

Comprehensive Recreation, Parks,  
Open Space, and Greenways Plan



Bethel, Marion and Tulpehocken Townships

Berks County, PA  
June 2020



# Comprehensive Recreation, Park, Open Space, and Greenways Plan

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June 2020

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# Comprehensive Recreation, Park, Open Space, and Greenways Plan

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# Chapter 1 - Introduction

## Plan Purpose

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Bethel, Marion, and Tulpehocken Townships decided to prepare a joint Comprehensive Recreation, Park, Open Space, and Greenways Plan to define future actions for providing recreation facilities, parkland, trails, greenways, and recreation programs over the next 10 years. The Plan builds upon the existing framework of parks and recreation services with recommendations that target enhancements desired by residents and needed in the three Townships.

The Plan provides a guide to the decisions the Townships will make concerning parks, trails and greenways, recreation facilities, financing, recreation programming, management, open space preservation, and related planning efforts. The Plan sets direction for decisions but supports flexibility as trends, resources, and opportunities change.

This Comprehensive Recreation, Park, Open Space, and Greenways Plan is a powerful tool in the three Townships' efforts to continually build and support quality parks and recreation systems. This Plan serves as a valuable resource in the following ways:

**A Guideline for the Future** – The vision and recommendations presented in this document offer a clear direction for planning of future parks and recreation initiatives. The wide scope and range of strategies assist in realistic planning for implementation of the Plan and assist in setting financial goals and the appropriate allocation of municipal financial support. The Plan should be reviewed annually, prior to budget season, with Township funding for parks and recreation based on its recommendations. As the Plan is implemented, residents can look forward to an exciting future in which recreation facilities are added and renewed, community recreation programs are offered, connection with the natural environment is strengthened, and parks are safe for everyone.

**A Public Relations Tool** – This Plan offers accessible and understandable information for the public and urges involvement of park users, community groups, neighbors, and other stakeholders in the Township parks and recreation systems. Ongoing communication of the benefits of parks and recreation is a critical piece of success for this Plan. Public support of and advocacy for the Township parks and recreation systems will allow for continued investment of financial resources.

**A Living Document** – The Plan provides a solid foundation to base local planning and management decisions regarding parks and recreation. Key components can be used by the municipalities to garner support for proposed projects or future funding assistance from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, federal grant programs, local businesses, and foundations.

## The Planning Process

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The planning process began in early 2019 and had six major components:

- A resident outreach and engagement process including Study Committee meetings, two public meetings, stakeholder interviews, on-line opinion survey, and focus group meetings with youth sports providers and Township elected officials
- Inventory and assessment of existing park areas, trails, recreation facilities, recreation programs, governance, financing, personnel, and maintenance operations
- Analysis to identify strengths, challenges, and opportunities for improvement of the parks and recreation systems
- A vision statement to provide strategic direction for the parks and recreation systems
- Recommendations which reflect community values captured from the public engagement process, evaluation of current conditions, analysis of existing facilities and programs, and consideration of trends
- Action plan with time frames over the short-, medium-, and long-term through 2030 to address the Plan’s recommendations

## The Benefits of Parks and Recreation

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For the most part, when people think of parks and recreation, they envision playgrounds, swimming pools, sports leagues, and summer camps, but parks and recreation is so much more. Parks are a home base, a refuge, a place to gather with friends and family.

Local parks and recreation services are at the core of what defines a healthy, prosperous and connected community. Demographic, societal and technological changes have heightened the need for the many benefits of parks and recreation; namely, being an important contributor to health and wellness, providing communal places where people of all ages and social strata can interact with each other, and providing places that protect and preserve high-priority conservation areas. In addition, unlike virtually every other form of recreation, access to local parks is not subject to high entrance fees or other qualifications.

Local parks deliver opportunities for play and physical activities, promote mental and spiritual well-being, provide a sense of place and a gathering space, and are the heart of a community. Public parks and recreation amenities have a distinct value in the way they build community identity, cohesion, and pride.

### RESIDENTS BENEFIT FROM PARKS, RECREATION FACILITIES, TRAILS, AND RECREATION PROGRAMS. THESE BENEFITS TAKE MANY DIFFERENT FORMS, INCLUDING:

- *Personal benefits — exercise, health, relaxation, fun, entertainment, enjoying being outdoors*
- *Environmental benefits — nature, aesthetics, fresh air, open space, wildlife*
- *Social benefits — sense of community, family-time togetherness, a safe place to take children, a place to meet people*
- *Economic benefits — availability for all, bringing business activity to the community, positive influence on property values*
- *Facility/activity-oriented benefits — recreation, sports, place to play, place to exercise pets*

## Top Issues for the Plan to Address

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After careful listening and evaluation, issues concerning parks and recreation were identified. It is essential that the Townships, along with community partners, address these issues over the next 10 years to develop parks and recreation systems that meet the needs of residents.

The following is a summary of the top issues (not in order of importance):

- Few Township-owned parks and recreation facilities
- Privately-owned park areas used by the public need major renovation to address safety and accessibility concerns
- The existing parks are very small in size
- Lack of recreation programs for all age groups
- Lack of indoor community programming space
- Lack of resident awareness of existing park areas and recreation opportunities
- Lack of tax-supported funding for parks and recreation
- Residents must travel outside of the Townships to enjoy community park amenities
- Lack of linear man-made features to support trail development
- The amount of parkland is insufficient for the current and projected population

## Plan Goals

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These Plan goals emerged as the basis for the Plan's recommendations:

- *Goal 1 – Develop and operate the Township parks and recreation systems effectively and efficiently through volunteer leadership and community partnerships.*
- *Goal 2 – Secure adequate financing to maintain existing parks, acquire parkland, develop trails and recreation facilities, and provide recreation programs for residents.*
- *Goal 3 – Expand promotion of Township park and trail areas, recreation facilities, recreation programs, and special events to increase public awareness of them and encourage resident use and participation.*
- *Goal 4 – Work in partnership with the Townships and with community groups to fund and provide a coordinated schedule of recreation programs and special events for residents.*
- *Goal 5 – Ensure that park areas and recreation facilities are well-maintained, meet current safety standards, and provide an enjoyable environment for residents.*

- *Goal 6 – Provide parks and recreation facilities to meet the needs of residents where they can have fun, socialize, experience nature, and lead active, healthy lifestyles.*
- *Goal 7 – Connect the region through greenways, trails, and protected open space.*

## A Vision for the Future of Parks and Recreation

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A comprehensive vision for the parks and recreation systems strengthens the Townships' role in defining and enhancing the municipalities' identity and quality of life. The success of this vision is tied to the commitment of the municipalities and to the value the community places on developing and improving the parks and recreation systems.

*Bethel, Marion and Tulpehocken Townships enhance the quality of life of residents and strengthen the bonds of community by providing safe, accessible and well-maintained parks, trails, and recreation facilities, preserving historic and natural resources, and providing affordable and inclusive recreation activities and experiences for all ages. Residents enjoy close-to-home open spaces, park areas, trails, playgrounds, sports fields and recreation programs that reflect their needs and interests. Residents and Township officials support financial investment in parks and recreation as it becomes a defining feature of the communities. With a focus on partnerships, resident involvement and regional cooperation, exceptional parks and recreation opportunities are developed in the three Townships.*

## Making the Vision a Reality

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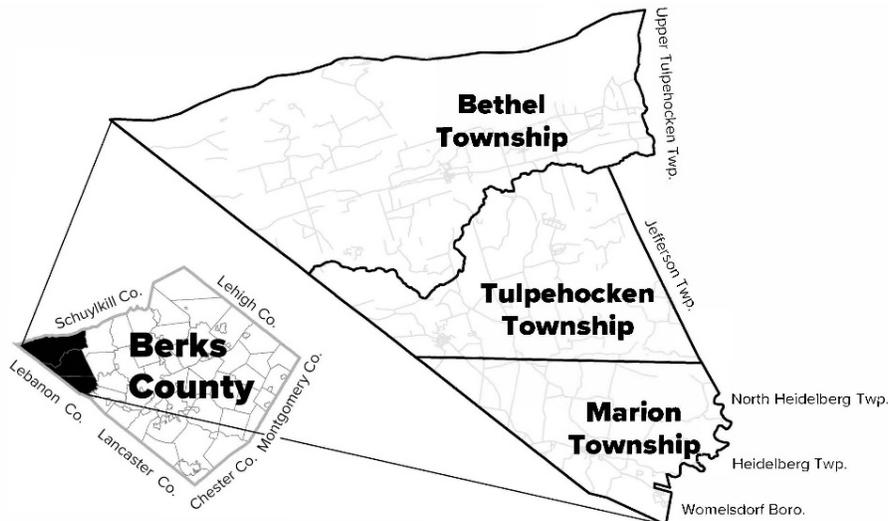
Close-to-home parks and recreation facilities serve many essential functions. They build community and provide opportunities for residents to improve their health. They improve nearby property values and encourage new development and investment. They provide an affordable source of recreation and they preserve the environment.

The Vision for the Future of Parks and Recreation will become a reality with the enthusiasm and support of Township elected and appointed officials, staff, community organizations, and residents. Success will require:

- A commitment to the funding necessary to acquire, improve, and enhance park areas, trails, recreation facilities, and recreation programs;
- Continued resident involvement in parks and recreation, through volunteering, fund-raising, advocacy groups, oversight of Plan implementation, and support for new initiatives;
- Cooperation, communication, and partnerships among Township officials and staff, Bethel and Tulpehocken Township Recreation Boards, Marion Township Community Association, Tulpehocken Area and Conrad Weiser School Districts, Bethel-Tulpehocken Public Library, fire companies, churches, Lions club, and other local organizations.

The Plan recommendations are a road map to guide the future work needed to achieve the vision and build the parks and recreation systems of Bethel, Marion, and Tulpehocken Townships. Implementation will require the focused energy, commitment, and resources of the municipalities and their elected officials, volunteers, and staff; the two school districts, community partners, and residents.

# Chapter 2 – About the Townships



Bethel, Marion, and Tulpehocken Townships are in northwestern Berks County, Pennsylvania. All three townships border Lebanon County to the west, and Bethel Township is bordered by Schuylkill County to the north. Interstate 78 bisects Bethel Township from east to west, and State Route 422 similarly divides Marion Township.

## History

The settlement of what would become Bethel, Marion, and Tulpehocken Townships began in 1723 with one of the great population movements in Colonial America. A group of German Palatine families, who had formerly been part of some 4,000 Palatine Germans who colonized New York State under Governor Hunter in 1710, left the Schoharie Valley to settle in the Tulpehocken region. At the time the land was inhabited by the Lenape Indians, who existed from present day Philadelphia to well beyond the borders of Berks County.

The Tulpehocken region was looked upon as a promised land by the early settlers, who were primarily engaged in farming. The Indians released the region in 1732. Tulpehocken was a meeting place between the white settlers and the Indians.

### Marion Township

Marion Township was founded in 1844 from parcels of land that had belonged to Tulpehocken and Heidelberg Townships. The height of Marion's vigor was in the mid-1800's due to the operation of the Union Canal.

### Tulpehocken Township

The name of Tulpehocken was taken from the stream of the same name. The term is of Native American origin and means "Land of Turtles." In 1729 the area was organized into a district, that was part of what was Chester

County. A petition in 1820 split the municipality, creating a new township called “Upper Tulpehocken,” and the Township was reduced in size by the formation of Marion in 1823, and Jefferson in 1851.

## Bethel Township

The Township of Lebanon was divided in 1739, and the northern section was called Bethel. It was named for a Moravian Meeting House which was not far from the Swatara Creek. With the creation of Berks County in 1752, Bethel was divided into two distinct areas. The western section became part of Lebanon County and the eastern section remained part of Berks County. In 1791 the northern boundary of the Township was established on top of the Blue Mountain. (History summarized from [www.berkshistory.org](http://www.berkshistory.org) & [www.livingplaces.com](http://www.livingplaces.com))

## Municipal Government

Bethel, Marion, and Tulpehocken Township are Townships of the Second Class. Each Township is governed by a three member Board of Supervisors. The Board of Supervisors appoints a Planning Commission and other committees including the Recreation Boards in Bethel and Tulpehocken Townships. Marion Township has a 501(c)(3) organization, the Marion Township Community Association, that oversees the municipal park.

## Demographics

Bethel, Marion, and Tulpehocken Townships are small rural communities with a combined 2010 population of 9,074. While Pennsylvania grew by 3.4 percent from 2000 to 2010, Berks County had a significant increase of 10 percent. Marion Township experienced growth on par with the County at 7.3 percent. In contrast, Bethel Township lost population by -1.3 percent, and Tulpehocken Township remained steady with a loss of -0.5 percent.

|   | 2000<br>Population | 2010<br>Population | Numeric Change<br>2000 - 2010 | %<br>Change |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|-------------|
| Pennsylvania  | 12,281,054         | 12,702,379         | 421,325                       | 3.4%        |
| Berks County  | 373,638            | 411,442            | 37,804                        | 10%         |
| Bethel Township                                       | 4,166              | 4,112              | -54                           | -1.3%       |
| Marion Township                                       | 1,573              | 1,688              | 115                           | 7.3%        |
| Tulpehocken Township                                  | 3,290              | 3,274              | -16                           | -0.5%       |
| Bethel, Marion &<br>Tulpehocken<br>Townships Combined | 9,029              | 9,074              | 45                            | 5.5%        |

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

## Population Projections

The Berks County Planning Commission has developed population projections for the municipalities. Table 2-2 presents population projections for Berks County as well as Bethel, Marion, and Tulpehocken Townships through 2030. The County, Marion Township, and Tulpehocken Township are all projected to increase by roughly 7 percent. Bethel Township’s projected growth is slightly less at 6.7 percent. This suggests the need to maintain existing parkland and recreation amenities in good working order to continue to meet resident needs, while investing in additional parkland.

| Table 2-2<br>Bethel, Marion & Tulpehocken Township Population Projections 2020-2030 |                    |                    |                    |                               |                         |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
|   | 2010<br>Population | 2020<br>Population | 2030<br>Population | Numeric Change<br>2010 – 2030 | % Change<br>2010 - 2030 |
| Berks County  | 411,905            | 425,477            | 440,656            | 28,751                        | 7.0%                    |
| Bethel Township   | 4,122              | 4,248              | 4,400              | 278                           | 6.7%                    |
| Marion Township   | 1,688              | 1,746              | 1,808              | 120                           | 7.1%                    |
| Tulpehocken Township  | 3,278              | 3,386              | 3,507              | 229                           | 7.0%                    |
| Bethel, Marion &<br>Tulpehocken Township<br>Combined                                | 9,088              | 9,380              | 9,715              | 627                           | 20.8%                   |

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Berks County Planning Commission

## Race

Bethel, Marion, and Tulpehocken Townships are nearly homogenous communities of over 97 percent Caucasian. African Americans make up less than one percent of Bethel and Marion Township’s population, and two percent of Tulpehocken Township’s population.

## Age

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the median age for Berks County is 39.1. Bethel Township is 38.8, Marion Township is 45.5, and Tulpehocken Township is 35.4. Bethel and Tulpehocken Townships saw an increase in younger age groups (0-24 years old) as a percentage of the municipal population, while Marion Township saw a decrease. The age cohort of 24-44 years old decreased in each municipality while the 55-64 years old age group grew. This indicates a need to enhance the quality of life in the community, including access to parks, to retain young families and to provide recreation opportunities that residents can enjoy throughout their lifetime.

| Table 2-3<br>Bethel, Marion & Tulpehocken Township Age of Population 2000-2010 |                 |       |                 |       |                      |       |
|--|-----------------|-------|-----------------|-------|----------------------|-------|
| Age Group  | Bethel Township |       | Marion Township |       | Tulpehocken Township |       |
|  | 2000            | 2010  | 2000            | 2010  | 2000                 | 2010  |
| Under 5 yrs.   | 0.6%            | 7.4%  | 6.6%            | 5.2%  | 6.7%                 | 7.8%  |
| 5 - 24 yrs.  | 28.1%           | 27.6% | 30.4%           | 23.8% | 31.2%                | 29.2% |
| 25 - 44 yrs.   | 30.1%           | 23.8% | 27.3%           | 20.2% | 33.6%                | 25.3% |
| 45 - 54 yrs.   | 15.1%           | 15.8% | 15.6%           | 16.0% | 12.3%                | 16.8% |
| 55 - 64 yrs.   | 9.5%            | 13.5% | 9.5%            | 15.7% | 6.3%                 | 10.7% |
| 65 - 74 yrs.   | 6.8%            | 7.5%  | 5.8%            | 11.6% | 8.5%                 | 6.3%  |
| 75 - 84 yrs.   | 3.1%            | 3.5%  | 3.9%            | 4.7%  | 3.3%                 | 3.1%  |
| 85 yrs. +  | 0.6%            | 1.0%  | 0.8%            | 2.0%  | 0.5%                 | 0.8%  |
| Median Age   | 36              | 38.8  | 36.0            | 45.5  | 34.0                 | 35.4  |

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

## Education

Roughly 16 percent of the residents, 25 years and older, in Berks County have a bachelor’s degree. Another seven percent has a graduate or professional degree.

## Income

The median household income in Bethel Township was \$59,911 in 2010, while Marion Township had a median household income of \$64,750. Tulpehocken Township’s median household income was \$57,763. Except for Tulpehocken Township, these are higher than the median household income of Berks County at \$59,580

## Housing

The median value of a house in Berks County in 2017 was \$170,900 and rent was \$885 per month. Over 70 percent of the housing stock is owner-occupied.

## Public Participation

Input from residents was sought throughout the planning process to understand the opportunities and issues in the region and to align recommendations with resident preferences. A five-part public participation process was undertaken to include: working with a Study Committee, conducting interviews with key stakeholders, holding two public meetings, holding two forums, and conducting an on-line public comment survey.

## Study Committee

The Study Committee was established to guide the planning process and provide feedback regarding project findings. The Study Committee was comprised of representatives of the three municipalities, Tulpehocken Area School District, and Berks County Parks & Recreation. The Study Committee met several times throughout the Plan development to discuss project findings and planning considerations and to review the draft report. The Study Committee provided guidance and direction on the Plan, identified key stakeholders for interviews, and shared feedback and ideas for consideration.

