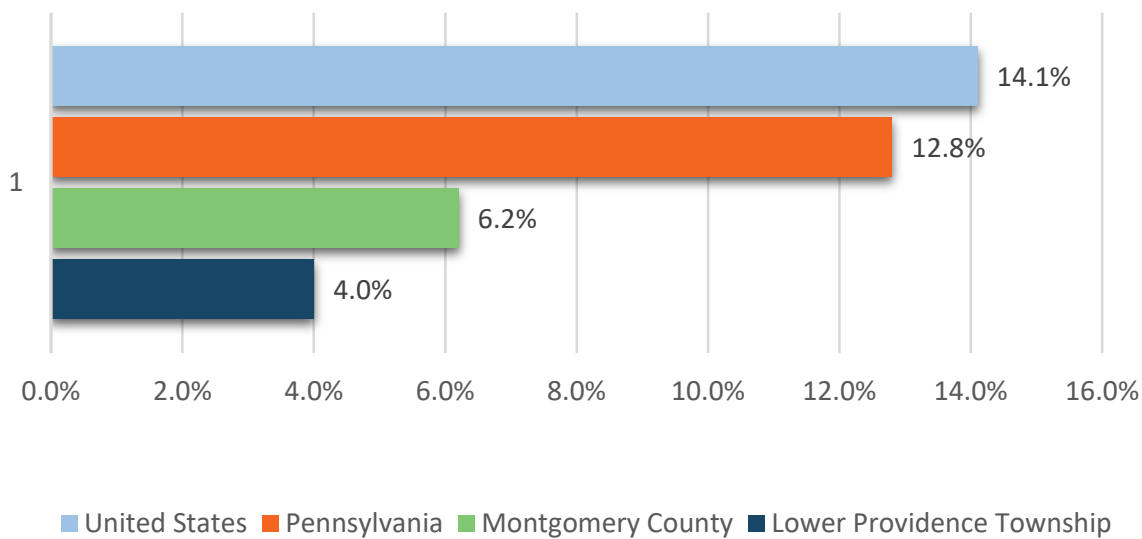
4.0% of the population in Lower Providence lives below the poverty rate, which is defined as lacking enough income or material possessions to meet one’s needs. This is below the percentage in Montgomery County (6.2%) and less than one third of Pennsylvania as a whole (12.8%).

The income demographic information suggests that Township residents are likely to have disposable incomes for recreational purposes and related purchases.

