

CHARACTER AREA 2: BIRCH STREET

Figure CA2-1: Character Area / Land Use

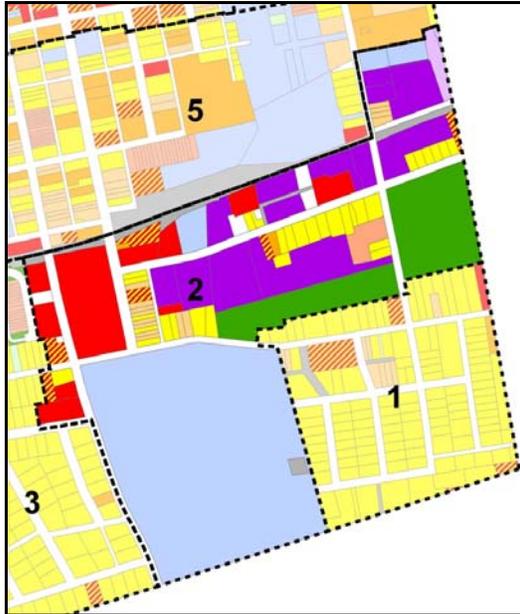


Figure CA2-2: Character Area / Aerial Photo



INVENTORY

LOCATION AND RELATIONSHIP WITH NEIGHBORING AREAS

- **Location** – Character Area 2 lies in the southeastern section of the Borough and is generally bordered by Union Street to the west, Kennett Township to the east, the railroad tracks to the north, and the Red Clay Creek and Kennett Township to the south.
- **Edges:**
 - North* – A majority of the northern border is defined by the railroad tracks, however in the easternmost portion there are industrial uses adjacent to residential uses in CA-5.
 - East* - The eastern border is adjacent to similar uses in Kennett Township that are appropriately zoned as light industrial.
 - South* - The southern border is the Red Clay Creek for the eastern portion and the Kennett Township line south of the school, which is primarily a residential area.
 - West* - The western border consists of smaller commercial uses backing onto townhomes and the Stenning Hills neighborhood in CA-3.
- **Impacts** – There is potential for future development or redevelopment, particularly along the north side of Birch Street between Broad and Walnut streets. The density of buildings could be higher to maximize the uses in this area and the setbacks of the existing structures are larger than what would be ideal. The positioning of the structures in this area could be more effective to maximize

the use of the land. Because there is a mix of residential and office, industrial, and commercial uses both within this area and at the edges, the potential conflicts between these uses must be carefully weighed.

EXISTING LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT PATTERN

- Uses** – Roughly seventy percent of the area is composed of commercial, industrial, and institutional uses. Commercial and industrial uses include a range of uses from the large Genesis office building on Union Street to a propane business, a storage facility, and office uses along Birch Street. Pockets of residential uses include twins and single family detached dwellings on the east side of south Broad Street and single family detached units on the north side of South Street, the south side of Birch Street west of Walnut Street, and the north side of Birch Street east of Walnut Street. The residential units, although older structures, all appear to be in reasonable repair; there is no indication of neglect. The Kennett Area Senior Center is an important institutional use within this area along the east side of Walnut Street just north of the railroad. The Kennett High School along the southern border of the Borough is the largest single land use within this character area. Finally, two recreational parcels are located within the area. The Kennett Community Park and outdoor pool run by the YMCA provides for both an active (warm weather) recreation facility in addition to a playground and picnic area adjacent to the Red Clay Creek. The Red Clay Creek trail begins at the parking lot for the pool and follows the creek west through the park and the adjacent industrial parcel before meeting up with Birch Street. The soccer fields at the southeastern corner of Walnut and Birch streets and owned by the school district provides both active recreation as well as open space and a buffer/natural area along the Red Clay Creek. See Figure CA2-3 for data on existing land use.

Figure CA2-3: CA-2 EXISTING LAND USE INVENTORY, 2010

Land Use Category	# Parcels	Acres	% of Parcels	% of Area
Residential:	48	8.3	48%	8.4%
<i>Single-family residential</i>	31	5.6	31%	5.7%
<i>Two-family residential</i>	14	1.5	14%	1.5%
<i>Townhouses/Row homes</i>	1	1	1%	1%
<i>Apartments</i>	2	0.2	2%	0.2%
Mixed Use	7	1.8	7%	1.8%
Commercial	10	9.9	10%	10.1%
Industrial	13	16.7	13%	17%
Institutional	4	36.9	4%	37.5%
Mushroom	2	0.8	2%	0.8%
Agriculture	-	-	-	-
Parks/Recreation	2	11.7	2%	11.9%
Vacant Land	7	1.4	7%	1.4%
Utilities/RR/Transportation*	6	10.9	6%	11.1%
TOTAL	99	98.4	100%	100.0%

Source: Chester County Planning Commission, 2010.