## Key Person Interviews and Forums

The planning process included interviews and forums with key stakeholders in the region. The purpose of the interviews and forums was to obtain information, ideas, concerns, and suggestions from individuals and organizations regarding parks, trails, recreation facilities, and recreation programs. Forums were held with representatives of sports organizations and township supervisors and planning commission members from the three municipalities.

## Public Meetings

Two public meetings were held to obtain input from citizens regarding their recreation interests, park and recreation opportunities, and existing park use. The first public meeting was held early in the planning process. A brief presentation that reviewed the importance of planning, the planning process, and the benefits of parks and recreation, preceded allotted time for public comment. The second public meeting was held to share the mission, vision, goals, and recommendations of the Plan.

## Online Public Comment Questionnaire

An on-line questionnaire was developed to explore resident's opinions regarding parks, recreation facilities, and how they would like to spend their leisure time in the region. The questionnaire was posted from April 8, 2019 to September 10, 2019 and 133 people logged onto and answered the on-line questionnaire. The questionnaire included 11 multiple choice questions and one open-ended question. The questionnaire provided a sense of resident preferences for recreation but cannot be considered statistically valid. The respondent profile is summarized below followed by a summary of the on-line questionnaire results.

- Response by Municipality (% of respondents / number of respondents / % of estimated 2017 Bethel, Marion & Tulpehocken Townships population):

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| Bethel Township:<br>62.41% / 83 / 0.020% | Marion Township:<br>4.51% / 6 / 0.004% | Tulpehocken Township:<br>30.83% / 41 / 0.124% |
|--|--|---|

- Respondent Age Group Breakdown:

|                           |                                 |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| - 18-24 years old: 1.01%  | - 50-64 years old: 23.23%       |
| - 25-34 years old: 18.18% | - 65-74 years old: 17.17%       |
| - 35-49 years old: 40.40% | - 75 years old and older: 0.00% |

- Household Demographic Breakdown:
  - Young children (9 and under): 47.31%
  - Older children (10-17): 41.94%
  - Single head of household: 17.20%
  - Senior citizens: 29.03%
  - People with a disability: 7.53%
  - Households with dogs: 59.14%

### On-line Questionnaire Summary

- The most popular reasons respondents visit parks is to participate in Trail Activities (80.95%), followed closely by Experiencing and Enjoying Nature (77.78%) and Self-directed Activities (67.46%). The next highest response is Socializing with Friends/Family (65.08%). Self-directed recreation to pursue personal interest in the outdoor setting is why residents visit parks.
- Respondents indicate that Bethel, Marion, and Tulpehocken Townships should prioritize Conserving Open Space and Natural Resources (69.09%) over the next ten years. The second priority is Maintain Parks and Recreation Facilities (67.27%), the third priority is Achieve a Balance of All of Above (60.87%), and close behind is the fourth priority of Improve Existing Parks and Recreation Facilities (60.75).

When high priority and medium priority are combined, the priorities switch with Maintain Parks and Recreation Facilities (97.27) as the highest priority, followed by Improve Existing Parks and Recreation Facilities (96.26%) as the second priority. The third highest priority is Achieve a Balance of All of Above (93.92%) followed closely by Conserve Open Space and Natural Resources (93.64).

The highest respondent percentage for the Low Priority category is Develop an Indoor Community Center (36.36%), followed by Provide Access to Creeks and Streams (23.36%), and Acquire New Parkland (20.75%).

Conserving open space and taking care of what the Townships have should be the priority for the region.

- Most respondents state that they never visit most of the parks in Bethel, Marion, and Tulpehocken Townships. Of the five traditional parks in the three municipalities only one (Rehrersburg Lions Park) had the most respondents listing Seasonal (30.00%) visits as highest. Most of the parks are small and the visitation findings aligns with a regional perspective where respondents are only familiar with the parks in their community.

The park with the highest response for Not Aware of This Park/Facility: Marion Township Playground (33.33%). This is due to most of the survey respondents residing in Bethel Township.

When the total visitation (Daily, Weekly, Monthly, and Seasonally) is combined, the top three park sites are Appalachian Trail (73.15), Blue Marsh Lake (72.98), and Camp Swatara (55.06%). These are larger, regional recreation assets which aligns with the preference indicated in Question #1 for Trail Activities followed by Experiencing and Enjoying Nature.

- Respondents indicated that it is Very Important (VI) to expand or add the following facilities in the Bethel, Marion, and Tulpehocken region. The top 10 VI facilities are listed in priority order. Also noted are the combined total for Very Important and Somewhat Important (SI).

1. Restrooms – VI – 71.57%, VI+SI – 94.12%

2. Nature Trails – VI – 62.38%, VI+SI – 91.09%
3. Trails for Running/Jogging/Bicycling/Cross-Country Skiing – VI – 60.40%, VI+SI – 91.09%
4. Fully Accessible Playground – VI – 57.28%, VI+SI – 88.35%
5. Picnic Pavilion – VI – 56.00%, VI+SI – 91.00%
6. Informal Picnic Areas – VI – 54.00%, VI+SI – 84.00%
7. Traditional Youth Playground – VI – 53.47%, VI+SI – 81.19%
8. Sitting Areas – VI – 47.47%, VI+SI – 82.82%
9. Baseball Field – Youth – VI – 34.65%, VI+SI – 73.26%
10. Swimming Pool – VI – 32.32%, VI+SI – 55.55%

The ranking stays the same for the top 3 responses if the scores for Very Important and Somewhat Important are combined.

The convenience of having restrooms in parks is important to visitors. Trails for exploring/experiencing nature and exercise, picnic areas, and children’s play areas are considered core facilities for parks.

The highest response percentage for the Not Needed option was Lacrosse Field (29.00%) followed by Pickleball Court (28.87%), and In-line Hockey Rink (25.77%). Lacrosse is growing significantly in many areas of Pennsylvania and is taking participants from traditional sports such as baseball, football, and soccer. Lacrosse is not played in the Tulpehocken Area School District, but it is a varsity sport in the Conrad Weiser School District. As the sport grows in the area the need for additional multi-purpose flat fields will grow. The popularity of Pickleball is growing very quickly, although the sport does not appear to be well known in the region. Pickleball has had a 650 percent increase in participation over the last six years, according to [USA Pickleball Association \(USAPA\)](#).

- Responses to Availability of Recreation Programs in the Bethel/Marion/Tulpehocken region was split by age. The three youngest cohorts (Elementary School Students, Preschool and Middle School Students) ranked highest with the Right Amount of recreation programs based on the responses, although Not Enough was the second percent response in each age group. The four older age groups (High School Students, Young Adults, Adults, and Mature Adults), Families, and People with Disabilities ranked Not Enough as the highest response. Not Enough as the first or second highest response for each cohort, indicates a need for programs.
- Respondents, by age, indicated highest interests in the following recreation programs:
  - Preschool – Arts and Crafts (27.87%), Summer Day Camps (25.93%), and Performing Arts (music, dance, drama) (25.46%).
  - Elementary School – Summer Day Camps (85.19%), League Sports (baseball, basketball, soccer, etc.) (77.08%), and Arts and Crafts (68.85%).

- Teens – Non-League Sports (golf, tennis, etc.) (55.56%), League Sports (baseball, basketball, soccer) (50.00%) and Clubs (46.00%).
- Adults – Self-Improvement and Education Classes (80.00%), Special Events (79.49%) and Exercise and Fitness (77.03%).
- Seniors – Concerts (33.33%), Trips (32.76%), and Self-Improvement and Education Classes (30.91%).

Program interests vary by age. Senior program interests lean toward less active, social recreation activities.

- Respondents indicated the following preferences regarding annual additional investment in parks and recreation:

- I would be willing to pay up to an additional \$10 per year more (31.31%).
- I would be willing to pay between \$11 to \$20 per year more (26.26%)
- I would be willing to pay between \$21 to \$30 per year more (28.28%)

Combined the three responses above garner 85.85% of respondents stating that they are willing to pay additional taxes if it is directed to parks and recreation.

- I am not willing to pay more (14.14%)

Over six out of seven respondents to the survey are willing to pay more per year for park and recreation investment.

- Respondents indicated that they receive information about parks and recreation opportunities in the region from Word of Mouth (25.25%) and Schools Send Home Information (23.23%). Do Not Hear About Them was the response from 20.20%.
- The open-ended question “Please use this space for any additional comments you may have regarding parks and recreation in the Bethel/Marion/Tulpehocken region” garnered 28 responses.

## Public Participation Process Findings

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Each method of obtaining public input found a consistent message from the residents of the Bethel, Marion, and Tulpehocken region. The following summarizes the input from the public meetings, on-line survey, and key stakeholders.

**Parks** – The municipal parks typically target the recreation needs of youth with an emphasis on play equipment and sports fields. The playgrounds need to be updated to comply with safety and accessibility standards, with Frystown as the exception, and the equipment should be arranged to be age-segregated. There are typically no accommodations to meet the Americans with Disabilities Act in the parks. Residents indicated a desire for trails and opportunities to experience and enjoy nature. There are no passive parks available to residents, although Airport Road Park, planned in Bethel Township, will provide a passive setting for trail activities and picnics.

**Schools** – Tulpehocken Area School District is open to shared recreation use and Bethel Elementary School provides a playground that can be used by residents. The Administration Building in Tulpehocken Township provides a potential opportunity to use the building for recreation programs and as a site for park development.

**Community Sports** – Various organizations provide youth sports programming for residents of the Bethel, Marion, and Tulpehocken region. The programs typically use municipal parks outside of the region except for Marion Township Playground and Frystown Playground. Most sports participation is steady, and organizations use the schools and Jefferson Township Park.

Additional sports fields are not requested at this time and local athletic fields are not currently being used. The region has not seen the introduction and growth of lacrosse and field hockey that other areas of the State are experiencing. If or when these sports are introduced into the region, additional pressure will be placed on the available fields.

**Trails** – The on-line questionnaire results show a strong desire by respondents for trails and access to natural areas. The most popular reasons respondents visit parks are to participate in Trail Activities (80.95%), followed by Experience Nature (77.78%), and Self-directed Activities (67.46%). 91.09 percent of survey respondents ranked nature trails as very important or somewhat important. The region is fortunate to have the Appalachian Trail located along the ridge in Bethel Township. Trails should be provided in existing parks to provide close-to-home locations for fitness and wellness activities.

**Programs and Services** – There are no municipal recreation programs in the Bethel, Marion, and Tulpehocken region.

**Maintenance** – Finding time and small budgets make park maintenance a challenge for the small rural communities of the region. Opportunities should be explored to cooperate on park maintenance within the region. Maintenance activities should be formalized in a written maintenance management plan to improve work scheduling, tracking, and budgeting. Playgrounds should be routinely inspected by a Certified Playground Safety Inspector.



# Chapter 3 - Parkland & Recreation Facilities

The Bethel, Marion, and Tulpehocken Township region recreation facilities and parkland are evaluated based on six factors that contribute to their value as local and regional assets and the ability of existing facilities to meet the recreation needs of residents. The six factors include:

1. Configuration of parkland
2. Amount of parkland
3. Locations of parks
4. Recreation facilities
5. Park and facility trends
6. Conditions of parkland and facilities

## Configuration of Parkland

Table 3-1 inventories municipal parks, state and federal protected lands and open space, quasi-public recreation lands, schools, and private recreation sites in the Bethel, Marion, and Tulpehocken region.

| Table 3-1<br>Bethel, Marion & Tulpehocken Region Park and Recreation Facility Inventory |         |                             |  |
|---|---------|-----------------------------|--|
| Municipal Parks   |         |                             |  |
| Park Name   | Acreage | Park Type                   | Comments / Facilities  |
| Bethel Township   |         |                             |  |
| Frystown Playground   | 2.1     | Neighborhood                | Basketball courts (2), playground, pavilion, baseball field (60')        |
| Airport Road Recreation Area  | 15.28   | -                           | Undeveloped, wooded  |
| Total Acreage   | 17.38   |                             |  |
| Marion Township   |         |                             |  |
| Marion Township Playground  | 5.89    | Community                   | Ballfield (60'), basketball court, playground, tennis courts (2), gazebo |
| Total Acreage   | 5.89    |                             |  |
| Tulpehocken Township  |         |                             |  |
| Rehrersburg Lions Club parcel   | 0.9     | -                           | Undeveloped parcel adjacent to Rehrersburg Lions Club Park               |
| Total Acreage   | 0.9     |                             |  |
| State and Federal Protected Lands/Open Space  |         |                             |  |
| Land Name   | Acreage | Owner                       | Comments / Facilities  |
| Bethel Township   |         |                             |  |
| PA Gamelands No. 80   | 1,481   | State                       |  |
| PA Gamelands No. 110  | 7,032   | State                       |  |
| Appalachian Trail   | 1,376   | Federal                     |  |
| Weiser State Forest   | 1,515   | State                       |  |
| Marion Township   |         |                             |  |
| Charming Forge, Tulpehocken Creek access area   | 22.4    | PA Fish and Boat Commission |  |
| Tulpehocken Township  |         |                             |  |
|   |         |                             |  |

| Quasi-Public Recreation Lands   |         |                                     |   |
|---|---------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Land Name   | Acreage | Owner                               | Comments / Facilities   |
| <b>Bethel Township</b>  |         |                                     |   |
| Camp Swatara  | 706     | Church of the Brethren              | Lodging, pond, mini-golf, swimming pool, trails, campground, etc. |
| Blue Mountain Wilderness Park Association                                       | 156.8   | Blue Mountain Eagle Climbing Club   |   |
| Frystown Fire Company   | 2.74    | Frystown Fire Co.                   |   |
| Union Fire Company of Bethel Ball Field   | 5.3     | Union Fire Co. of Bethel            | Ball field (60'), not currently in use                            |
| Tri-County Worship Center   | 9.9     | Tri-County Worship Center           | Gymnasium   |
| <b>Marion Township</b>  |         |                                     |   |
| Marion Volunteer Fire Company Community Center                                  | 1.4     | Marion Fire Co.                     |   |
| Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church Picnic Grove                                 | 21      | Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church  | Bandshell, play equipment, pavilion with kitchen, scout house     |
| <b>Quasi-Public Recreation Lands</b>  |         |                                     |   |
| Land Name   | Acreage | Owner                               | Comments / Facilities   |
| <b>Tulpehocken Township</b>   |         |                                     |   |
| Camp Calvary  | 83.3    | Assemblies of God Church            | Swimming pool, pond, mini-golf                                    |
| Mt. Aetna Playground  | 0.8     | Mt. Aetna Fire Co.                  | Playground, tennis court  |
| Mt. Aetna Rescue Fire Co.   | 4.3     | Mt. Aetna Fire Co.                  | Ballfield (60'), bandshell, pavilion                              |
| Rehrersburg Lions Club Park   | 3.31    | Rehrersburg Lions Club              | Lions Club building, pavilion, playground                         |
| Little Swatara Church of the Brethren   | 9.31    | Little Swatara Church of Brethren   | Sand volleyball court, gaga pit, community room                   |
| <b>Schools</b>  |         |                                     |   |
| School Name   | Acreage | Ownership                           | Comments / Facilities   |
| <b>Bethel Township</b>  |         |                                     |   |
| Bethel Elementary School  | 15.7    | Tulpehocken Area School District    | Playground, pavement games, lawn, ballfield (60')                 |
| Bethel Dunkard Brethren Church School   | 3.0     | Bethel Dunkard Brethren Church      |   |
| Lebanon Valley Christian School   | 3.0     | Lebanon Valley Christian School     |   |
| Blue Mountain View Parochial School   | 1.4     | Blue Mountain View Parochial School |   |
| <b>Marion Township</b>  |         |                                     |   |
| North Marion Parochial School   | 1.9     | North Marion Parochial School       |   |
| <b>Tulpehocken Township</b>   |         |                                     |   |
| Sara Kurr Zock Building, Tulpehocken Area School District Administration Office | 7.4     | Tulpehocken Area School District    | Ballfield, open lawn  |
| Mt. Aetna Mennonite School  | 11.4    | Mt. Aetna Mennonite School          | Ballfield, playground   |

| Private Recreation Sites                 |         |                                  |                       |
|--|---------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Site Name                                | Acreage | Ownership                        | Comments / Facilities |
| <b>Bethel Township</b>                   |         |                                  |                       |
| Bethel Beagle Club                       | 121.8   | Bethel Beagle Club               |                       |
| Lebanon Valley Motorcycle Club           | 15.4    | Lebanon Valley Motorcycle Club   |                       |
| Northwest Berks Rod and Gun Club         | 19.1    | Northwest Berks Rod and Gun Club |                       |
| Grimes Airport and Golden Age Air Museum | 160     | Golden Age Air Museum            |                       |
| <b>Marion Township</b>                   |         |                                  |                       |
| Marion Township Rod and Gun Club         | 20.4    | Marion Township Rod and Gun Club |                       |
| <b>Tulpehocken Township</b>              |         |                                  |                       |

Conclusions from the Parkland and Recreation Facility Inventory include:

- Bethel and Marion Townships have municipal parkland. Tulpehocken Township does not own parkland. Tulpehocken Township does own an undeveloped parcel adjacent to the Rehrersburg Lions Club Park.
- Quasi-public recreation lands, school grounds and churches supplement municipal parkland and provide important recreation opportunities for the region.
- There is significant acreage of State Game Lands and Weiser State Forest in the region that provides opportunity for passive, nature-based recreation and hunting.

