

Nittany Hills & Penfield

The Nittany Hills and Penfield neighborhoods make up the southeastern edge of the Borough. Residents of this area describe their neighborhood as quiet and orderly. These neighborhood areas feature a mix of small, single-family homes, duplexes, and larger homes in residential subdivisions characteristic of 1990s and 2000s residential development. Situated high upon a hill overlooking the commercial development along South Atherton, Centre Hills Golf Course and views of Mount Nittany, this neighborhood is at one of the highest elevations in the Borough. These areas are somewhat quiet and tucked away; there are no through streets and access is limited to a few intersections with University Drive and Branch Road in College Township.

These neighborhood areas were studied in conjunction with the State College South neighborhood plan from the mid-1990s. However, these areas are not currently represented

by a neighborhood or homeowners association.



Neighborhood Characteristics

The population of this area according to the 2010 Census was 353 residents. This represents 0.8% of the total population of the Borough. The age of residents is well-balanced, with each significant age group making up roughly an equal part of the neighborhood's population. 30% of the neighborhood's population is between 25-44 and another 32% is between 45-64. Within 39 of the neighborhood's housing units reside families with children that are of school age. Of the neighborhood's 151 Occupied Housing Units, 68% are owner-occupied and 32% are renter-occupied.

The Nittany Hills/Penfield area is the one of only a few Borough neighborhoods in which a majority of the housing stock in the neighborhood is maintained as owner-occupied. According to the Borough's Registered Student Home list in December of 2013, there were just **XX single-family homes or duplexes with student home permits in the neighborhood, which represents only X% of the neighborhood's housing**



stock. Housing units have increased by only X since 1990.

Land use for this area was historically wooded; despite the neighborhood's use as a single-family, owner-occupied neighborhood, it still maintains much of its natural features. In fact, a report from the Pennsylvania State Department of Conservation and Natural Resource's Forestry Division indicated that the neighborhood is part of the State College Southeast tree management area, which maintains approximately 50% of its land area with mature tree cover.

These neighborhood areas are surrounded by the most land use types of any of the Borough's neighborhoods.

Nittany Hills & Penfield by the Numbers

Population (2010)	353
% of Borough	0.8%
Age of Residents (2010)	
Under 18	15.6%
18-24	8%
25-34	17%
35-44	13.3%
45-64	32%
65 & up	16.1%
Occupied Housing Units (2010)	151
Owner-Occupied	68.2%
Renter-Occupied	31.8%
Increase in Units since 1994	X%
Registered Student Homes (2013)	X

Neighborhood SWOT Analysis

Further north along University Drive are Lederer and Walnut Springs Parks, which are forested preservation areas with hiking paths and other recreational amenities. Additionally, these areas are bordered by the Centre Hills Country Club golf courses, Slab Cabin Run drainage areas and the Kissinger Meadows wetland. Across University Drive is a well-established single-family neighborhood. To the southwest along University Drive are a series of churches and other commercial uses, and along South Atherton Street is a dense mix of commercial activities. According to the Centre Region Planning Agency's Growth Forecast Map for 2009-2040 the neighborhood is essentially built out; only a few opportunities for the construction of new single-family homes on vacant lots were identified.

Traffic and transportation impacts, such as illegal parking and speeding, in the neighborhood are limited due to the lack of any through streets and overnight parking restrictions. There are some congestion issues experienced by residents traveling into or out of the neighborhood at peak times of day when traffic is heavy on University Drive. Due to the limited connectivity of the neighborhood to other areas of the Borough, there are no bus or bike routes that run through the neighborhood. Residents do have access CATA bus routes that utilize University Drive and the nearby bike route connect to downtown and campus runs north along Garner Street and to the neighboring commercial amenities along South Atherton.

Residents of the Nittany Hills and Penfield neighborhoods participated in a SWOT Analysis along with residents of the Vallamont Neighborhood. Many of the characteristics of these neighborhoods as identified by residents were similar. This analysis does include those comments that were unique to Nittany Hills and Penfield residents.

Strengths

Residents of these neighborhood areas feel that they live in a quiet and orderly place with beautiful views of the surrounding natural areas. Residents enjoy a close proximity to both SCASD public schools as well as Penn State's campus. They feel that the numerous parks in the area are strengths and appreciate their rustic, natural quality of Lederer Park as compared to other Borough parks.

Weaknesses

Many of the weakness identified by the neighborhood residents were centered around University Drive. Some residents feel that University Drive is an important gateway in our community, connecting the University athletic facilities with other parts of State College, and its aesthetic appeal does not reflect its importance or the same level of design that other community gateways do. Additionally, where there are street lights, some trees and vegetation block the view. Special event traffic, rush hour, and changes to traffic patterns during construction make it difficult to exit onto University Drive from some of the neighborhoods' streets. Some residents feel that the rentals on University Drive and Royal Circle have problems with over-occupancy. Some residents feel that it is a weakness that the neighborhood is not served by natural gas.

Opportunities

Residents from these neighborhoods felt that there was an opportunity to enhance University Drive as a gateway in State College by adding plantings, signage, and lighting that will make the corridor more safe and aesthetically pleasing. Additional improvements suggested for University Drive included: addressing traffic issues during construction and special events to make access to the neighborhood less problematic and installing traffic mirrors at intersections with University Drive where visibility is limited for cars turning out of the neighborhood.

Threats

Residents of these areas felt that there were several threats that could impact quality of life in the neighborhood.



One threat dealt with the conversion of homes to rental properties, poor maintenance of those rental properties, and absentee landlords that do not oversee conditions of and behavior within the rentals. Residents also felt that recent or future developments in College Township could threaten neighborhood quality of life. For example, lights from banks and gas stations on South Atherton cause light pollution in the neighborhood. Additionally the neighborhood is surrounded by the Centre Hills Golf Course and the proposed educational center for the Kissinger Meadows. Residents feel that it would be a threat if any of these areas were sold and developed for uses other than nature and recreation.

SWOT at a Glance

- + Quiet, orderly, beautiful views of surrounding areas
- + Proximity to campus, schools, parks, access to bus routes
- Traffic on University Drive impacts exiting neighborhood
- No natural gas service
- Rental management on University Drive and Royal Court
- Address traffic, pedestrian crossings on University Drive
- Make University Drive look like an important gateway
- ✗ Existing or new developments in College Township
- ✗ Loss of Centre Hills Golf Course or Kissinger Meadows
- ✗ More rentals with absentee landlords