* ROW Total includes all roadways and paper roadways

Railroad parcels are shared with CA-5

- **Lot Size** – Lots range in size from about 3,500 sq.ft. for residential twins to 7.7 acres for the soccer fields and 35 acres for Kennett High School. Residential lots on Birch Street are around 11,000 sq.ft. while commercial and industrial parcels are one-half acre to roughly four acres in size.
- **Sewer/Water** – This area is served by public sewer and water.
- **Stormwater** – This area is served by the Borough stormwater collection system.

ZONING

This planning area is comprised of four zoning districts. OI-1 (Office and Industrial) predominates the center of the area along Birch Street and the east side of South Union Street. C-2 Commercial exists along the west side of Union Street. R-3/PAO (Med. Density Residential/Professional Office) occurs on the east side of South Broad Street and along the northeastern corner of this character area. Lastly, the R-3 Residential includes the school and existing residential uses on Birch Street west of Walnut Street. See Figure 4-3 on page 4-8 for the Borough Zoning Map.

R-3 Residential

The R-3 District is a residential zoning district located along south Birch Street, the school property, and at the northeast corner of Broad and Birch Street. The minimum lot size and front yard setback in this district is 2,000 square feet and 20 feet. The majority of the uses and building setbacks in this area appear to be in conformity with the requirements of the district. See Figure 4-5.

- **Nonconforming Uses** – There are a few nonconforming uses in this area including the restaurant/inn on the northeast corner Broad and Birch Street.
- **Nonconforming Lot Size** – The lots in this area are generally consistent with zoning requirements.

R-3/PAO

The R-3 Residential/Professional Office District is a residential zoning district that also provides for small scale offices to serve the needs of local residential uses and generate a mixed use landscape. This area is located along the east side of South Broad Street between Birch Street and South Street as well as the northeastern edge of the character area. The minimum lot size and front yard setback in this district is 3,500 square feet and 20 feet. The majority of uses and building setbacks in this area appear to be in conformity with the requirements of the district.

- **Nonconforming Uses** – There does not appear to be any nonconforming uses in this area.
- **Nonconforming Lot Size** – The lots in this area are generally consistent with zoning requirements.

C-2 Commercial

The C-2 District is a commercial zoning district that also allows for residential uses. This area is located along the west side of south Union Street and includes small commercial uses to serve local residents such as a car wash, gas station (Land Hope), and a few small stores. The minimum lot size and front yard setback in this district is 5,000 square feet and 10 feet. The uses and building setbacks in this district appear to be in conformity with the requirements of the district.

- **Nonconforming Uses** – There are no nonconforming uses in this area.
- **Nonconforming Lot Size** – The lots in this area are generally consistent with zoning requirements.

OI-1 Office/Industrial

The OI-1 Office/Industrial District is an industrial zoning district that also provides for commercial and office uses. This area comprises the center of the character area along Birch and Walnut Streets in addition to the block bordered by the railroad and South, Union, and Broad Streets. A wide range of uses exist in this area from the large Genesis office, warehouses, propane distributors, and office uses. The minimum lot size and front yard setback in this district is 20,000 square feet and 40 feet. Setback non-conformities can have a greater impact on this area, since they can preclude typical additions or other modifications to structures in addition to compromising the continuity of the streetscape. The uses and building setbacks in this area appear to be in conformity with the requirements of the district.

- **Nonconforming Uses** – The single family residential dwellings along South Street east of Broad Street and on Birch Street east of Walnut Street are non-conforming, otherwise the remainder of uses appear to be conforming.
- **Nonconforming Lot Size** – The lots in this area are generally consistent with zoning requirements. However, the residential uses within the OI-1 district are nonconforming in terms of minimum lot size.