Different types of parks provide different opportunities for visitors. Table 3-2 presents a typical Park Classification System. It shows the range of park types, their benefits, typical facilities, and the maintenance levels appropriate for the park type.

| Table 3-2<br>Bethel, Marion, & Tulpehocken Region Park and Recreation Classification System     |   |   |  |  |
|---|---|---|--|--|
| Type/Size/Service Radius  | Definition  | Benefits  | Appropriate Amenities  | Maintenance Level  |
| <b>Mini Park</b><br><i>0-5 acres</i><br><i>¼-mile service radius</i>                            | Smallest park type, addresses limited recreation need         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provides close to home recreation</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Playground</li> <li>▪ Benches, seating area</li> </ul>  | High level of maintenance associated with well-developed park and playground and reasonably high visitation. |
| <b>Neighborhood Park</b><br><i>5-10 acres</i><br><i>minimum</i><br><i>½-mile service radius</i> | Focus of neighborhood; in walking/biking distance of visitors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provides access to basic recreation opportunities</li> <li>▪ Contributes to neighborhood identity</li> <li>▪ Establishes sense of community</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Play areas</li> <li>▪ Ballfields</li> <li>▪ Game Courts</li> <li>▪ Picnic/Seating</li> <li>▪ Pathways</li> <li>▪ Community gardens</li> </ul> | High level of maintenance associated with well-developed park and reasonably high visitation.                |

|   |  |   |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|---|
| <b>Community Park</b><br><i>10-50 acres, preferably 50-80 acres 2-mile service radius</i> | Large park for active & passive recreation; serves residents municipality-wide. Accommodates large groups. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Variety of recreation opportunities for all ages and interests</li> <li>▪ Space for organized, large scale, high participation events</li> <li>▪ Family destination</li> <li>▪ Fitness and wellness opportunities</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Play areas</li> <li>▪ Organized sports facilities</li> <li>▪ Pavilions</li> <li>▪ Permanent restrooms</li> <li>▪ Lighting</li> <li>▪ Amphitheaters</li> <li>▪ Pools, Rinks</li> <li>▪ Parking</li> </ul> | Moderate level of maintenance associated with moderate level of development, budget restrictions, inability to perform higher levels of maintenance. Potential for park “friends” or adopt-a-park partners. |
| <b>School/Community Park</b><br><i>Variable</i>   | Parkland adjoining a school used for both recreation and education.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Combines two public entities for expanded year round recreation.</li> <li>▪ Maximizes public resources</li> <li>▪ Expands recreation opportunities</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Youth-oriented game courts and ball fields</li> <li>▪ Play areas</li> <li>▪ Seating</li> <li>▪ Pathways</li> <li>▪ Lighting</li> <li>▪ Parking</li> </ul>  | Moderate level of maintenance associated with moderate level of development, budget restrictions. Potential for cooperative agreement with school.  |
| <b>Sports Complex</b><br><i>30+ acres; preferably 50-80 acres</i>                         | Consolidates sports fields and related facilities in a centralized location.                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Economy of scale</li> <li>▪ Improved management</li> <li>▪ Municipal showcase</li> <li>▪ Attracts visitors who stimulate local economy</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ball fields</li> <li>▪ Lighting</li> <li>▪ Spectator areas</li> <li>▪ Restrooms, Concessions</li> <li>▪ Landscaping</li> <li>▪ Parking</li> </ul>  | State of the art maintenance applied to high quality facilities. Associated with high visitation; revenue generating facilities, tourism.   |
| <b>Special Use Facility</b><br><i>Variable</i>  | Facility for a single purpose use.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provides special focus recreation opportunities</li> <li>▪ Contributes to community identity</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Depends on purpose</li> </ul>  | High level of maintenance associated with well-developed park and reasonably high visitation.   |
| <b>Greenways and Trails</b><br><i>Variable</i>  | Tie park areas and community together to form a contiguous park environment.                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Connects community</li> <li>▪ Reduces auto dependency</li> <li>▪ Improves air quality</li> <li>▪ Contributes most desired recreation facility for people throughout their lifetime</li> <li>▪ Attracts visitors</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Pathways – multipurpose</li> <li>▪ Trailheads</li> <li>▪ Support facilities</li> <li>▪ Signage</li> </ul>  | Lowest level of maintenance. Focus on trailheads and trail safety.  |
| <b>Natural Resource Area/ Preserve</b>  | Natural areas for the protection and management of natural environment                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Protects resources</li> <li>▪ Provides wildlife habitat</li> <li>▪ Offers opportunities for environmental education</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Trails</li> <li>▪ Signage</li> <li>▪ Support facilities</li> </ul>   | Lower level of maintenance.   |

The following conclusions can be drawn from the analysis of Park and Recreation Classifications as they relate to the parkland in the Bethel, Marion, and Tulpehocken region:

- The parks are small. There are no parks that have the recommended acreage of a community park in the region.
- Airport Road Recreation Area has the acreage to be classified as a neighborhood park. At 15.28 acres Airport Road Recreation Area will be the largest park in the region when developed.
- Marion Township Playground functions as a community park but at 5.89 acres aligns with a neighborhood park from a size perspective. The opportunity to acquire contiguous acreage to expand the park and offer additional recreation opportunities should be explored.

- Frystown Playground at 2.1 acres is classified as a mini park.
- There are no municipal parks which function as Nature Preserves or Natural Resource Areas available for passive recreation pursuits. Several State Game Lands and Weiser State Forest are located partially within the Bethel, Marion and Tulpehocken region, providing opportunities for passive recreation and the enjoyment of natural areas.
- There are no Sports Complexes or Special Use Facilities in the region.
- There are no multi-use trails in the region. The Appalachian Trail, a long-distance primitive trail, is located along the Kittatinny Ridge within public lands in Bethel Township.

### Recreation and Parks are Essential to Quality of Life

#### Recreation

- *Improves personal health*
- *Is key to balanced human development*
- *Is a significant economic generator*
- *Reduces self-destructive and anti-social behavior*
- *Builds strong families and healthy communities*
- *Reduces health care, social services and police/justice costs*

## Amount of Parkland

How much parkland does the Bethel, Marion, and Tulpehocken region need to meet the recreation needs of residents? The Bethel, Marion, and Tulpehocken region has 24.17 acres of parkland in four (4) park sites. Two of the park sites totaling 7.99 acres are developed and offer active recreation opportunities. A population-based analysis is typically used to evaluate active public parkland. The population of a community drives the number of active park facilities, such as ballfields and basketball courts that a community needs. As a community's population grows, so does the need for parkland. A population calculation that correlates to parkland acreage can readily be updated as a community grows.

Passive parks, greenways, trails, and nature preserves are not evaluated using an acreage standard because the size of these park areas should be based on the site resources and the area necessary to protect the resources and make them available for public enjoyment.

The prevailing standard for active parkland acreage has been 10-acres per thousand population. This standard was first referenced in the 1969 National Park, Recreation and Open Space Standards, published by the NRPA (National Recreation and Park Association). Communities have continued to work with the 10-acre per thousand-population standard over the past 46 years as an easy default to evaluate if their community has sufficient parkland. But much has changed in sports, recreation, and the way we spend our leisure time since 1969. Consider the following factors that influence the amount of parkland needed to serve a community:

- There are new popular youth sports: soccer and lacrosse

- Youth soccer didn't emerge as a major youth sport until the 1980's and 1990's. US Youth Soccer, the largest youth soccer organization in the U.S., has 3,000,000 members ages 5 – 19.<sup>1</sup>
- Lacrosse didn't emerge as a popular youth sport until the 2000's with "just over 250,000 players in 2001 to the current total of 826,023, an increase of over 225 percent over a 15-year timeframe."<sup>2</sup>
- Girls' participation in youth sports has grown significantly since 1969. In 1972, Title IX provided equal access to programs and activities that receive Federal financial assistance, including sports. In the 45+ years since Title IX went into effect, girls' participation in sports has grown exponentially. "During the 1971-1972 school year, immediately before the legislation passed, fewer than 300,000 girls participated in high school athletics. To put that number in perspective, just 7% of all high school athletes were girls. In 2010-2011, the number of female athletes had climbed by more than tenfold to nearly 3.2 million, or 41% of all high school athletes."<sup>3</sup> Before Title IX, one in 27 girls played sports. Today that number is two in five.<sup>4</sup> This growth is also reflected in youth sports programs.
- Youth sports programs have expanded beyond their traditional seasons. Baseball is no longer just a spring sport with most youth programs offering both spring and fall seasons. Soccer and lacrosse also are played in multiple seasons.

These statistics show that the 10-acre parkland standard is outdated. In 1995, in the *NRPA Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines*, the NRPA promoted "a shift away from reliance on an absolute national standard, i.e. the long-standing notion of 10 acres/1,000 persons, to increasing community self-direction where the number of acres for park and recreation land is based on what the citizens determine is best for themselves."

The current parkland acreage for the Bethel, Marion, and Tulpehocken region can be calculated to determine the status quo for parkland acreage based on population. The calculation is based on the 2010 population for the region.

2010 Status Quo Calculation – Active Municipal Parks

9,088 (2010 population of region) ÷ 1,000 = 9.088

7.99 (active parkland acreage) ÷ 9.088 = 0.88-acres of parkland/1,000 residents.

At 0.88-acres per 1,000 population, the Bethel, Marion, and Tulpehocken region is well below meeting the minimum standard first recommended in 1969. Recreation needs in the region has been offset by community organizations such as the Mt. Aetna Rescue Fire Company and the Rehrersburg Lions Club. These entities offer recreation sites totaling 8.41-acres that are available for public use. Combining this quasi-public recreation land with the municipal parks totals 16.4-acres.

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.usyouthsoccer.org/media\\_kit/ataglance/](http://www.usyouthsoccer.org/media_kit/ataglance/), n.d., Web. 14 Dec. 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Logue, Brian. [www.uslacrosse.org/blog/national-lacrosse-participation-tops-825000-players](http://www.uslacrosse.org/blog/national-lacrosse-participation-tops-825000-players), 9 June 2017, Web. 14 Dec. 2017.

<sup>3</sup> National Federation of State High School Associations, *2010-11 High School Athletics Participation Survey*.

<sup>4</sup> Olmstead, Maegan. [www.womenssportsfoundation.org/education/title-ix-and-the-rise-of-female-athletes-in-america/](http://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/education/title-ix-and-the-rise-of-female-athletes-in-america/), 2 Sep. 2016, Web 14, Dec. 2017.

2010 Status Quo Calculation – Active Municipal Park and Community Organization Parks

$$9,088 \text{ (2010 population of region) } \div 1,000 = 9.088$$

$$16.4 \text{ (active parkland acreage) } \div 9.088 = 1.81\text{-acres of parkland/1,000 residents.}$$

The use of community organization recreation sites, church grounds, and school grounds offset a portion of the overall need for parkland in the region but does not fully address the parkland deficit. Additionally, the focus of these organizations and entities is not recreation and the long-term availability of recreation offerings is not guaranteed. While using school district facilities is a wise use of facilities paid for with public funds, community use of school facilities will always be second priority to school use. Additionally, land ownership may change or concerns regarding maintenance and liability may eliminate the use of these recreation sites in the future.



Table 3-3 provides an assessment of active parkland in the Bethel, Marion, and Tulpehocken region for the U.S. Census years 2010 and population projections for 2020 and 2030. For assessment purposes, the 10-acre standard is divided between community parks (8-acres) and neighborhood and mini parks (2-acres). Table 3-3 compares the population of the region with the existing active parkland acreage. Undeveloped parkland and non-municipal parkland have been excluded from this analysis.

|  | Existing Active Parkland Acreage | Recommended Acres/2010 Population – 9,088 | 2010 Deficit (-) Excess (+) | Recommended Acres/2020 Population – 9,380 | 2020 Deficit (-) Excess (+) | Recommended Acres/2030 Population- 9715 | 2030 Deficit (-) Excess (+) |
|--|----------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|---|-----------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| Community Parks @ 8 Acres/1,000 Population – Total acreage | 0                                | 72.70                                     | -72.70                      | 75.04                                     | -75.04                      | 77.72                                   | -77.72                      |
| Neighborhood/Mini Parks @ 2 Acres/1,000 Population         | 7.99                             | 18.18                                     | -10.19                      | 18.76                                     | -10.77                      | 19.43                                   | -11.44                      |
| Totals (Total community park + neighborhood park)          | 7.99                             | 90.88                                     | -82.89                      | 93.80                                     | -85.81                      | 97.15                                   | -89.16                      |

Source: PA State Data Center/Berks County Planning Commission

The 2010 U.S. Census indicated a population of 9,088 in the Bethel, Marion, and Tulpehocken region. Population projections for 2020 and 2030 provided by the Berks County Planning Commission show modest growth over the next two decades which corresponds to the need for additional parkland.

| Table 3-4<br>Bethel, Marion, & Tulpehocken Region –<br>Parkland Acreage/NRPA Standards Analysis – Municipal Assessment |            |  |  |                           |
|--|------------|--|--|---------------------------|
| Year   | Population | Recommended<br>Parkland Acres/10-<br>Acre Standard | Existing Active<br>Parkland<br>Acreage | Deficit (-)<br>Excess (+) |
| <b>Bethel Township</b>   |            |  |  |                           |
| 2010   | 4,122      | 41.22  | 2.1                                    | -39.12                    |
| 2020   | 4,248      | 42.48  |  | -40.38                    |
| 2030   | 4,400      | 44.00  |  | -41.90                    |
| <b>Marion Township</b>   |            |  |  |                           |
| 2010   | 1,688      | 16.88  | 5.89                                   | -10.99                    |
| 2020   | 1,746      | 17.46  |  | -11.57                    |
| 2030   | 1,808      | 18.08  |  | -12.19                    |
| <b>Tulpehocken Township</b>  |            |  |  |                           |
| 2010   | 3,278      | 32.78  | 0                                      | -32.78                    |
| 2020   | 3,386      | 33.86  |  | -33.86                    |
| 2030   | 3,507      | 35.07  |  | -35.07                    |

Table 3-4 provides an assessment of the amount of parkland available for active recreation in each municipality for U.S. Census year 2010 and projected for 2020 and 2030. The Berks County Planning Commission projects modest growth in each municipality through 2030.

The following conclusions can be drawn from the regional and municipal assessment of parkland acreage:

- The Bethel, Marion, and Tulpehocken region currently has a deficit of parkland. Based on the 2010 population and 10 acre/1,000 population standard, the region needs an additional 83 acres of parkland to serve the current population. The deficit will grow to almost 90 acres by 2030.
- The greatest need is for additional community parkland. At the 10-acre standard an additional 72-78 acres of community parkland is needed to meet current and projected needs. This equates to one or two new community parks in the region.
- Bethel Township will offset a portion of their parkland deficit when Airport Road Recreation Area is developed, if active recreation amenities are provided as part of the park development.
- Marion Township has the lowest deficit of parkland of the three municipalities with a need of 10-12 acres over the next 20 years.
- Tulpehocken Township, with no public parkland has the greatest challenge to meet the parkland standard with a deficit of 32-35 acres.

## Location of Parks

The parkland distribution analysis evaluates the location of parks relative to population centers and considers physical barriers that limit easy access to park sites. Service radiuses, which define the geographic area generally served by a park, have been applied to each municipal park, based on the Bethel, Marion, and Tulpehocken park classification. Community Parks have the most facilities and typically draw visitors from beyond a municipal boundary. Typically, a two-mile service radius is applied to Community Parks. Neighborhood and Mini Parks are smaller with fewer facilities and typically draw visitors from the immediate

surrounding neighborhood. Neighborhood and Mini Parks have been assigned a half-mile service radius. The Existing Facilities Map on page 3-26 illustrates the service radius for each municipal park. Examination of the Existing Facilities Map with service radius illustrates the following about park locations:

- Most of the region does not have convenient access to parkland. The lack of community parks with the larger, 2-mile service radius contributes to the minimal access to parkland.
- U.S. Route 78 is a divided highway and a barrier to convenient access to parkland.
- The eastern portions of the municipalities are not served by parkland. Frystown Playground is located near the boundary of Bethel and Tulpehocken and a portion of residents of northwest Tulpehocken Township fall within the park’s service radius.
- Parkland is not evenly distributed throughout the region or by municipality.

## Recreation Facilities

Recreation facilities should be provided within a community to meet the demands of individuals, community groups, and organized adult and youth leagues. The appropriate number of recreation facilities in a community should be based on need as defined by current and projected facility usage and local trends in recreation activities.

**Table 3-5  
Bethel, Marion, & Tulpehocken Recreation Facility Inventory**

| Park Name                       | Baseball Field<br>60/75' BL | Baseball Field<br>90' BL | Softball Field | Multi-Purpose<br>Field | Playground | Pavilion | Basketball<br>Court | Tennis Courts | Football Field | Walking Trail |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------|------------------------|------------|----------|---------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|
| <b>Municipal Parks</b>          |                             |                          |                |                        |            |          |                     |               |                |               |
| Frystown<br>Playground          | 1                           | -                        | -              | -                      | 1          | 1        | 2                   | -             | -              | -             |
| Airport Road<br>Recreation Area | -                           | -                        | -              | -                      | -          | -        | -                   | -             | -              | -             |
| Marion Township<br>Playground   | 1                           | -                        | -              | -                      | 1          | 1        | 1                   | 2             | -              | -             |
| <b>Totals</b>                   | <b>2</b>                    | <b>0</b>                 | <b>0</b>       | <b>0</b>               | <b>2</b>   | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b>            | <b>2</b>      | <b>0</b>       | <b>0</b>      |

An analysis of facilities must consider the context of the municipality and the trends and popularity of the sport or activity that the facility serves.

## Facility Assessment

Following is the facility assessment for the Bethel, Marion, and Tulpehocken Township region by activity:

**Softball** – There are no softball fields in the region. Softball is new to the region and is played at Jefferson Park in Jefferson Township. The existing unused ballfields could be rehabilitated for softball use if the local leagues need additional fields.

**Baseball** – There are two baseball fields that are currently used in the region. The Northern Lebanon Vikings use the Frystown Playground and Conrad Weiser Little League use the field in Marion Playground. Both fields have 60-foot baselines. Tulpehocken Youth Baseball plays at Jefferson Park in Jefferson Township. There are no 90-foot baseline fields in the region. Mt. Aetna Rescue Fire Co. and Rehrersburg Lions Club Park have fields that have not been used recently and require rehabilitation to bring them into playing standards. Tulpehocken Youth Baseball indicates that more fields are needed in the area.