Median Household Income 2018



Poverty Rates 2018

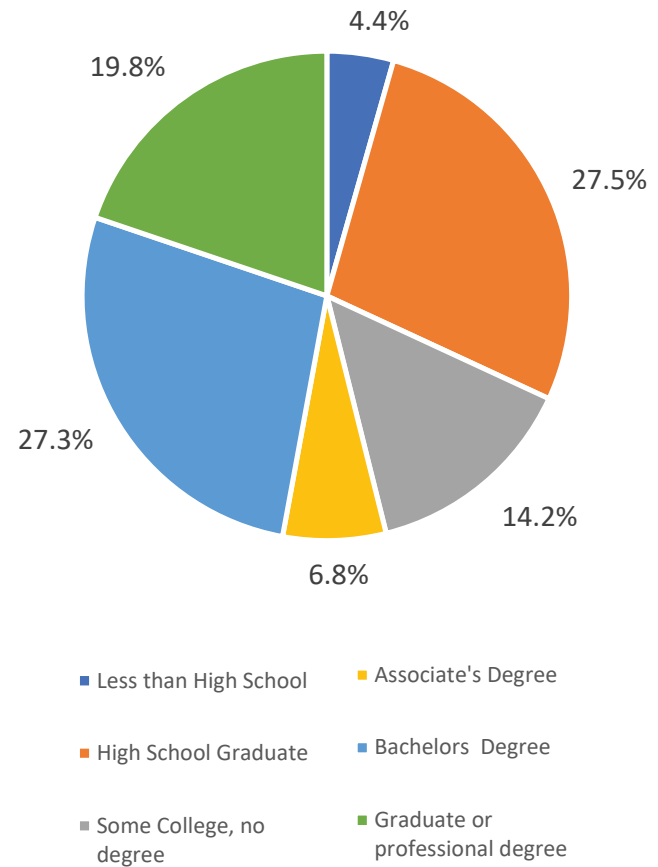


## Education & School Enrollment

The majority of the population within Lower Providence has received some college education, at 68.1%, with 47.1% of the population obtaining a bachelor's degree or higher; these are on with educational attainment rates in surrounding areas. In Montgomery County, 70.4% of the population has had some college education, and 48.8% obtained a bachelor's degree or higher; in Pennsylvania as a whole, 55.0% has had some college education and 30.7% has obtained a bachelor's degree or higher.

In 2018, of the 25,440 residents age 3 or older, 6,093 were enrolled in school. Of those enrolled in school, 9.0% were in nursery or preschool; 3.6% were in kindergarten; 17.3% were grades 1-4; 19.8% were in grades 5-8; 28.1% were in high school; and 14.3% were in college, undergraduate; and 7.8% were in graduate or professional school. According to the PA Department of Education, the Methacton School District is projected to go from 4,764 students in 2018-2019 to 4,242 students by 2028-2029.

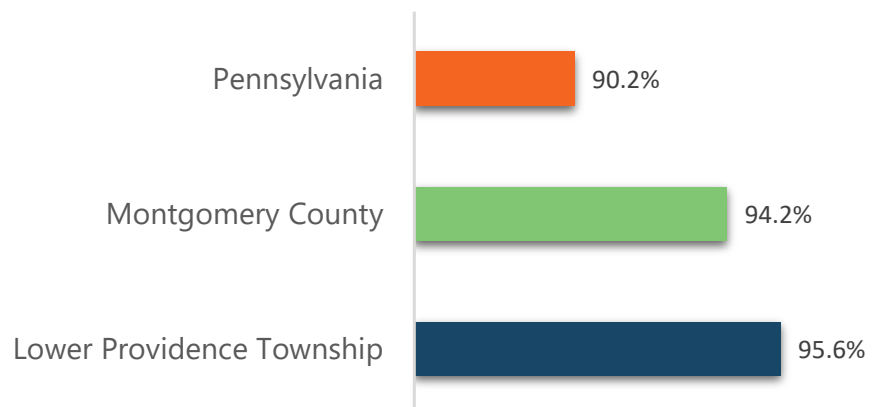
(p. 841 <https://www.education.pa.gov/Documents/Data%20and%20Statistics/Enrollment/Enrollment%20Projections/School%20District%20Enrollment%20Projections.pdf>)



Educational Attainment of Persons Age 25 & Over						
	Less than High School	High School Graduate	Some College, no degree	Associate's Degree	Bachelors Degree	Graduate or professional degree
Lower Providence Township	4.4%	27.5%	14.2%	6.8%	27.3%	19.8%
Montgomery County	5.8%	23.8%	14.6%	7.0%	27.4%	21.4%
Pennsylvania	9.8%	35.1%	16.0%	8.3%	18.6%	12.1%

## High School Graduate or Higher

■ Lower Providence Township ■ Montgomery County ■ Pennsylvania





School Enrollment Population 3 Years and Older				
	Lower Providence Township		Montgomery County	
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
Total (3 years and older)	25,440		794,910	
Enrolled in a school	6,093	100.0%	201,938	100.0%
Nursery school/preschool	551	9.0%	15,788	7.8%
Kindergarten	221	3.6%	8,681	4.3%
Grade 1 - 4	1055	17.3%	40790	20.2%
Grade 5 - 8	1207	19.8%	41,022	20.3%
Grade 9 - 12	1711	28.1%	43655	21.6%
College, undergraduate	870	14.3%	37,613	18.6%
Graduate or professional school	478	7.8%	14,389	7.1%
Not enrolled in school	19,347	317.5%	592,972	293.6%