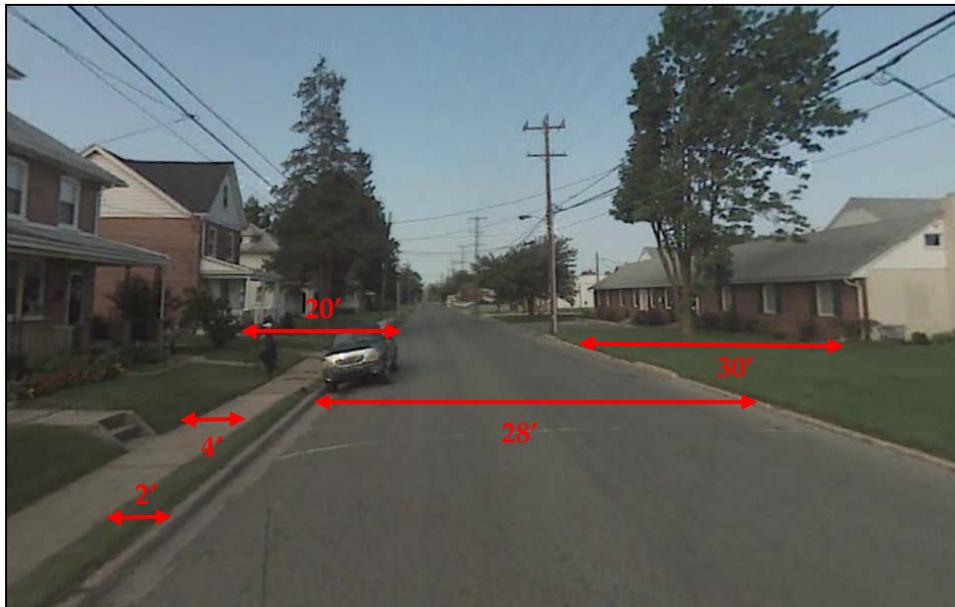
EXISTING NATURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES AND RECREATION

- **Natural** – This planning area lies within the Red Clay Creek watershed and the East Branch of the Red Clay Creek runs directly through the area. There is little terrain change within the area, some woodlands exist along the stream corridor, but there are few other natural features. This area is underlain by the Cockeysville Marble geologic formation. The area is generally a built-out environment.
- **Historic** – The Borough’s National Register Historic District encompasses the western end of the area with the western boundary being Union Street and including the school, properties along Broad Street and Church Alley east of Broad Street, and about half of the properties along the north side of Birch Street.
- **Recreation** – The Kennett YMCA pool and Kennett Community Park are located on the north side of the creek with the pool entrance on Walnut Street and an additional access to the park from South Street. The park includes basketball courts, pavilions, and the Red Clay Creek Trail connecting from the parking lot along the creek to Birch Street through the adjacent industrial parcel. Immediately east of the YMCA pool across Walnut Street are the schools’ soccer fields and also some open space/wetlands adjacent to the north side of the creek.

EXISTING CIRCULATION AND ACCESS

- **Roadway Access** – Birch Street and Broad Street are minor collector roadways. Walnut Street is a major collector providing access to Cypress Street and State Street (Baltimore Pike) leading to US 1, the major roadway throughout southern Chester County. US 1 connects to Route 202 further to the east providing access to the West Chester and Wilmington areas, in addition to US 1 heading straight into Philadelphia. Union Street is an arterial street and is the main north/south street through the Borough, heading south towards Routes 41 and 7, both major regional roads, and north to US 1. Figure CA2-4 represents an example of existing conditions for local streets in this area. See Figure 7-14 in Chapter 7 for roadway functional classification.

Figure CA2-4: Birch Street Existing Conditions



- **Pedestrian Access** – This area has fairly good pedestrian access with most of the streets having sidewalks along at least one side of the street. There are particular areas such as Birch Street and a few other gaps that should be addressed to provide a complete sidewalk network.

POTENTIAL FOR CHANGE/DEVELOPMENT

This area is primarily built out, however there is potential for infill development and redevelopment particularly along Birch Street.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CA-2

*Note: Cross references to recommendations in other chapters are provided for more information.