**Football** – There are no football fields located in municipal parks and football is not offered in Tulpehocken Area School District.

**Basketball** – There are three outdoor basketball courts in the region. Two courts are provided at Frystown Playground with the correct solar orientation. The courts do not have runout room at the goal ends of the court and block edging creates a trip hazard. The courts have minimal line markings beyond the key at each basket. The basketball courts are close to the playground. One basketball court is provided in Marion Playground with the correct solar orientation. The court surface is aged with pavement cracks and no evidence of court line markings. Run out room is provided on the south end. Basketball goals are provided at the ends of the Mt. Aetna Playground tennis court without pavement markings.

Outdoor basketball courts are recommended in new neighborhood and community parks. Where possible, courts should be developed in banks of at least two courts, near parking areas and separated from activity areas popular with younger children and passive activity areas. Court lighting extends play time and lights are suggested in parks where they would be compatible with surrounding land use.

- Adding basketball courts is considered Very Important or Somewhat Important by 73.73 percent of the respondents to the on-line survey.

**Soccer** – There are no multi-purpose flat fields in the Township, although Marion Township Playground ballfield outfield could be used for soccer or other flat-field sports. Tulpehocken Soccer Club plays games at Jefferson Park in Jefferson Township and practices at Bethel Elementary school and other schools of the Tulpehocken Area School District. Tulpehocken Soccer is the largest youth soccer club in the region, serving boys and girls with fall and spring seasons. The club indicates that there are an adequate number of fields for soccer games.

Multi-purpose fields which serve soccer, field hockey, and lacrosse should be developed in neighborhood and community parks to accommodate the existing programs. Field lights are suggested, where appropriate, to extend playing times and maximize the use of existing facilities.

- Soccer is considered Very Important or Somewhat Important by 65 percent of respondents to the on-line survey.

**Lacrosse** – Lacrosse is a growing sport in the state but is not currently played as a club or youth league in Tulpehocken or Bethel Townships and is not a school sport in the Tulpehocken Area School District. The Conrad-Weiser School District does have lacrosse as a school sport, and it is also offered as a youth club for boys and girls. There is currently no use of parks for lacrosse. Lacrosse is growing at a fast pace in other areas of the State and is also currently played in several school districts in PIAA District III. The interest in lacrosse and its growth at the youth level is expected to reach the Bethel, Marion, and Tulpehocken region and will eventually have an impact on participation in traditional sports like baseball and soccer. Multi-purpose fields should be provided in community parks for lacrosse and soccer. Multi-purpose fields should be sized to accommodate each of these sports.

**Volleyball** – There are no lawn or sand volleyball courts in the region. Volleyball courts are popular park facilities and are often used in conjunction with picnic outings and should be located close to picnic pavilions, where possible. Families and adults generally prefer lawn volleyball while teens and young adults prefer sand volleyball courts. When new community parks are developed, the level of interest in league play should be evaluated. If interest emerges for competitive volleyball, courts in banks of two or more for league play should be developed. League play is typically in evenings and courts should be developed with lights.

- The on-line survey indicates relatively low interest in volleyball courts with 52.04 percent of respondents indicating that sand volleyball courts are Very Important or Somewhat Important and 54 percent indicating that grass volleyball courts are Very Important or Somewhat Important.

**Tennis** – There are two tennis courts in the region. One court in Marion Township Playground is in disrepair with no net and deteriorated pavement surface without color coat. There is a single court in Mt. Aetna Rescue Fire Company Park. The court has faded color coat and cracks visible on the court surface and is surrounded by a 10-foot high chain link fence in relatively good condition.

Tennis is a lifetime recreation activity that can be enjoyed by all ages. Although the popularity of the sport has waned over the last decade, it is important to provide tennis courts in municipal park systems for the lifetime recreation benefits. Tennis courts should be developed in banks of two or more and should be in visually accessible areas, preferably near parking areas and park entrances. Court lighting is recommended where adjacent land use is compatible. Tennis courts should be developed in future community parks.

- The on-line survey found moderate interest in tennis courts with 67.33 percent listing tennis courts as Very Important or Somewhat Important.

**Swimming Pools** – There are no public swimming pools in the region. Swimming is a lifetime recreation activity and convenient access to swimming pools would be an asset for the region.

**Playgrounds** – Updated play equipment is provided in Frystown Playground. Marion Township Playground, Rehrersburg Lions Club Park, and Mt. Aetna Rescue Fire Co. Park have playground areas that are outdated with equipment that does not meet latest accessibility and safety standards. When developing and renovating playground areas, the following general guidelines should be incorporated into the design:

- The playground layout, equipment, and safety zone should comply with the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) Guidelines for Playground Safety.
- Playgrounds must meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which requires that an accessible route be provided from walkways/parking areas to the playground equipment and that a portion of the equipment offer activities that can be utilized by physically challenged children.
- Playgrounds should be age-segregated to accommodate children of different ages and abilities and meet the CPSC safety guidelines.
- Important American Society for Testing and Materials references for public playground safety:

- F1487 Standard Consumer Safety Performance Specification for Playground Equipment for Public Use.
- F1292 Standard Specification for Impact Attenuation of Surface Systems Under and Around Playground Equipment.

Playgrounds should be developed to stimulate imaginative play as well as physical activity. Playgrounds should be bright, interesting environments that engage children while providing convenient facilities for adults, such as benches and shaded seating areas. Playgrounds should be located for safety, with adequate separation from parking areas, ballfield foul ball and home run territory, and drives/roadways.

Playgrounds should be renovated or upgraded on a cyclic basis to conform to the latest safety and accessibility standards. A playground safety and accessibility audit should be completed, and all playground equipment should be removed that cannot be rehabilitated to fully comply with the latest standards. Playground renovation and replacement should be identified in the municipality's Capital Improvement Program, starting with the playground that is in most urgent need of replacement. Playgrounds should be incorporated into new community and neighborhood parks.

**Trails/Pathways** – Trails and pathways should be provided in every park for recreation purposes and to meet the requirements of the ADA. ADA requires an accessible route from parking areas and drop-off areas to recreation facilities. Accessible routes must extend to player areas. Viewing areas for physically impaired spectators must be provided at sports fields and courts. In neighborhood and community parks, where space allows, developing trails with a minimum eight-foot width is recommended to accommodate multiple users. In more urban or developed settings, trails should be paved to provide multiple recreational opportunities, such as bike riding, inline skating, jogging, and walking. Stonedust aggregate trails may be preferred in parks with natural settings where slopes are gentle. Trails in parks should link to nearby multi-use trails and sidewalks to promote non-motorized access to parks.

Walking is an activity widely enjoyed by all segments of the population. Residents noted that they access the Appalachian Trail in Bethel Township for hiking.

- Respondents to the online survey ranked nature trails second highest (91.09%) , followed by trail (running, jogging, bicycling, etc.) as Very Important or Somewhat Important) facilities to expand or add. Restrooms were ranked first at 94.12 percent.

**Indoor Recreation** – There are no indoor recreation venues in the region. The Bethel-Tulpehocken Public Library offers reading programs and the Marion Township building, Rehrersburg Lions Club building, and the Tulpehocken Area School District administration building offer potential sites for indoor recreation programs.

- The online survey found moderate interest in developing an Indoor Field House with game fields and courts, with 51.02 percent of respondents indicating that an indoor facility is Very Important or Somewhat Important. The survey also found that a Recreation Center with a gymnasium and meeting rooms is considered Very Important or Somewhat Important by 70 percent of respondents.

**Picnic Area** – Picnic pavilions are offered in Frystown Playground, Rehrersburg Lions Club Park, Mt. Aetna Rescue Fire Co., and Marion Playground. Picnic areas can be configured as scattered picnic tables and grills within a shaded grove of trees or a picnic pavilion with complementary amenities such as horseshoe pits, volleyball court, playground, and softball field. In community parks, picnic areas serve families and

groups. Pavilions offer shaded sitting areas for caregivers near playgrounds and are important amenities in new parks with limited vegetation for shade.

- The online survey found high interest in developing picnic opportunities, with 91 percent of respondents indicating that picnic pavilions were Very Important or Somewhat Important and 84 percent indicating that informal picnic areas were Very Important or Somewhat Important.

## Park and Facility Trends and Research

Park and recreation facility needs are influenced by local, regional, and national trends. Consider the following trends.

- Dual seasons, year-round sports, and travel teams are affecting participation numbers in youth sports. Many players are choosing a single sport earlier and not playing multiple sports.
- US Lacrosse notes that lacrosse has grown in participation every year since 2006 until 2017 and 2018 when growth leveled off in participants ages 14 and younger. The organization noted that there are 14 states, including Pennsylvania with at least 10,000 participants at the youth level. The growth rate from 2013 to 2018 in high schools was 21.4 percent in boy's lacrosse and 25.7 percent in girl's lacrosse. The Sports & Fitness Industry Association tracks youth sports participation and found that lacrosse grew 7.9% from 2016-2017 in children ages 6-12 years old. As lacrosse becomes more popular it typically will pull from traditional sports like soccer, baseball, and softball.
- Sports & Fitness Industry Association change in participation rates from 2016 to 2017 for sports for children ages 6-12 years old who participate on a regular basis:
  - Baseball – increase 3.6%
  - Basketball – increase 0.9%
  - Flag Football – increase 9.9%
  - Tackle Football – decrease 11.8%
  - Lacrosse – increase 7.9%
  - Soccer – decrease 9.5%
  - Tennis – decrease 5.5%
  - Volleyball – increase 7.2%
  - Wrestling – increase 0.2%
- Sports and Fitness Industry Association found that the percentage of children who regularly participated in high-calorie-burning sports fell from 28.7% in 2011 to 23.9% in 2017.
- The online recreation survey for this planning project asked: “How important is it to expand or add the following facilities in the Bethel, Marion, and Tulpehocken region?” and the percentage of responses that indicated Very Important and Somewhat Important included:
  - Basketball Courts: 73.73%
  - Soccer: 65%
  - Youth Baseball: 73.26%
  - Youth Softball: 72.55%
- Seniors are more active and request facilities for recreation and fitness and wellness activities.
- State-wide, walking is ranked as the activity with the highest participation and trails are typically the highest desired park facility. Trails can be used by most segments of the population and are popular for walking, jogging and participating in fitness and wellness activities.

- Trails were cited on the online survey as the second most desired facility but are not provided in any of the existing parks. Trails are required to provide accessible routes to recreation facilities as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act and to provide opportunities for health and fitness activities.

## Conditions of Parkland and Recreation Facilities

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Each park site listed below was visited several times to observe existing conditions and explore park development opportunities and issues. Generally, the parks are small and maximized with recreation facilities. Common issues in the parks relate to the requirement to meet the public access provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the need for age-segregated playgrounds, and the suggestion for gathering area near activity areas. Specific findings of site observations and recreation opportunities for each park are outlined below.

### Frystown Playground – Bethel Township

Frystown Playground is classified as a neighborhood park based on its small size at 2.1 acres. The park has been recently upgraded with a new playground and enhancements to the baseball field. Accessibility is an issue throughout the park site and a Site Design and Engineering Study should be completed to address accessibility and illustrate access to existing and planned improvements.



#### Opportunities –

- Develop accessible parking on the park site. Two areas of accessible parking may be required due to the on-site slopes: one at the baseball field and one on the lower portion of the site.
- Extend trails from the accessible parking to the recreation facilities to provide a required accessible route. Extend a trail to the spectator and player areas of the baseball field.
- Develop a safe crossing of Chestnut Street with a crosswalk and safety signs.
- Provide a restroom or ADA compliant portable restroom along the accessible route.
- Eliminate benches in lawn areas for ease of mowing.
- Consider developing spectator seating behind the backstop of the baseball field. The elevated location will provide full view of the field. Incorporate the existing flagpole.
- Improve the playground by adding a plaza area with benches, picnic tables, and trees for shade for caregivers at the playground.

- Plant street trees along both sides of Chestnut Street on the park property.

## Airport Road Recreation Area – Bethel Township

Airport Road Recreation Area is a 15.28-acre undeveloped natural parcel owned by Bethel Township. The Township has developed a master plan for the park that proposes facilities for passive recreation activities.

### Opportunities –

- Develop parking, age-segregated playground, pavilion, and a comfort station on the lower, more gentle slopes.
- Develop a network of trails that explore the site and are configured with loops for variety of walking experiences. Connect trails to facilities.
- Incorporate benches and picnic tables along the trail.
- Maintain as much of the natural cover as possible.
- Remove invasive vegetation.



## Marion Township Playground – Marion Township

This park is classified as a community park based on the mix of facilities offered, although the size at 5.89-acres is less than a typical community park. The park site includes the municipal building located on the west side of Water Street. The park is in the village of Stouchburg. There are no ADA accommodations in the park and the courts and playground equipment are aged and need updating. The baseball field is used by youth leagues seasonally. The courts and baseball field have preferred solar orientation.

### Opportunities –

- Develop a master plan for the park that seeks public input to guide development and rehabilitation to the park. The master plan should include the following:
  - New age-segregated playground.



- Repurpose and renovate or remove the three court surfaces based on the recreation facilities desired by residents.
- Trail encircling the park site with linkages to facilities.
- Larger backstop repositioned to provide player and spectator area along the baselines and behind the backstop.
- On-site accessible parking spaces.



- Street trees along Scharff Road and Hunsicker Drive.
- The possibility of acquiring contiguous land on the south side of the park that provides access to the Tulpehocken Creek was mentioned during the planning study. The potential acquisition area is wooded and within the floodplain of the creek and would provide an area to extend trails to the creek for fishing and nature study. Upland areas may accommodate development of picnic facilities.

## Rehrersburg Lions Club Parcel & Rehrersburg Lions Club Park – Tulpehocken Township

Rehrersburg Lions Club Park is 3.31 acres owned by the Lions Club and the Lions Club Parcel is an undeveloped 0.9 acre parcel contiguous to the west side of the park owned by Tulpehocken Township. The park is in disrepair and there are no ADA accommodations. The ballfield has not been used in recent years. The park is the site of the annual Rehrersburg Carnival.

### Opportunities –

- Develop a master plan for the park that incorporates both the park and the parcel and seeks public input to guide development and rehabilitation of the park. The master plan should include the following:
  - New age-segregated playground with gathering area for caregivers.
  - Improved baseball/softball field if needed for league use.



- Trail encircling the park with linkage to facilities and Lions Club building.
- Add accessible picnic tables and benches.
- Improved parking area.
- Street trees along road frontages.
- Other facilities desired by residents.



### Mt. Aetna Playground & Mt. Aetna Rescue Fire Co.

These parks are in the village of Mt. Aetna, separated by Tanner Street West and the Fire Company building. Mt. Aetna Playground is 0.8 acres and includes one tennis court, a pavilion, and playground equipment. The Mt. Aetna Rescue Fire Co. parcel is 4.3 acres and includes a stage and viewing lawn, open space, and a baseball field. There are no ADA accommodations on either parcel. The playground equipment is outdated and lacks safety surfacing material in the fall zone and should be removed. The existing baseball field has not been recently used and does not have a preferred orientation.

#### Opportunities –

- Develop a master plan for the park that incorporates both the park parcels and seeks public input to guide development and rehabilitation of the park. The master plan should include the following:
  - Develop new age-segregated playground with safety surface material in the fall zone and gathering area with benches, picnic tables, and shade for caregivers.
  - Add a trail/accessible route encircling the Mt. Aetna Rescue Fire Co. parcel and linking to facilities with crosswalk to facilities on the Mt. Aetna Playground parcel.
  - Improved and re-orient the baseball field if desired for league play.
  - Other facilities desired by residents.



## Mandatory Dedication

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A typical means of acquiring land for recreation purposes, including trails is the mandatory dedication process. In 1989, the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC), Act. No. 170 of 1988 went into effect. This legislation provides municipalities with the authority to require the dedication of public land for recreation purposes. To comply with this legislation, municipalities must meet the following requirements:

1. Adopt a recreation plan that establishes parkland standards and park service areas, identifies areas in need of parkland, and includes a capital improvement program.
2. Have a municipal subdivision and land development ordinance (SALDO).
3. Develop a mandatory dedication ordinance within the SALDO that contains standards for determining the portion of a development to be dedicated and the amount, if any, of fee to be paid in lieu of land.
4. Create a separate interest bearing account for the placement of any collected fees.

The dedication of parkland is a mechanism that many municipalities use to ensure that future residents have adequate park and recreation opportunities by requiring developers to dedicate public open space within proposed developments. Bethel Township has a mandatory dedication ordinance that requires the developer of subdivisions to dedicate parkland for recreation purposes. The ordinance provides for fees-in-lieu of land as an alternative to land dedication, when approved by the Township Board of Supervisors. Tulpehocken and Marion Townships do not have mandatory dedication ordinances.

### 2014 Changes to the Law

In 2014, the Pennsylvania General Assembly clarified and modified the public dedication rules, addressing three major matters:

- Use of land and fees
- Accounting
- Removal of time limits.

**Use of Land and Fees** – The rules originally required the dedicated land or fees “to be used only for the purpose of providing park or recreational facilities accessible to the development.”

This changed in 2014 to state that:

The land or fees, or combination thereof, are to be used only for the purpose of providing, **acquiring, operating or maintaining** park or recreational facilities **reasonably** accessible to the development.

Under the new rules, municipalities are clearly authorized to use fees not only for acquisition and development of facilities but also for operations and maintenance.

**Accounting** – The original rules required municipalities to deposit the fees in an interest bearing account:

“clearly identifying the specific recreation facilities for which the fee was received.... Funds from such accounts shall be expended only in properly allocable portions of the cost incurred to construct the specific recreation facilities for which the funds were collected.”

The 2014 rules only require that the fees be placed in an interest bearing account:

“clearly identified as reserved for providing, acquiring, operating or maintaining park or recreational facilities.”

This change provides municipalities flexibility in banking and accounting for fees while still requiring that any fee be used to support the development that generated it.

**Removing Time Limit** – The rules previously required municipalities to refund any fees that they failed to use for an allowed purpose within three years of receipt. The 2014 revision now require that:

Upon request of any person who paid any fee under this subsection, the municipality shall refund such fee, plus interest accumulated thereon from the date of payment, if the municipality had used the fee paid, for a purpose other than the purposes set forth in this section.

There is no time limit for expending collected fees.

## Land Dedication Formula

**Current Land Dedication Formula** – The Bethel Township SALDO required dedication of parkland for each residential lot created for a single family dwelling in a subdivision or land development. The SALDO defines the required parkland acreage to be dedicated as follows:

A minimum of 0.06 acres of parkland shall be reserved for park and/or recreation purposes for each dwelling unit created. Additionally, improvements to these land areas shall be based upon a minimum of \$250 per dwelling unit proposed, such improvements will be subject to approval by the Township Board of Supervisors.

**Alternative Land Dedication Formula #1** – One popular method to determine how much open space should be required in a subdivision is through a dwelling unit calculation using the standard of providing 10-acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. To derive a per unit calculation using this methodology, the 1,000 population figure is divided by the municipality’s 2010 U.S. Census average household size. The following calculation results:

Bethel Township 2010 Average Household Size: 2.87

$1,000 / 2.87$  persons per dwelling unit = 348 dwellings

Divide the desired 10-acres per 1,000 residents by the 348 dwellings to yield the amount of land per dwelling:

$10\text{-acres} / 348$  dwellings = 0.029 acres/dwelling

Example: For a subdivision of 50 homes, the 0.029 acre requirement would net 1.45 acres of parkland:

$$0.029\text{-acres/dwelling} \times 50 \text{ dwellings} = 1.45 \text{ acres}$$

Table 3-6 illustrates the calculation for the three municipalities.

| Table 3-6<br>Land Dedication Formula – 10-Acres/1,000 Population |                         |                                    |                        |                         |
|--|-------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Municipality   | Bethel Township         | Bethel Township Existing Ordinance | Marion Township        | Tulpehocken Township    |
| 2010 Average Household Size                                      | 2.87                    | 2.87                               | 2.58                   | 2.94                    |
| Dwellings Per 1,000 Residents                                    | 348                     | 348                                | 388                    | 340                     |
| 10-Acre Standard / Dwelling Per 1,000 Residents                  | 0.029                   | 0.06                               | 0.026                  | 0.029                   |
| 50 Unit Subdivision Example:                                     | 50 x 0.029 = 1.45 acres | 50 x 0.06 = 3.0 acres              | 50 x 0.026 = 1.3 acres | 50 x 0.029 = 1.45 acres |

**Alternative Land Dedication Formula #2** – A dwelling unit calculation using a standard of providing 15-acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. To derive a per unit calculation using this methodology, the 1,000 population figure is divided by the municipality’s 2010 U.S. Census average household size. The following calculation results:

Bethel Township 2010 Average Household Size: 2.87

$$1,000/2.87 \text{ persons per dwelling unit} = 348 \text{ dwellings}$$

Divide the desired 15-acres per 1,000 residents by 348 dwellings to yield the amount of land per dwelling:

$$15\text{-acres}/348 \text{ dwellings} = 0.043 \text{ acres/dwelling}$$

Example: For a subdivision of 50 homes, this 0.043 acre requirement would net 2.15 acres of parkland:

$$0.043\text{-acres/dwelling} \times 50 \text{ dwellings} = 2.15 \text{ acres}$$

Table 3-7 illustrates the calculation for the three municipalities.

| Table 3-7<br>Land Dedication Formula – 15-Acres/1,000 Population |                         |                                    |                         |                        |
|--|-------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Municipality   | Bethel Township         | Bethel Township Existing Ordinance | Marion Township         | Tulpehocken Township   |
| 2010 Average Household Size                                      | 2.87                    | 2.87                               | 2.58                    | 2.94                   |
| Dwellings Per 1,000 Residents                                    | 348                     | 348                                | 388                     | 340                    |
| 15-Acre Standard / Dwelling Per 1,000 Residents                  | 0.043                   | 0.06                               | 0.039                   | 0.044                  |
| 50 Unit Subdivision Example:                                     | 50 x 0.043 = 2.15 acres | 50 x 0.06 = 3.0 acres              | 50 x 0.039 = 1.95 acres | 50 x 0.044 = 2.2 acres |

**Bethel Township’s Current Land Dedication Formula** – Bethel Township’s current SALDO requires “A minimum of six-one hundredths (0.06) acre of land shall be reserved for park and or recreation purposes for each residential lot created...”

Example: For a subdivision of 50 homes, the – 0.06-acre requirement would net 3.0 acres of parkland:

$$0.06\text{-acres/dwelling} \times 50 \text{ dwellings} = 3.0 \text{ acres}$$

The 0.06 acre requirements can be correlated to an acreage standard by multiplying the 0.06 acre requirement by 348 (the dwellings per 1,000 residents at 10 acres/1,000 ) to reveal the parkland standard of 20.88 acres of parkland per 1,000 population.

$$0.06\text{-acres} \times 348 = 20.88 \text{ acres of parkland/1,000 population}$$

The alternative land dedication formula should relate to the Parkland Acreage Standard adopted by this recreation plan and should be based on the latest U.S. Census data for average household size. The Parkland Acreage Standard has a direct relationship to the amount of parkland acreage to be dedicated for recreation purposes.

## Fee-in-Lieu

**Current Fee-in-Lieu Requirements** – Bethel Township’s fee-in-lieu of dedicating parkland or open space is defined by the ordinance as follows:

If a fee-in-lieu of dedication of land is proposed by the subdivider or developer, the fee shall be based on the fair market value of the land required to be dedicated and improved. The subdivider or developer shall provide the Board of Supervisors with all the information necessary to determine the fair market value of the approved development, including, but not limited to, an appraisal acceptable to the Township. The subdivider or developer, upon approval by the Township Board of Supervisors, may choose to submit the minimum fees stated below rather than prepare and submit the appraisal.

For residential subdivision or land development, the minimum fee shall be two-thousand-dollars (\$2,000.00) per lot or unit.

For non-residential subdivision or land development, the minimum fee shall be one-thousand-dollars (\$1,000.00) per gross lot area.

**Example of Fee-in-Lieu Calculation** – When fee-in-lieu is preferred over land dedication the municipalities should require that the fee relate to the average fair market value of the land to be dedicated.

Using the Bethel Township current 3.0 acres of land dedication for a 50-unit subdivision, the developer should provide the Township with an appraisal for an undeveloped one-acre parcel within a similar contextual setting as the proposed development. Therefore, for example, if the land were appraised at \$50,000 per acre, the Township would accept a \$150,000 fee-in-lieu of the land dedication.

If the Township prefers a dwelling unit calculation to assess fee-in-lieu, the calculation should relate to the current fair market value and should be review and adjusted on an annual basis. The following calculation is based on \$50,000 per acre land appraisals and the current land dedication calculation:

$$0.06 \text{ acres} \times \$50,000/\text{acre} = \$3,000/\text{dwelling unit fee-in-lieu amount.}$$

Tables 3-8 and 3-9 explore the Fee-In-Lieu based on the 10 Acre/1,000 Population and 15 Acre/1,000 Population.

| Table 3-8<br>Fee-In-Lieu – 10 Acres/1,000 Population   |                            |   |                            |                            |
|--|----------------------------|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Municipality   | Bethel Township            | Bethel Township Existing Ordinance                                | Marion Township            | Tulpehocken Township       |
| 10-Acre Standard / Dwelling Per 1,000 Residents        | 0.029                      | 0.06  | 0.026                      | 0.029                      |
| 50 Unit Subdivision Example:                           | 50 x 0.029 = 1.45 acres    | 50 x 0.06 = 3.0 acres   | 50 x 0.026 = 1.3 acres     | 50 x 0.029 = 1.45 acres    |
| Fee-In-Lieu Based on \$50,000 Appraised Value Per Acre | 1.45 x \$50,000 = \$72,500 | 3.0 x \$50,000 = \$150,000  | 1.3 x \$50,000 = \$65,000  | 1.45 x \$50,000 = \$72,500 |
| Fee-In-Lieu Per Acre                                   | 0.029 x \$50,000 = \$1,450 | 0.06 x \$50,000 = \$3,000 per calculation (\$2,000 per ordinance) | 0.026 x \$50,000 = \$1,300 | 0.029 x \$50,000 = \$1,450 |

| Table 3-9<br>Fee-In-Lieu – 15 Acres/1,000 Population   |                             |   |                            |                            |
|--|-----------------------------|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Municipality   | Bethel Township             | Bethel Township Existing Ordinance                                | Marion Township            | Tulpehocken Township       |
| 15-Acre Standard / Dwelling Per 1,000 Residents        | 0.043                       | 0.06  | 0.039                      | 0.044                      |
| 50 Unit Subdivision Example:                           | 50 x 0.043 = 2.15 acres     | 50 x 0.06 = 3.0 acres   | 50 x 0.039 = 1.95 acres    | 50 x 0.044 = 2.2 acres     |
| Fee-In-Lieu Based on \$50,000 Appraised Value Per Acre | 2.15 x \$50,000 = \$107,500 | 3.0 x \$50,000 = \$150,000  | 1.95 x \$50,000 = \$97,500 | 2.2 x \$50,000 = \$110,000 |
| Fee-In-Lieu Per Acre                                   | 0.043 x \$50,000 = \$2,100  | 0.06 x \$50,000 = \$3,000 per calculation (\$2,000 per ordinance) | 0.039 x \$50,000 = \$1,950 | 0.044 x \$50,000 = \$2,200 |

By tying the mandatory dedication fee-in-lieu to the fair market value of an acre of land and the average household size, the dedication of lands or fee will align with the changing real estate market.

### Land Type and Characteristic for Dedication Requirements

The characteristics of land suitable for dedication for recreation purposes should be defined by the ordinances. Bethel Township has identified seven criteria for lands to be dedicated for parkland.

Mandatory Dedication ordinances should provide concise criteria for land to be dedicated for parkland or open space. The following criteria is suggested for land to be dedicated for parkland and trails.

- The land is a minimum of five acres in size, contiguous in shape and has soil conditions suitable for developing recreational facilities. The five acres relates to the size of a neighborhood park as defined by the Bethel, Marion, Tulpehocken Park and Recreation Classification System. The municipality should require a fee-in-lieu for land areas less than five acres unless the land to be dedicated is contiguous to an existing park site or protected open space.
- The land is configured to include natural features worthy of preservation and protection.
- The land is easily and safely accessible from all areas of the subdivision with direct access to a public street and the minimum required lot width at the public street frontage. Sidewalk connections are provided where feasible. No roadways traverse the site.
- A maximum of 15% (or 10%) of the total site to be dedicated can consist of floodplain, wetlands, steep slopes (in excess of 8%), utility easements or rights-of-way, or other limiting features that render the lot un-developable.
- The land should be accessible to utilities such as sewer, water, and power. The municipality should require that the developer extend utilities to the tract.
- The land should not contain stormwater facilities designed to detain, retain, or infiltrate stormwater.
- The land to be dedicated shall be in a suitable place on the periphery of the subdivision or land development so a more usable tract will result when additional land is obtained upon development of the adjacent land. The location shall be subject to the Township Board of Supervisors.
- When the dedicated land exists adjacent to a tract to be subdivided or developed, the land to be dedicated shall be located to adjoin the presently existing dedicated land to create a single, larger tract. The configuration of such land shall be subject to review and approval by the Township Board of Supervisors.
- Trails and linear parks may be developed and dedicated for public use and incorporated into the trail system of the municipality, by means of land dedication or grant of right-of-way or easement to the municipality. Trails and linear parks shall be consistent in location, design, dimension, topography, and route with an approved *Trail System Map* and recommended by the Township Board of Supervisors.
  - Lands to be dedicated for trails should be suitable for the development of a trail without extensive engineering and structures.
  - Grants of rights-of-way or easements, intended to be incorporated in the trail system shall be not less than twenty feet (20') wide and not more than thirty feet (30') wide at any point along the length of said trail and shall include an additional twenty-foot (20') wide parallel construction easement along the length of said trail which shall automatically terminate upon the completion of construction of the same.

- Dedication of lands shall be a minimum width of fifty feet (50').
- The width of the trail surface shall be eight feet (8') wide, unless approved at other width by the Township Board of Supervisors. In no case shall the trail surface width be less than 5-foot (5') wide.
- Trail surface material shall be approved by the Township Board of Supervisors.

## Mandatory Dedication for Non-Residential Development<sup>5</sup>

Some municipalities have significant park and recreation demands generated by non-residents (e.g., commercial/industrial athletic league programs). However, the MPC is silent on whether public dedication may be imposed on *non-residential* developments. The MPC refers to public dedication as serving “in-habitants of the development or subdivision,” and it is unclear if this term encompasses *employees* (see §503(11)(v)).

Nevertheless, several municipalities do impose public dedication requirements on commercial and industrial development. Newtown Township (Bucks County), for example, imposes a dedication standard of 750 sq. feet of parkland per 1,000 sq. feet of building area or requests a fee-in-lieu payment of \$1,291 per 1,000 sq. feet of non-residential building area.

Bethel Township SALDO requires dedication of land for nonresidential subdivision or land development as follows:

A minimum of three-hundredths (0.03) acre of land reserved for park and/or recreation purposes for every gross acre of every nonresidential subdivision or land development except subdivision of land developments of agriculture, recreational, school, and church land. Additionally, improvements to these land areas shall be based upon a minimum of \$100.00 per gross acre, such improvements will be subject to approval by the Township Board of Supervisors.

An alternative approach ties the non-residential land dedication standard to the number of parking spaces used by employees in a development.

To continue the previous example, in Bethel Township, 0.029 acres of land is required for every 2.87 residents (average household size) in a development. Similarly, this non-residential approach could require 0.029 acres for every 2.87 parking spaces of employees who are not municipal residents and who use local park and recreation facilities.

There is disagreement in the planning field about whether public dedication should be applied to commercial or industrial uses, and it does not appear that this disagreement will be settled anytime soon. Therefore, to improve the odds that its public dedication ordinance will stand the test of time, a municipality that decides to require public dedication for commercial and industrial land uses should specifically document the recreational needs of commercial and industrial users who are not residents

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<sup>5</sup> Public Dedication of Land and Fees-in-Lieu for Parks and Recreation, A Tool for Meeting Recreational Demands in Pennsylvania Municipalities. <http://conservationtools.org/guides/17-public-dedication-of-land-and-fees-in-lieu-for-parks-and-recreation>. October 1, 2015.

within the municipality and devise a methodology to determine their level of demand. Then it should create a standard that exacts the amount of parkland needed to serve future employees and make sure that such parks are readily accessible to the employees.

## Parkland & Recreation Facility Analysis

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### Strengths

- The region has community organizations, churches, and schools that offset the need for parkland at the municipal level. Residents in each community have access to parkland and recreation facilities. Youth league facility needs are addressed in neighboring communities.

### Challenges

- The municipalities need additional parkland to meet the minimum standard of 10-acres of parkland per 1,000 population and to provide facilities desired by residents. The park facilities typically target the recreation needs and interests of youth. Opportunities for teens, young adults, adults, adult seniors, and persons with disabilities are limited and should be introduced. The parks lack accessibility accommodations (ADA) and in most locations include outdated play equipment.
- The parks are small and typically maximized with recreation facilities. There is relatively little room to expand the recreation facility offerings in the existing parks to add facilities desired by residents. Overall, in the region, there is a need for additional parkland and the parkland deficit will grow to over 89 acres, based on the Parkland Acreage Standard, by 2030.
- Marion and Tulpehocken Townships do not have mandatory dedication of parkland ordinance provisions in their SALDO requiring dedication of parkland or fee-in-lieu to offset the recreation impact of new development.

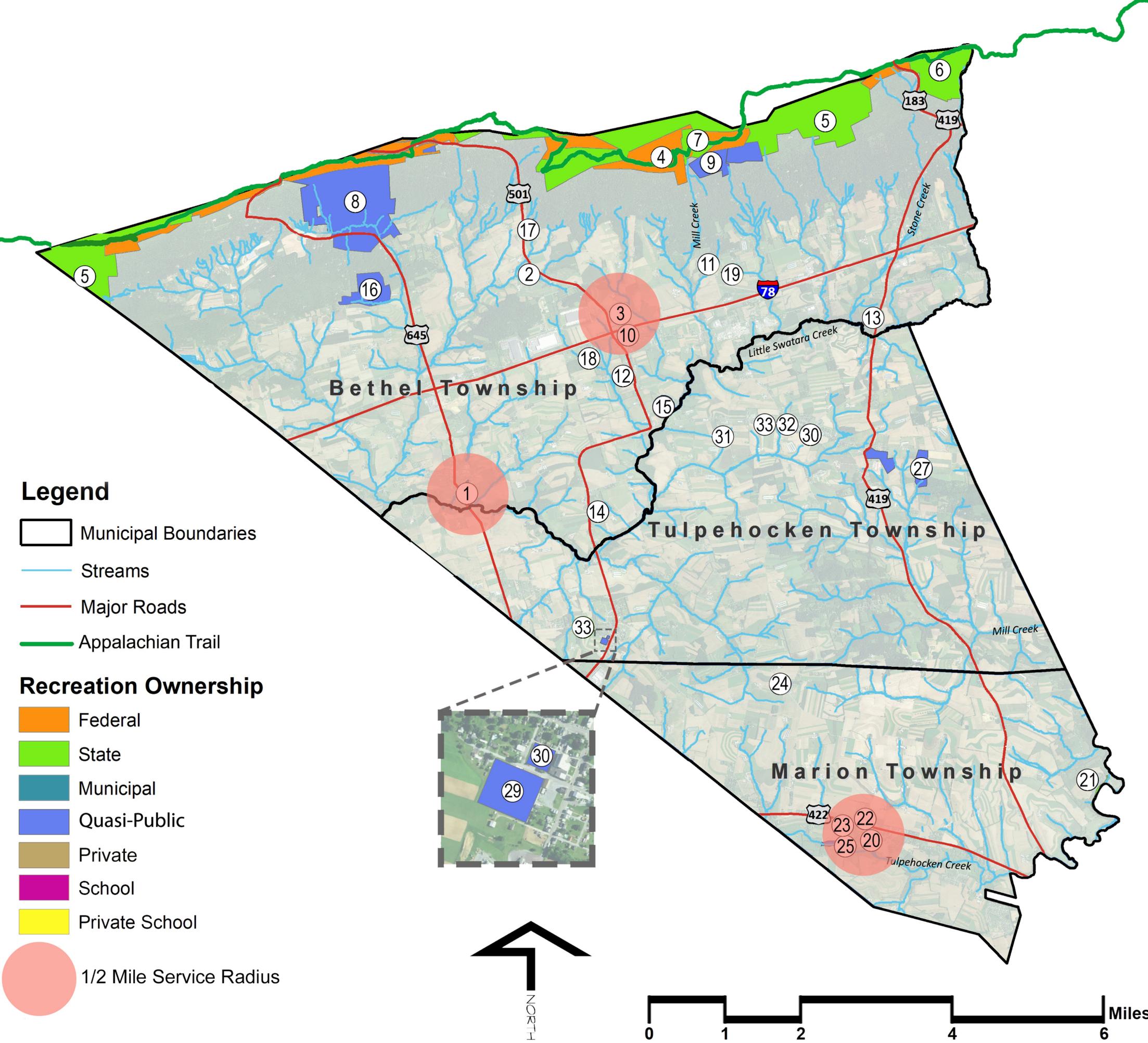
### Opportunities

- Citizens value the existing parks and support park enhancements. Each of the existing park sites except for Airport Road Recreation Area have relatively gentle topography which can readily accommodate accessible trails to meet the requirements of the ADA. Investment in the existing parks can provide facilities that provide quality recreation experiences.
- When developed, Airport Road Recreation Area will provide a destination for passive recreation in a natural setting.
- A regional approach to providing expanded recreation opportunities can be efficient and is viewed positively by state funding agencies.