FUTURE LAND USE AND ZONING CHANGES

- CA2-1 OI-1 Zoning.** Investigate modifications to the OI-1 District zoning district, particularly in terms of the permitted uses, building height, minimum lot size, front yard, and side yard setbacks. The minimum lot size could be reduced to provide more opportunity for infill development and consideration should be given to reducing the front yard setbacks. Rezoning using form based codes or TND as described below in recommendation CA2-2 should receive additional consideration. Consideration should be given to removing Cluster Development Option as a conditional use in the OI-1 District as a potentially inappropriate use and development type for the intent of this district and contrary to the land use plan for this area.
- CA2-2 Form Based Codes/TND.** Consider applying Form Based Zoning to the Birch Street Corridor to facilitate redevelopment and guide development to produce an area that is more pedestrian friendly and incorporates a fabric that is more in-line with the Borough’s character than the current “industrial park” aesthetic. As an alternative to Form Based Zoning, Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND as permitted by Section 7A of the PA Municipalities Planning Code) could be developed as a base zoning district or an overlay to promote a more urban and pedestrian character. Smaller front yard setbacks, increased building height, requiring parking to be to the side or rear of structures, sidewalks, and an upgraded streetscape are all elements that should be considered. *See Figure CA2-5 and CA2-6 on page CA2-10, below. See recommendation ED-3 and ED-7 in Chapter 6, and EC-5, EC-20, and EC-25 in Chapter 12.*
- CA2-3 Institutional Use Provisions.** Review the specific provisions for Institutional uses in Section 23-29(c)(19)(C), particularly in terms of impervious surface requirements that appear to limit these use. The Borough should consider more specific provisions for senior housing to be added to the OI-I, or into revisions using Form Based Codes or TND. Senior housing options should be considered as a redevelopment opportunity within the CA-2 character area. *See recommendation H-5 and H-18 in Chapter 5 and ED-8 and ED-9 in Chapter 6.*
- CA2-4 Streetscaping.** Birch Street lacks appropriate sidewalks and pedestrian amenities in addition to aesthetic amenities such as street trees. The Borough has initiated planning and engineering for streetscaping improvements, however funding for the improvements has not been secured. Streetscaping improvements should be included in the Borough subdivision ordinance so that if and when redevelopment occurs, appropriate infrastructure is included with any new development. In addition, the Borough should pursue funding for streetscaping improvements along Birch Street to improve the potential for infill and redevelopment. Streetscaping should include curbing, sidewalks, crosswalks, street

lighting, and street trees at a minimum, with benches, bike racks, and other similar amenities as further consideration. *See recommendation ED-5 in Chapter 6, and T-25, T-30, T-31, T-32, T-34, and Figure 7-13 in Chapter 7.*

NATURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES AND RECREATION

- CA2-5 Natural, Creek (Riparian Buffer).** Facilitate the protection of the Red Clay Creek by adopting a stream overlay or “riparian buffer” requirement with a minimum of at least ten (10) feet. The buffer could be established either through not mowing the buffer or through various cost effective means of installing buffers including grants, volunteer organizations (e.g. Boy Scouts), or programs such as Treevitalize. *See Chapter 10, Natural Resource Plan, for more information. See recommendation NR-8, NR-9, NR-21, and Figure 10-4 in Chapter 10.*
- CA2-6 Natural, Geology.** Consider ordinance provisions to protect the underlying Cockeysville Marble formation. Because this formation is susceptible to contributing to groundwater contamination and this area is industrial in nature, measures should be taken to evaluate if any contamination has indeed occurred and to prevent this possibility in the future. *See Chapter 10: Natural Resources for more information. See recommendation NR-1 and Figure 10-4 in Chapter 10.*
- CA2-7 Natural, Stormwater.** Consider ordinances or programs to replace, remove, or modify existing stormwater runoff pipes that flow directly into the creek. Instead of directly flowing into the creek dispersion boxes, riprap, or other methods should be used to help slow and filter stormwater runoff before it enters the stream. *See Chapter 8, Community Facilities and Services and Chapter 10, Natural Resources for more information. See recommendation CF 13-15 in Chapter 8, NR-16, NR-18, NR-19, and NR-20 in Chapter 10, and PR-33 in Chapter 11.*
- CA2-8 Natural, Floodplain.** The areas adjacent to the Red Clay Creek are within the Floodplain zoning overlay. Location within the floodplain is of consequence particularly for industrial uses along Birch Street. The Borough should monitor both existing and future industrial development to ensure compliance with floodplain district regulations, particularly relating to the storage of materials and chemicals that could cause contamination in a flood situation. The use of pervious pavement, reductions in impervious coverage, drainage swales to capture particulate matter, riparian buffers, and other best practices should be considered to reduce stormwater runoff and water quality in the Red Clay Creek. The Red Clay Creek is listed as an impaired stream and efforts should be made to improve the stream’s quality. *See Chapter 10, Natural Resources for more information on Floodplains. See recommendation NR-18, NR-20, and Figure 10-11 in Chapter 10, and PR-33 in Chapter 11.*
- CA2-9 Natural, Open Space.** Protect the open space area adjacent to the stream east of Walnut Street and maintain the riparian buffer. *See Chapter 10, Natural Resources and Chapter 11, Parks, Recreation, and Open Space for more information.*