# Bethel, Marion, and Tulpehocken Township Park and Recreation Facility Inventory

July 2019



| BETHEL TOWNSHIP      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| 1                    | Frystown Playground  |
| 2                    | Airport Road Recreation Area   |
| 3                    | Bethel-Tulpehocken Community Library   |
| 4                    | Appalachian Trail  |
| 5                    | PA Gamelands No. 80  |
| 6                    | PA Gamelands No. 110   |
| 7                    | Weiser State Forest  |
| 8                    | Camp Swatara   |
| 9                    | Blue Mountain Wilderness Park Association  |
| 10                   | Union Fire Company of Bethel Ball Field  |
| 11                   | Tri-County Worship Center  |
| 12                   | Bethel Elementary School   |
| 13                   | Bethel Dunkard Brethren Church School  |
| 14                   | Lebanon Valley Christian School  |
| 15                   | Blue Mountain View Parochial School  |
| 16                   | Bethel Beagle Club   |
| 17                   | Lebanon Valley Motorcycle Club   |
| 18                   | Northwest Berks Rod and Gun Club   |
| 19                   | Grimes Airport and Golden Age Air Museum   |
| MARION TOWNSHIP      |  |
| 20                   | Marion Township Playground   |
| 21                   | Charming Forge Tulpehocken Creek Access Area                                     |
| 22                   | Marion Volunteer Fire Company Community Center                                   |
| 23                   | Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church Picnic Grove                                  |
| 24                   | North Marion Parochial School  |
| 25                   | Marion Township Rod and Gun Club   |
| TULPEHOCKEN TOWNSHIP |  |
| 26                   | Rehrersburg Lions Club Parcel  |
| 27                   | Camp Calvary   |
| 28                   | Mt. Aetna Playground   |
| 29                   | Mt. Aetna Rescue Fire Co.  |
| 30                   | Rehrersburg Lions Club Park  |
| 31                   | Little Swatara Church of the Brethren  |
| 32                   | Sara Kurr Zock Building, Tulpehocken Area School District Administration Offices |
| 33                   | Mt. Aetna Mennonite School   |



# Chapter 4 – Greenways, Trails & Open Space

Greenways and trails are important components of a community's comprehensive park system. Trails provide passive recreation opportunities and green corridors protect natural resources and important habitat areas. Easy access to trails promotes fitness and wellness activities. Connecting parks and community destinations with trails and greenways adds to the livability and quality of life of a community. This chapter will explore the opportunities for greenways and trails in the Bethel, Marion and Tulpehocken region.

## Greenways & Trails

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### Greenways

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A greenway is a corridor of open space. Greenways may vary greatly in scale from narrow ribbons of green that run through urban, suburban, and rural areas to wider corridors that incorporate diverse natural, cultural, and scenic features. They can incorporate both public and private property and can be land- or water-based. They may follow old railways, canals, or ridge tops, or they may follow stream corridors, shorelines, or wetlands, and include water trails for non-motorized craft. Some greenways are recreational corridors or scenic byways that may accommodate motorized and non-motorized vehicles. Others function almost exclusively for environmental protection and are not designated for human passage.

Greenways differ in their location and function, but overall, a greenway will protect natural, cultural, and scenic resources, provide recreational benefits, enhance natural beauty and quality of life in neighborhoods and communities, and stimulate economic development opportunities.

## Benefits of Greenways and Trails

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### Social Benefits

- Provide access to historically and culturally significant features.
- Provide opportunities to reconnect with the natural environment.
- Increase quality of life.
- Help to preserve the character and aesthetic appeal of a place or landscape.

- Provide significant new public places which can help to connect people and communities.
- Improve health and wellness of greenway and trail users.
- Heighten sensitivity to the natural environment by providing for interaction between people and nature.



### Transportation Benefits

- Promote non-motorized transportation.
- Provide safe alternative transportation routes for pedestrians and bicyclists which will lessen dependency on automobiles.
- Provide emergency access via trails to undeveloped areas.
- Reduce roadway congestion through redistribution of users to alternative transportation routes.



### Ecological Benefits

- Connect fragmented landscapes.
- Promote plant and animal species diversity.
- Provide corridors for wildlife migration and movement.
- Preserve and protect vital wildlife, plant, and aquatic habitats.
- Improve air quality and reduce noise.
- Protect natural areas.
- Reduce stormwater damage and promote flood mitigation within protected floodplains.



- Protect watersheds and groundwater retention areas.
- Store and convey floodwaters.
- Clean up abandoned corridors.
- Serve as a filtering zone; wetlands absorb pollutants and nutrients and slow surface run-off.

## Recreation Benefits

- Provide areas to jog, walk, bike, ride horses, cross-country ski, and canoe.
- Serve as sites for passive pursuits such as picnicking, fishing, and enjoying nature.
- Connect existing and planned trails.
- Encourage ecotourism.
- Provide landscapes for environmental education.
- Provide connections between parks and other protected lands.



## Economic Benefits

- Increase nearby property values.
- Precipitate new and expanded businesses related to greenway and trail use. New businesses will provide employment opportunities and revenues.
- Create tourist destinations which generate expenditures on food, services, and lodging.
- Reduce damage and financial loss from flooding by providing buffer areas along stream and river corridors.

## State and Local Greenway and Trail Initiatives

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### Pennsylvania

In 1991, Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge enacted Executive Order 1998-3, charging DCNR, DEP, and PENNDOT, assisted by the Pennsylvania Greenways Partnership Commission, to develop an action plan for advancing a Pennsylvania Greenways Partnership Program. In June 2001, *Pennsylvania Greenways: An Action Plan for Creating Connections* was completed. The plan sets forth a series of goals and

action items in a coordinated and strategic approach aimed at developing a statewide system of connected greenways.

### Pennsylvania Greenways Vision

Pennsylvania and its many partners will develop an outstanding network of greenways across the Commonwealth, creating an asset highly valued by Pennsylvanians and enhancing the quality of life for all. This network of greenways will connect Pennsylvanians' open space, natural landscape features, scenic, cultural, historic and recreational sites, and urban and rural communities. Greenways will become one of the Commonwealth's most powerful tool to achieve sustainable growth and livable communities.

It is envisioned that Pennsylvania's greenways network will consist of individual greenways and regional networks of greenways of all kinds. While every greenway is important and adds value to Pennsylvania's landscapes and communities, a statewide greenways network achieves broad connections that are fundamental to sustainable environments in rural, suburban, and urban settings. The landscape connections that will result throughout Pennsylvania will create a "green infrastructure" of open space vital to the health of Pennsylvania's ecological systems and manmade communities. The statewide greenways network also can provide a new connectivity within and among Pennsylvania's communities and promote healthier lifestyles with more abundant recreational opportunities and transportation alternatives, and stronger connections to cultural and historic places. This connectivity can be represented by the metaphor of the "hubs" and "spokes" of a wheel.

### Berks County Greenway, Park & Recreation Plan

The *Berks County Greenway, Park & Recreation Plan* identifies two greenways and five existing or potential trails in the Bethel, Marion, and Tulpehocken region.

Greenways include:

- Kittatinny Ridge Greenway
- Tulpehocken Greenway

Trails include:

- Appalachian Trail
- Andulhea Greenway Trail
- Hex Highway Trail
- Tulpehocken Trail
- Tulpehocken Creek Water Trail.



## Regional Greenway and Trail Initiatives

The Bethel, Marion, and Tulpehocken region, in the northwest corner of Berks County shares borders with Schuylkill and Lebanon Counties and five municipalities in Berks County. Currently, only the Appalachian Trail extend between municipalities and counties. The Appalachian Trail follows the Blue Mountain ridgeline. Future trails associated with the Tulpehocken Creek/Union Canal and Hex Highway would extend from the region to adjacent municipalities.

## Organizing Elements of the Greenways and Trail Network

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The 2001 Pennsylvania Greenways – An Action Plan for Creating Connections proposes that “... the Commonwealth should have a distinguishable greenway network, similar to the Interstate Highway System ...”. This greenway network will ultimately take the form of "hubs and spokes." The "hubs" of this network are the destination and the "spokes" are the greenways and trail corridors connecting these destinations with the places where we live, work, and play. The following hubs and spokes have been identified in the Bethel, Marion, and Tulpehocken region:

### Hubs

#### Schools

- Bethel Elementary School
- Sara Kurr Zock Building

#### Recreation

- Municipal Parks
- Northwest Berks Rod and Gun Club
- Camp Swatara
- Charming Forge Tulpehocken Creek Access Area
- Blue Mountain Wilderness Park Association
- Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church Picnic Grove
- Union Fire Co of Bethel Ball Field
- Marion Township Rod and Gun Club
- Tri-County Worship Center
- Camp Calvary
- Appalachian Trail
- Mt. Aetna Playground
- Bethel Beagle Club
- Rehrersburg Lions Club Park

#### Cultural – Historic

- Grimes Airport and Golden Age Air Museum
- Schubert Gap Power Dam Remnants
- Spannuth Mil
- Showers 500 Steps
- Fort Henry (sign)

- Andulhea Museum

### Commercial – Employment

- Village of Bethel
- Old Route 22
- Route 422

### Other Destinations

- Restaurants
- Churches
- Municipal Buildings
- Fire Halls
- Private Schools

### Spokes

- Trails
- Stream Corridors
- Wooded Ridge Lines
- Sanitary Sewer Easements
- Utility Rights-of-Way
- Road Rights-of-Way

### Barriers

There is one significant barrier to greenway corridor and trail development in the region: PA Route 78. PA Route 78 is a limited-access highway that traverses the study area in an east-west direction. Seven roads cross over or under PA Route 78 and several local roads dead-end at the highway. There are no other significant barriers to connectivity in the region.

## Greenways in the Bethel, Marion and Tulpehocken Region

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The Kittatinny Ridge and streams provide the spokes for the Bethel, Marion, and Tulpehocken region greenway system. The greenways are illustrated on the Greenway and Trails map on page 18.

### Major Greenways

**Kittatinny Ridge Greenway** – The Kittatinny Ridge Greenway, also known as the Blue Mountain Ridge Greenway, follows the Blue Mountain ridgeline, which generally aligns with the northern boundary of Berks County. The greenway corridor is partially within Bethel Township extending approximately 11-miles along the northern Township boundary with Berks County and includes portions of Weiser State Forest and State Game Lands No. 110 and 80. The Appalachian National Scenic Trail is located within this greenway corridor.



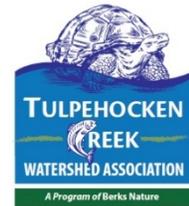
The Kittatinny Ridge Greenway is a 200-mile regional greenway extending south into Maryland, crossing Fulton, Franklin, Dauphin, and Lebanon Counties; and northeast to New Jersey, crossing Berks, Carbon, Lehigh, Northampton, and Monroe Counties. The Kittatinny Ridge is recognized as a “globally significant” migration flyway in spring and fall for thousands of hawks and eagles and millions of songbirds; and has been officially designated by Audubon as the state’s largest “Important Bird Area (IBA).”



Schubert’s Gap Power Dam remnants and the Shower Steps are located within this greenway corridor.

**Tulpehocken Greenway** – The Tulpehocken Greenway follows the Tulpehocken Creek . The headwaters of the Tulpehocken Creek originate in the foothills just west of Myerstown and flow east to Reading, where it empties into the Schuylkill River. The Tulpehocken Creek flows through southern Marion Township and forms a portion of the municipal boundary between Marion Township and North Heidelberg and Heidelberg Townships and Womelsdorf Borough.

The Tulpehocken Creek Watershed Association is dedicated to the monitoring, conserving, and restoration of the Tulpehocken Creek Watershed’s exceptional rivers and streams. The main corridor of the Tulpehocken Creek is about 40 miles long, including approximately 8 miles in Marion Township. The stream is classified as a Cold Water Fisheries stream by PA Department of Environmental Protection, water quality standards within the study area.



The Union Canal (est. 1827) was 79 ½ miles in length between Reading on the Schuylkill River and Middletown on the Susquehanna River. The canal route followed several streams including the Tulpehocken Creek. The canal towpath paralleled the creek.

## Minor Greenways

**Little Swatara Creek Greenway** – The Little Swatara Creek Greenway follows the Little Swatara Creek which flows from east to west to join the Swatara Creek in Lebanon County. The Little Swatara Creek forms the boundary between Bethel Township and Tulpehocken Township.

There are no public parks located along this creek and it is classified as a Cold Water Fisheries stream by PA Department of Environmental Protection, water quality standards within the study area.

## Existing & Potential Trails in the Bethel, Marion & Tulpehocken Region

Trails in the Bethel, Marion, and Tulpehocken region are illustrated on the Greenway & Trail map on page 18.

## Existing Trails

**Appalachian National Scenic Trail** – The Appalachian National Scenic Trail is a continuous, marked footpath extending along the Appalachian Mountain system for more than 2,100 miles between Katahdin in Maine and Springer Mountain in Georgia. The Appalachian National Scenic Trail traverses the northern boundary of Bethel Township, generally following the Kittatinny Ridge line of Blue Mountain, meandering between Schuylkill County and Berks County.



The Appalachian Trail is a recreation resource valued by residents of the region. Destinations within Bethel Township include the Kimmel and Fisher Lookouts which provide long-distance views over Camp Swatara and the valley. The lookouts have access from the Route 501 parking area. Kessel Trail is a 1.3-mile trail that extends from Route 501 to the Appalachian Trail and has a link to the Shower Steps. The Shower Steps are 500 stone steps placed by Lloyd Showers to provide access to the Appalachian Trail.



The Appalachian Trail Conservancy and Appalachian Trail Park Office, in partnership with the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service, and numerous volunteer organizations, share responsibility for general trail management and operations; resource management; facilities and use management; information, interpretation, education, and outreach; and technical program support.

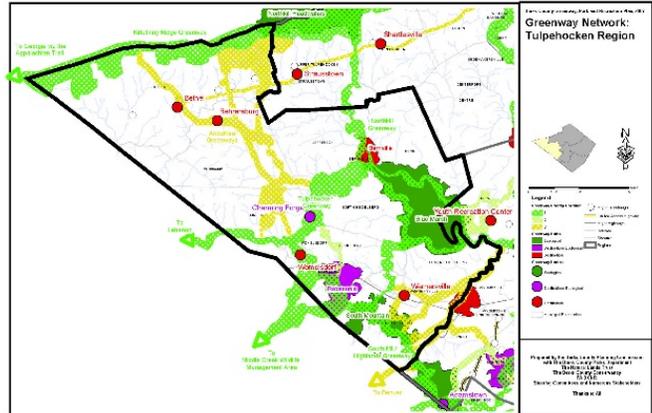
On June 11, 2008, then Governor Rendell signed House Bill 1281 amending the Appalachian Trail Act of 1978. HB 1281 is now known as Act 24 of 2008 and became effective on August 10th, 2008. The amended act now requires municipalities where the Appalachian Trail passes to adopt and enforce zoning ordinances that preserve the “natural, scenic, historic and aesthetic values of the trail and to conserve and maintain it as public resource”. Bethel Township should consider adopting zoning ordinance provisions to follow Act 24.

## Potential Trails, Bicycle Routes, and Trail Accommodations

Opportunities for trails in the Bethel, Marion, and Tulpehocken region are limited due to the lack of man-made linear resources such as abandoned railroad or trolley lines. The region has three significant natural corridors that provide greenway opportunities, but trail opportunities within these corridors are challenging due to the private land ownership. Typically, when a municipality plans for a trail system the preferred trail type is a multi-use trail that can accommodate pedestrian, bicycles, as well as other permitted uses. The region is fortunate to have approximately 11-miles of Appalachian Trail, but the trail is designated as a footpath and only hiking is permitted, limiting its function in a regional comprehensive trail system.

Potential trails in the Bethel, Marion, and Tulpehocken region include:

**Andulhea Greenway Trail** – The Andulhea Greenway Trail is designated in the *Berks County Greenway, Park and Recreation Plan*. The greenway does not follow a natural linear feature but was envisioned as a connector that extends from the Kittatinny Ridge Greenway to the villages of Bethel and Rehrersburg and from Rehrersburg to Womelsdorf Borough utilizing the Route 419 corridor. The corridor links to the Appalachia Trail.



The Andulhea Greenway Trail is promoted in *the County Plan* as a trail connector to the Appalachian Trail, to expand recreation value to residents and advance the local economy through tourism from visitors who visit the area to access the Appalachian Trail. The greenway extension to Womelsdorf along Route 419 is recommended as bike lanes on expanded road shoulders which would connect to the Hex Highway bike route. A separate two-way trail for bikes and pedestrians adjacent to the road is preferred if the road right-of-way width is sufficient.

**Hex Highway Trail** – Hex Highway Trail is suggested in the *Berks County Greenway, Park and Recreation Plan* as a bicycle route that extends along Old Route 22 between Hamburg and Bethel. The route would promote local history, culture, and natural resources. Trail development options to explore include bike lanes on expanded road shoulders or a separate trail adjacent to the road. This east-west corridor connects to the Andulhea Greenway trail which is a north-south corridor.

**Tulpehocken Trail** – The Tulpehocken Trail follows the Tulpehocken Creek and Union Canal towpath. The trail is proposed as a multi-use regional trail that would extend west into Lebanon County and east into Jefferson and North Heidelberg Townships, Berks County where it will connect with the trails of Blue Marsh Lake Recreation Area.

**Tulpehocken Creek Water Trail** – The Tulpehocken Creek is not designated as an official PA Water Trail but there are areas of the creek that can be paddled seasonally, and the *Berks County Greenway, Park and Recreation Plan* list the creek as a water trail. There are no public parks located along the stream in the study area. Water trails are recreational waterways between specific locations, containing access points and day-use sites for public boating. Water trails emphasize low-impact use and promote stewardship of the water and land resources. Areas for public access to the creek for paddle craft launch and landing should be sought.



## Complete Streets & Walkable Communities

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Walking is an easy way to start and maintain a physically active lifestyle that will provide substantial health benefits. Among adults who reported any physical activity in 2011, 52 percent of men and 74 percent of women reported walking as one of the top two activities in which they participate.<sup>1</sup> Walking can be multipurpose and, where pedestrian and bicycle accommodations are provided, can be transportation to get to school, go shopping, walk the dog, or gather with friends at a nearby park to socialize. Walking benefits communities by making them safer, reducing air pollution, and benefiting local economies.

**Complete Streets** – Complete Streets are streets for everyone. They are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities.<sup>2</sup> Benefits of Complete Streets include:

- Provide travel choices
- Encourage walking and bicycling
- Encourage healthy and active lifestyles
- Enhance safety
- Improve air quality
- Help reduce carbon emissions
- Help create livable communities where walking and bicycling are a viable choice of transportation
- Provide children with opportunities to reach nearby destinations in a safe environment
- Have positive environmental impacts due to reduced pavement widths, use of pervious pavement, and introduction of landscaping

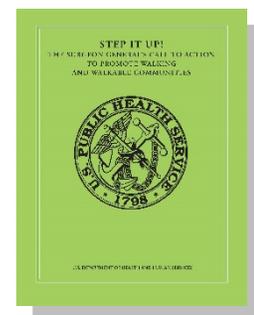
In 2015 the US Department of Health and Human Services released *“Step It Up! The Surgeon General’s Call to Action to Promote Walking and Walkable Communities”*. The Call to Action addresses several key principles for improving the nation’s health and defines five goals to support walking and walkability in the United States.

**Goal 1** – Make Walking a National Priority.

**Goal 2** – Design Communities that Make It Safe and Easy to Walk for People of All Ages and Abilities.

**Goal 3** – Promote Programs and Policies to Support Walking Where People Live, Learn, Work, and Play.

**Goal 4** – Provide Information to Encourage Walking and Improve Walkability.



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1 Watson KB, Frederick GM, Harris CD, Carlson SA, Fulton JE. U.S. adults’ partition in specific activities, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System – 2001. *J Phys Act Health*, 2015;12(suppl 1):S3-S10.

2 National Complete Streets Coalition, 10/28/15. <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets/complete-streets-fundamentals/complete-streets-faq>

## Goal 5 – Fill Surveillance, Research, and Evaluation Gaps Related to Walking and Walkability.

**A Park Within A 10-Minute Walk of Home** – Easy access to parks promotes an active, healthy lifestyle. Parks provide opportunities and facilities for physical activity for people of all ages and abilities. Convenient access to parks can facilitate incorporating healthy activities into daily routines. The Trust for Public Land, Urban Land Institute, and National Recreation & Park Association have teamed together to create a campaign that promotes easy access to parks: *Everyone Deserves A Park Within A Ten-Minute Walk of Home*. This campaign recognizes that parks are essential to the physical, social, environmental, and economic health of a community.



This goal is especially relevant in urban areas where the built fabric of a city limits opportunities for outdoor activities. As the Bethel, Marion, and Tulpehocken region grows, the goal of providing convenient access to parkland should be considered as development occurs.

## Expanding the Trail System

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The setting of the Bethel, Marion, and Tulpehocken region with its small villages and rural townships, dominated by agriculture and woodlands will require a broad approach to create a comprehensive network of trails throughout the region. The three multi-use trails noted above; Andulhea Greenway Trail, Hex Highway Trail, and the Tulpehocken Trail, are suggested corridors and do not currently exist. Extensive planning, coordination, and municipal and County effort and investment will be required to make these trails a reality. These trails should be the spine trails, generally providing east-west and north-south trails through the region. Other trails should link to these trails.

There are not always physical features such as an abandoned railroad or trolley line to create a regional-wide system of trails. Other options are needed to create a connected region that is pedestrian and bicycle friendly. To maximize connectivity sidewalks, bike lanes, and shared roadways may help to round out the trail system and extend connections into the developed areas of communities. Following are facilities that should be considered to enhance connectivity and expand the trail system.

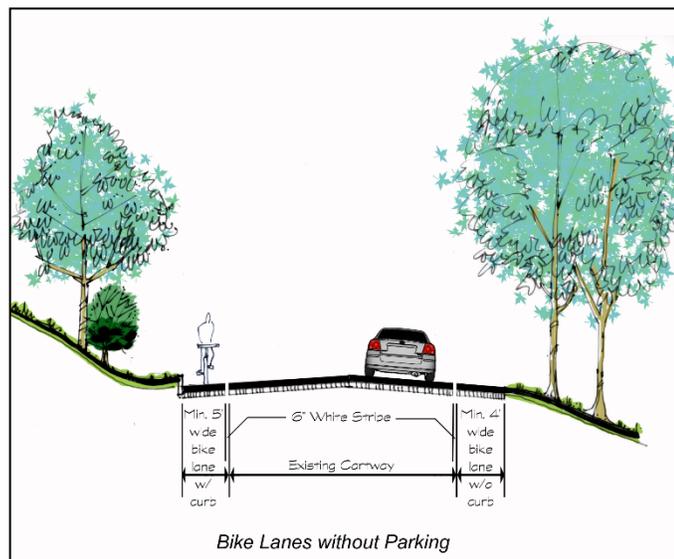
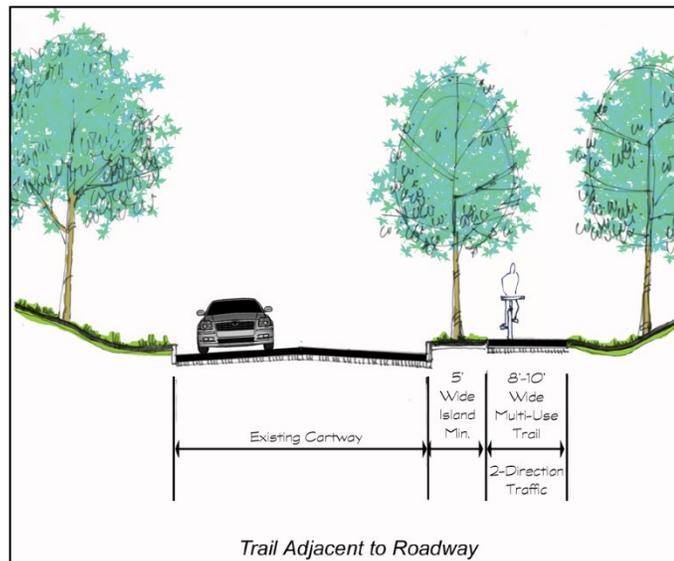
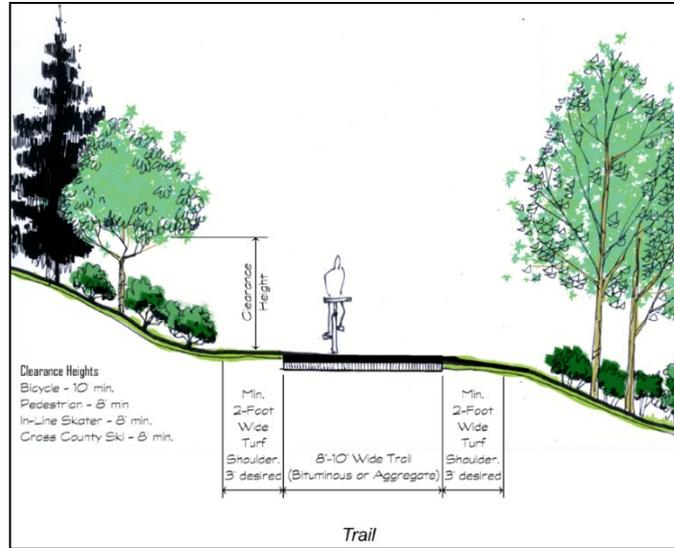
**Sidewalks** – Sidewalks present one level of solution for enhancing mobility, but only accommodate pedestrians. To truly enhance mobility in a community, trails of enough width to accommodate both pedestrians and cyclists are needed. Parts of Bethel, Rehrersburg, Frystown, Mt. Aetna, and Stouchsburg are developed with sidewalks, but the sidewalks do not extend throughout the entire community. The municipal subdivision and land development process should require sidewalks in residential developments and limit the consideration of waivers for the requirement. Parks within the villages should have sidewalk along street frontages.

**Trails** – Typically, the preferred configuration for a trail is a separate corridor that extends from point A to point B. Safety is enhanced when trails are separated from roadways and road crossings are minimized. Community trails should be multipurpose for both pedestrians and bicycles. Recommended width for a shared use trail with two-directional traffic is 8-12-feet. Trails may follow a stream corridor or a road or utility right-of-way or run cross-country following no physical feature at

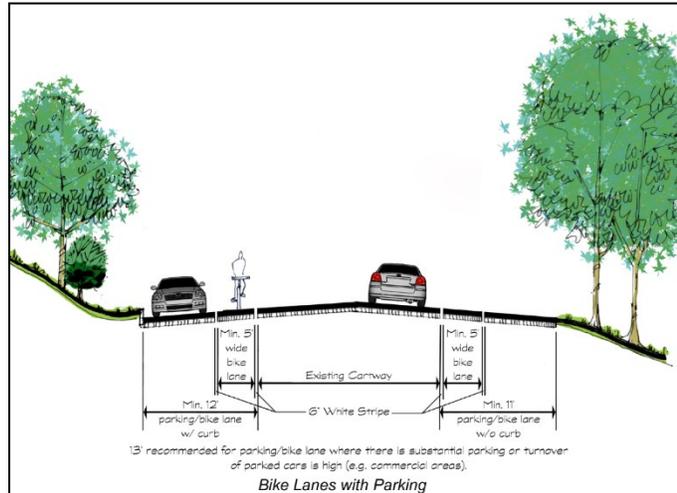
all. Where trails are outside of public rights-of-ways, access easement will be required where trails are not on public land.

**Trails Adjacent to Roadways –** Trails adjacent to roadways are typically located within the road right-of-way. A grass strip of at least 5-foot wide should separate the trail from the roadway where possible. Trails adjacent to roadways are suggested along roads that do not have adjoining sidewalks and the physical area to develop a separate trail is available.

**Bike Lanes without Parking –** Where physical space is limited; trail development may not be possible. An alternative may be development of bike lanes on wide roadways with adequate right-of-way width. Bike lanes should be developed on both sides of a two-way street, separated from the vehicular cartway by a 6" white stripe. Bike lanes carry bike traffic, on the road cartway, in the same direction as the adjacent vehicular traffic. The recommended minimum width of a bike lane is 4' on streets without curb or gutter and 5' from the face of a curb. The *American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities* should be referenced when designing on-road bicycle facilities. Bike lanes provide a travel route for bicycles but do not provide accommodations for pedestrians. In areas where sidewalks exist, bike lanes can expand the network by providing a dedicated location for bicyclists. Where sidewalks are not provided, a separate multi-use trail is preferred to accommodate both pedestrians and bicyclists. Bike lanes effectively narrow a street and provide a traffic calming effect as motorists typically drive slower on narrower cartways.



**Bike Lanes with Parking** – Additional consideration must be made where on-street parking is permitted. To expand the connectivity of the trail network for cyclists, bike lanes are often developed between the parking aisle and the vehicle cartway on streets with parking where certain spatial parameters exist. The sketch below shows the dimensions provided in the AASHTO guidelines for bike lanes on streets with on-street parking.



There is an inherent danger associated with bike travel in the “door zone” of parked cars and the topic of bike lanes on streets that allow on-street parking is controversial, with diverse views that relate to safety.

Car doors opening into bike lanes present a significant safety concern for cyclists. When cyclists encounter a door opening in their path of travel, they must either stop short or swerve into the vehicle travel lane to avoid the open door. Cyclists have been injured and killed trying to avoid an open car door or hitting an open door. The possibility of a door zone related crash is highest in locations with high parking turnover, such as a main street or in commercial districts.

Various techniques have been experimented within communities to reduce door zone accidents such as wider bike lanes, pavement markings and warning signs, and in some communities shared lane pavement markings, are used.

**Signed Shared Roadways** – The roadways throughout the Bethel, Marion, and Tulpehocken region have not been designed with bicyclists in mind. In Pennsylvania, a bicycle is considered a vehicle and must conform to the rules and regulations that apply to all vehicles as well as specific requirements for bicycles. There are accommodations that can make a roadway more compatible with bicycle travel. Signing or marking a road for shared use is a common design feature that enhances bicycle use. The AASHTO guidelines note the following reasons for developing a signed bike route:

- The route provides continuity to other bicycle facilities such as bike lanes and shared use paths.
- The road is a common route for bicyclists through a high demand corridor.
- In rural areas, the route is preferred for bicycling due to low motor vehicle traffic volume or paved shoulder availability.
- The route extends along local neighborhood streets and collectors that lead to an internal neighborhood destination such as a park, school, or commercial district.

The two signs at the right are used in Pennsylvania to designate a shared road roadway. In April of 2012 Pennsylvania enacted a new law to enhance bicycle safety, requiring drivers to provide a 4-foot comfort zone when passing on the left of bicyclists.



Another method of signing a roadway that emerged in recent years and is becoming more popular is the installation of “sharrow” markings on roadway pavement. A sharrow is a shared lane marking that is often installed on roadways that are popular with bicyclists but too narrow or inappropriate for bike lanes. The sharrow indicates where bicyclists should ride to avoid traveling in the door zone of parked cars and alerts motorists of bicycle traffic. Sharrows are typically installed 11-feet from the curb, which provides approximately 4-feet clearance from parked cars. Sharrow markings are intended to improve the position of the bicyclists and motorists on roads without bike lanes, alert motorists, deter aggressive motorist behavior, encourage correct bicycle travel, and encourage bicycle use.



Other roadway improvements that enhance shared road bicycle travel include bicycle-safe drainage grates, paved shoulders, flush bridge expansion joints, improved railroad crossings, controlled intersections with lights, and wide curb lanes.

## Greenways and Open Space Protection

The greenways in the Bethel, Marion, and Tulpehocken Region function primarily to protect open space, natural area, and natural resources. The Kittatinny Ridge Greenway primarily traverses public lands while the Little Swatara and Tulpehocken Greenways are exclusively on private lands, following stream corridors.

While public ownership is one way to protect the greenways and their underlying resources, few municipalities have the financial resources or the opportunity to acquire all the land along a natural corridor. Working with willing landowners to protect land through stream stabilization and riparian buffer planting initiatives promotes conservation. Conservation easements and purchase of development rights are popular approaches to open space protection while the land remains in private ownership.