- CA2-10 Natural, Street Trees.** Plant and maintain street trees along streets where they are not currently located, particularly Birch Street. Street trees provide positive aesthetics in addition to environmental benefits. *See recommendation T-31 and Figure 7-13 in Chapter 7, NR-10 in Chapter 10, and EC-14 in Chapter 12.*
- CA2-11 Historic.** The Borough and property owners should continue to work to preserve the locally significant historic resources in this planning area. Property owners within the Historic District should be made aware of the opportunity to use historic tax credits as a means to improve, protect, and restore their properties. *See Chapter 9: Historic Resources for more information. See recommendation HR-15 in Chapter 9.*
- CA2-12 Recreation, Trail.** Continue to improve the trail along the creek and install trailheads, signs, and markers to promote the trail's use and increase its usability. Determine a means to connect the "southern" end of the trail within this area to the "northern" end across the railroad tracks to complete an interconnected trail through the Borough and to the adjacent municipalities. *See Chapter 7, Transportation and Chapter 11, Parks, Recreation, and Open Space for more information. See recommendation T-23, T-25, and Figure 7-13 in Chapter 7, PR-26 and Figure 11-3 in Chapter 11, and EC-19 In Chapter 12.*

CIRCULATION AND ACCESS

- CA2-13 Traffic Calming.** Traffic calming and streetscaping improvements should be made along the roadways within this area as appropriate. While mid-block traffic calming may not be appropriate due to potential interference with the commercial traffic, if the trail connection is made between the north and south ends of the trail across the railroad tracks, some traffic calming may be necessary to increase safety for trail users to cross Birch Street. *See recommendation T-16 and T-18 on page 7-22.*
- CA2-14 Pedestrian Access.** Complete an interconnected system of sidewalks throughout the area. A focused effort should be made to connect the sections of the Red Clay Creek across the railroad as mentioned in recommendation CA2-8, above. Sidewalks should be installed on both sides of Birch Street to create a complete network due to the amount of traffic and particularly the number of trucks and other commercial vehicles. A crosswalk for the Red Clay Creek Trail should also be located on Birch Street near the bridge over the creek (See Map 7-7). Walnut Street in the vicinity of the railroad should be improved by the installation of and improvements to sidewalks. The Walnut Street bridge over the Red Clay Creek should include sidewalks or a walkway to connect existing sidewalks to either side of the bridge. A crosswalk should be installed to provide a safe and clear connection between the High School and the Kennett Community Park along South Street (See Map 7-7). Finally, the Red Clay Creek trail should be continued east of Walnut Street into Kennett Township. *See Chapter 7, Transportation and Chapter 11, Parks, Recreation, and Open Space for more information. See recommendation H-19 in Chapter 9, T-21, T-22, T-23, T-24, T-25, and Figure 7-13 in Chapter 7, PR-11, PR-26, Figure 11-3, and Figure 11-8 in Chapter 7, and EC-19 in Chapter 12.*

- CA2-15 Intersections.** Consider improvements at intersections to increase safety for both vehicular and pedestrian traffic. In particular, improvements to the intersection of Union and South Street should be considered. *See Chapter 7: Transportation for more information. See recommendation T-4 and T-28 in Chapter 7.*

SUGGESTED FUTURE PLANS AND PROJECTS

- CA2-16 Future Planning Efforts, Birch Street.** Consider focused planning efforts on the Birch Street area to provide more specific direction and details in terms of zoning changes such as setbacks, building height, and uses, in addition to design guidelines and infrastructure improvements such as sidewalks, traffic calming, street trees and streetscapes. TCDI and PCTI grants are two available sources of funding for planning projects. *See recommendation CA2-2, above, and EC-5 and EC-20 in Chapter 12.*
- CA2-17 Future Planning Efforts, Ways Lane.** Continued communication and coordination with Kennett Township in regard to the “Ways Lane” area to the east of the Borough border is necessary both to remain aware of how development in that area may affect the Borough in addition to coordination on improvements to Ways Lane and effect on Birch and Walnut Street. Consider a planning effort in coordination with Kennett Township in regard to Ways Lane and the adjacent area within Kennett Township. Kennett Township began an update to the Township Comprehensive Plan in April 2012, the Borough should remain aware of this and other planning efforts in Kennett Township. *See recommendation ED-9 in Chapter 6.*

CONCEPTS

The following images in Figure CA2-5 and Figure CA2-6 were created in ESRI ArcScene to depict existing conditions and an example of potential future development on the Birch Street corridor that includes items such as infill development, street trees, and sidewalks.

Figure CA2-5: Birch Street Existing Conditions



Figure CA2-6: Birch Street Potential Improvements