Table 4-1 identifies various strategies to protect open space and greenway corridors.

| Table 4-1<br>Open Space Protection Strategies |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| Open Space Protection Strategy                | Strategy Explanation   | Advantage/Disadvantage  |
| Acquisition or Donation                       |  |   |
| Acquisition                                   | Acquisition of land for the sole purpose of greenway/trail development | One of the most effective methods of permanently protecting open space. It is also the most costly and contingent upon an agency or organization to manage and maintain the land. |
| Donations/Gifts                               | Donation of land to an agency or non-profit organization               | Provides permanent protection without public expenditure. May provide tax benefits to the donor if the donation is for preservation or conservation.                              |
| Bargain Sale                                  | Land is purchased at less than its appraised market value.             | Difference in purchase and fair market value is considered a charitable gift for tax purposes.  |

**Table 4-1  
Open Space Protection Strategies**

| Open Space Protection Strategy         | Strategy Explanation  | Advantage/Disadvantage   |
|--|---|--|
| <b>Acquisition or Donation</b>         |   |  |
| Option to Buy                          | An agreement with a property owner to purchase or have the right of first refusal to purchase land.   | Secures the rights for future purchase but does not set price or determine when or if property would be sold.  |
| Purchase of Development Rights         | To provide a landowner the monetary difference between the value of land when fully developed with uses allowed by rights verses the value of the same parcel remaining undeveloped as open space.  | For landowner lowers taxes on land. Cost to purchase development rights may be high.   |
| Purchase of Resource Protection Rights | To purchase the rights from a landowner to protect and manage specific resources.   | Cost to purchase resource protection rights may be high.   |
| Purchase & Resale                      | Purchase land by party desiring to restrict its future use and resold only under conditions or restrictive deed conditions.   | Party that originally purchased the land for the sole purpose of restricting its use is relieved of continuing ownership and maintenance responsibilities. Land remains on tax rolls.  |
| Condemnation                           | Condemnation is the act of eminent domain or taking of private property for public purposes.  | Tool for acquisition. May be costly and reflect negatively on the greenway initiative. Use as last resort for protection.  |
| <b>Easements</b>                       |   |  |
| Conservation Easements                 | A legally enforceable agreement between a landowner and an agency or non-profit organization which places restriction on the use of or activities on a specific property which aligns with conservation objectives.   | Less expensive than acquisition of land. The landowner retains rights not surrendered in the easement agreement and the easement provisions are valid and enforceable in perpetuity. Public access may be restricted. Method for enforcement needed. |
| Public Access Easement                 | An easement that provides the public the right to access to or through a privately-owned land for a defined purpose such as hiking, walking, and biking. Specific activities such as hunting and motorized vehicle use may be prohibited.   | Less expensive than acquisition of land. The landowner retains rights not surrendered in the easement agreement and the easement provisions are valid and enforceable in perpetuity.   |
| <b>Land Use Regulations</b>            |   |  |
| Overlay Zone                           | A zone that is overlaid on an existing zone which adds regulation governing the use of a property. This technique is typically used to protect floodplains, woodlands, and steep slopes. Overlay zones can be designated for specific resources or areas to provide additional environmental protection. Riparian buffers, wetlands, and unique natural areas are resources that could be protected with an overlay zone. | Enforced by local government. Allows targeted protection of natural resources.   |
| Cluster Zoning                         | Cluster zoning promotes the clustering of development and maximizing open space on a tract of land. Ordinance provisions should promote the preservation of sensitive natural resources such as stream corridors, wetlands and hedgerows, contiguous open space, and buffering.   | Can reduce construction and infrastructure costs. Must work with developer to ensure that open space is useful as a greenway and linked to other protected open space.   |

| Table 1<br>Open Space Protection Strategies |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| Open Space Protection Strategy              | Strategy Explanation  | Advantage/Disadvantage   |
| Land Use Regulations                        |   |  |
| Transfer of Development Rights              | Property owners can sell development rights to developers for use in targeted areas. Open space is preserved by deed restrictions on properties that no longer carry development rights.  | Allows development to be directed to specific areas.   |
| Mandatory Dedication                        | Dedication of land from developers for park and recreational purposes. Municipalities must adopt a recreation plan that supports the dedication standards contained in the subdivision and land development ordinance.  | Dedicates open space where development is occurring. Fee in lieu of provisions allows fee for land based on fair market value to be used for purchase of land in targeted areas. |
| Open Space Subdivisions                     | Open space subdivisions promote preservation of open space through the identification of natural resources and development designs that preserve these resources and significant open space.  | Retain the density of the tract being developed. Must work with developer to ensure that open space is useful as a greenway and linked to other protected open space.            |
| Other Methods                               |   |  |
| Official Map                                | A municipality may map existing and proposed features such as parks, greenways, trails, and easements, and through this designation reserve public land. If a plan for subdivision or development of mapped land is presented, the municipality may withhold approval for a period of one year, giving the municipality the option to purchase or condemn the property. | The official map does not protect land for greenways but merely reserves land for purchase by the municipality.  |
| Deed Restriction                            | Restrictions as part of the deed that limit in some way the use of a piece of land. Examples include removing vegetation, requiring a portion of a tract to remain undeveloped, buffer, etc.  | Features protected in perpetuity.  |

It will take the cooperative efforts and long-term commitment of landowners, municipalities, the county, and land conservation organizations to fully protect the greenways identified. The existing protected open space parcels and park site are the building blocks of a continuous network of protected green corridors. Protecting contiguous lands along the major greenway corridors is recommended as the highest priority for conservation. The rationale for starting with contiguous lands is based on the conservation principles stated by the *International Union for Conservation of Nature – 1980 World Conservation Strategy* which suggests that connected natural systems are ecologically more sustainable and important than unconnected systems. “If all else is equal, large reserves are better than small reserves; a single large reserve is better than several small ones of equivalent total area; reserves close together are better than reserves that are far apart; rounded reserves are better than long, thin ones; reserves clustered compactly are better than reserves in a line; and reserves that are connected by corridors are better than unconnected reserves.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Mark A. Benedict and Edward T. McMahon, *Green Infrastructure, Linking Landscapes and Communities* (Washington: Island Press, 2006), p.110.

## Greenways, Trails & Open Space Analysis

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### Strengths

- Residents of the Bethel, Marion, and Tulpehocken region value the nearby Appalachian Trail. Residents have voiced support for trails in general. Trail activities and experiencing and enjoying nature ranked highest as responses to the opinion survey as to why residents visit parks or recreation areas.
- The region is fortunate to have avoided the rampant development that has consumed open space in other areas of Pennsylvania. Stream corridors, wooded hedge rows, and large tracts of agricultural and open space lands remain undeveloped, which can facilitate their protection and function as greenways and open space.

### Challenges

- The challenges to greenway protection and trail development include the lack of public lands along designated greenway and trail corridors and the need to work with private landowners to protect green resources, develop trails, and permit public access. The lack of man-made linear resources such as abandoned railroads necessitates the development of bike lanes along existing roadways to expand and interconnect a system of trails.

### Opportunities

- The public input process found that there is broad public support for trails in the region. The green resources of the Region present ample opportunity to conserve open space and greenways corridors.







# Chapter 5 - Recreation Programming

Municipal government provides public park areas and recreation facilities and offers public recreation programs to ensure that, regardless of age, physical or mental condition, or economic or social standing, all residents have opportunities to enjoy broad, satisfying recreation experiences.

Providing park land and recreation facilities are important municipal functions. Equally as important are the recreation experiences residents have through involvement in recreation programs and community events.

This chapter addresses the variety of organizations that help to meet the recreation program needs of Bethel, Marion and Tulpehocken Township residents.

*Recreation programs build community by providing positive activities that encourage a sense of unity, pride and appreciation for community traditions and heritage. Through recreation programs, citizens improve their health and fitness, enhance their creativity, build relationships, reduce stress, and become happier and more involved in community life. Children develop self-confidence, stay physically active and make friends.*

## Inventory of Recreation Programs and Providers

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### Township-Sponsored Recreation Programs

The Bethel Township Recreation Board sponsors a Tree Lighting with Santa special event at the square in Bethel. The National Night Out event switches between Bethel and Tulpehocken Townships every other year. The Recreation Board assists the Police Department with the event in Bethel Township. The Recreation Board also sponsors the Hometown Heroes street banners.

The Tulpehocken Township Recreation Board does not sponsor any recreation programs or special events.

The Marion Township Community Association (MTCA) sponsors fund raising community special events. All proceeds from these events are used to upgrade the Marion Township Playground facilities. The Township's 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary is in 2019. A Community Picnic, Community Yard Sale, and Garden Tour events are planned for June. A Car Show is also being held on Main Street in Stouchsburg. MTCA has purchased street banners to commemorate the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

### Public School Districts

The three Townships are in two different school districts. Marion Township is part of the *Conrad Weiser Area School District*, with Heidelberg and South Heidelberg Townships, and Robesonia, Wernersville and Womelsdorf Boroughs. Bethel and Tulpehocken Townships are part of the *Tulpehocken Area School District*, with Jefferson and Penn Townships and Bernville Borough.

*Tulpehocken Junior/Senior High School and Conrad Weiser Middle School and High School* offer a wide variety of extracurricular activities for students including athletics, music, drama, and clubs. School dances and other special events are held throughout the school year. Both School Districts have Parent-Teacher Organizations (PTO's) made up of parents and teachers who volunteer their time to enhance the educational experience of students. PTO's conduct fundraisers to support field trips, purchase classroom supplies and host family events.

Student performances such as musical plays and concerts are open to the public. High school sporting events attract all ages of residents as spectators. The Tulpehocken Area School District offers Golden Age Passes for residents ages 65 and over, which provide free admission to school-sponsored events. Residents of the Conrad Weiser Area School District, age 65 and over, are also eligible for a free pass for school-sponsored events.

*Bethel Elementary School* offers a variety of free before and after school clubs to students throughout the school year including Kids with a Cause, Karate, Hockey, Fantasy Football, Sewing, Crafts, STEM, Running, Spanish, Writing, Sports, Arts and Crafts, and Dance Club. Teachers volunteer their time to lead the clubs. *Conrad Weiser West Elementary School* in Womelsdorf offers fee-based after school science clubs.

The School Districts play an active role in recreation by allowing public use of their facilities for youth sports programs. Youth sports use of indoor and outdoor facilities is free of charge for groups located within School District boundaries. School activities have precedence over non-school activities; if a conflict in scheduling occurs, the school-sponsored activity has priority. If school is closed, all activities held within the buildings are also cancelled. Use of outside playing fields is denied during periods of excessive rain or drought and field use may be limited to give access to more community groups or to allow the fields to rest. Tennis courts and outside basketball courts are available for individual use on a first-come first-serve basis. Outdoor track facilities are available for walking.

## Youth Sports

The *Conrad Weiser Community Association* (CWCA) offers local youth sports clubs a corporate framework for support and resources, by allowing them to share the CWCA name and 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status. Member clubs maintain complete autonomy over the management of their coaches, teams, players and volunteers; control their registration process and handle their fund-raising; and have access to web-based tools for collecting player data and registration fees. For \$3 per player per year, CWCA handles financial reporting and includes member clubs under their director and officers' insurance policy. Member clubs also share information about fundraising and player, coach or parental concerns in order to mitigate conflicts that may cross over between the different youth sports clubs. Youth sports member clubs include *Conrad Weiser Youth Basketball Club*, *Conrad Weiser Little Scouts Football and Cheerleading*, *Conrad Weiser Youth Soccer Club*, and *Conrad Weiser Baseball and Softball Club*, which sponsors boys' senior baseball, Little League baseball and girls' softball. Little League baseball utilizes the ball field at the Marion Township Playground for practices and games.

The youth sports groups that serve Bethel and Tulpehocken Townships are separate parent-run organizations. The *Tulpehocken Youth Soccer Club* home fields are at Jefferson Park in Jefferson Township. Boys and girls in under-9 through under-19 divisions compete in the Reading Berks Junior Soccer League against local soccer clubs. *Tulpehocken Little League Baseball and Softball* practices and plays at Jefferson Park, Umbenhauer Park, and the Strausstown Fire Station ball field. *Tulpehocken Youth Basketball* offers clinics for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, recreation league play for 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade, and in-house recreation and travel league play for 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade boys and girls from early November through the beginning of

March. The *Tulpehocken Youth Cheerleading* program is for children entering Kindergarten through 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Squads cheer for the youth basketball and wrestling programs. The *Tulpehocken Youth Wrestling Association* offers an elementary wrestling program for boys and girls in Kindergarten through 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Practices are held at the Tulpehocken High School old gym; weekly matches are held on Friday nights. The Tulpehocken High School Field Hockey team and coaches hold free *Field Hockey Clinics* for girls in 1<sup>st</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> grades.

*Northern Lebanon Little League Baseball* is utilizing the ball field at Frystown Playground under a contract agreement with Bethel Township. Registration for this program is open to youth in Bethel Township.

## Public Libraries

The *Bethel-Tulpehocken Public Library* offers many free activities for the community, including teen club, adult book club, family movie nights, how-to lessons for adults, art and science classes for children, Trim Healthy Mama support group, computer help, weekly story time, craft projects, yoga, and special events such as an end-of-summer Carnival. It also offers a variety of programs for home-schooled children. The library building and grounds are owned by Bethel Township. The *Bernville Area Community Library* is also located within the Tulpehocken Area School District. Three libraries are located within the Conrad Weiser Area School District to serve Marion Township residents: *Robesonia, Wernersville and Womelsdorf Public Libraries*. The libraries offer many programs for all ages, including community yoga classes, adult book discussion groups, and toddler and preschool story times.

## Swimming Pools

Three outdoor swimming pools are located outside of the Townships but within the school district boundaries. The *Bernville Community Pool* offers Tulpehocken Area School District residents a discounted daily admission as well as family and individual season memberships. Programs include moonlight swims, swimming lessons, and chicken barbecues. The swimming pool is in its 61<sup>st</sup> year of operation and is run entirely by volunteers. The *Conrad Weiser Community Pool* in Robesonia Borough is operated by the Robesonia Swimming Pool Association. It hosts a youth swim team and swimming lessons, as well as special events throughout the summer. It does not charge a non-resident rate. A free five-week summer playground program is held at the pool but is for residents of Robesonia Borough and Heidelberg Township only. The *Womelsdorf Community Pool* in Womelsdorf Borough is managed by the Sinking Spring YMCA and offers swim lessons, swim team, and special events. Myerstown Community Pool and Camp Swatara's swimming pool are also popular with residents.

## Youth Development

Two 4-H Clubs for youth ages 8 to 18 are sponsored by Penn State Cooperative Extension and meet in the Townships. The *Bethel 4-H Club* meets at the Little Swatara Church of the Brethren and focuses on sewing, nutrition education, and cooking instruction. The *Western Berks 4-H Dairy Club* meets at the Trinity United Church of Christ in Rehrersburg.

*Hawk Mountain Council Boy Scouts of America* and *Girl Scouts of Eastern Pennsylvania* serve the area with active Boy Scout and Girl Scout groups. Youth groups are sponsored by many of the churches in the Townships.

## County Senior Centers

The closest senior centers to the Townships are in Strausstown and Wernersville. Both are sponsored by Berks Encore through the Berks County Office of Aging and offer a variety of fitness activities, health screenings, lunchtime meals, cards, craft classes, and special program opportunities Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Once each month the *Blue Mountain Seniors* meet in the basement of the Little Swatara Church of the Brethren in Tulpehocken Township. The *Marion Seniors* meet monthly at the Marion Volunteer Fire Company Social Hall.

## Private Clubs

*Marion Township Rod and Gun Club* sits on 20.4 acres of property adjacent to the Tulpehocken Creek. The social club sponsors events such as a fishing derby for children.

The *Northwest Berks Rod and Gun Club* owns 19.1 acres in Bethel Township. It offers its members a target range and archery range and holds a variety of events throughout the year.

The *Lebanon Valley Motorcycle Club* owns a 15.4-acre property in Bethel Township used as a recreational area for picnics and camping for its 300+ club members. The pavilion is enclosed by roll-up doors and has a kitchen and bathrooms. The club holds an annual block shoot and other events for its members.

The *Blue Mountain Eagle Climbing Club* maintains 62 miles of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. When the federal government purchased land to preserve the trail, the land was turned over to local trail clubs for stewardship. The club's purpose is to preserve the forests, protect the wildlife, and promote and encourage mountain climbing, hiking, camping, and the appreciation of nature on the Appalachian Trail; to construct and maintain shelters, arboretums, and other facilities for public use and enjoyment; and to provide activities for members to enjoy nature, recreation and fellowship.

## Church-Related Recreation Programs

The *Little Swatara Church of the Brethren* in Tulpehocken Township offers women's exercise classes, seated exercise classes, quilting and crafter's clubs, bus trips for ages 50+, and Wednesday night youth activities. An outdoor picnic pavilion can be reserved by community groups.

Located in Bethel Township at the base of Blue Mountain on 700 acres, *Camp Swatara* is an American Camp Association accredited camp, a member of the Church of the Brethren Outdoor Ministries Association and is affiliated with the American Baptist Churches of Pennsylvania and Delaware. Overnight week-long summer camps for school aged children and youth offer traditional, adventure, and off-site travel programs. Day camps for toddlers, weekend camps for families, and camps for people with intellectual disabilities are also offered. As a non-profit ministry, the camps are very reasonably priced. Camp Swatara has many retreat facilities from hotel-style accommodations with food service to rustic cabins. The 140-site Family Camping Center is open to the public and operates from April to November. It offers tent and RV campsites with electric, water and sewer connections. Small and large cabins are also available for rent. The campground features two playgrounds and lots of open space for recreational activities including soccer, softball, basketball, sand volleyball, four-square, BMX bike trail, shuffleboard, ping pong, an 18-hole miniature golf course, splash pad, five-acre lake for boating and fishing, and over five miles of hiking trails. An outdoor swimming pool is shared with resident youth campers.

The 83-acre *Camp Calvary* in Tulpehocken Township is affiliated with the Assemblies of God Church and offers specialty camps such as: Sportsmen’s Weekend, Couple’s Retreats, Wilderness/Survival Hikes, Father/Son and Father/Daughter Retreats, Men’s and Ladies’ Retreats, and School and Family Camps. The grounds include a pond, swimming pool, recreational fields, water slide, water trolley, raft, paddle boats, paintball area, snow slide, basketball court, and soccer field. Indoor facilities include a camp store, craft shop, game room, snack shop, coffee shop, large indoor activity center, and bookstore. Camp Calvary has 18 rustic cabins located near a modern bathhouse facility. The Inn at Camp Calvary features 12 private rooms with modern amenities. Rental of the facilities is permitted and some of the programs are open to the public.

## Community Special Events

The Townships are home to a variety of special events organized by community organizations, schools, churches and volunteers.

- An annual *Senior Citizens’ Day* is held at the Tulpehocken Area Junior/Senior High School every March. The event includes a potpie dinner and attending the student rehearsal of the All School Community Musical.
- The Tulpehocken Area School District holds an annual *Veterans Day Ceremony* in the high school auditorium in November which includes patriotic music, student speeches, and veteran recognition.
- The area’s volunteer fire companies – *Mt. Aetna Rescue Fire Company, Union Fire Company of Bethel, Keystone Fire Company in Rehrersburg, Frystown Community Fire Company, and Marion Volunteer Fire Company* – hold various indoor and outdoor fundraising community special events throughout the year. Most have social halls as well. Popular annual events include three Carnivals held in Mt. Aetna and a Car Show held in Rehrersburg.
- The *Rehrersburg Lion’s Club* holds an annual Carnival at the Lion’s Club Park.
- The *Tri-County Worship Center* sponsors many community special events, including a Community Day/School Backpack and Supplies Giveaway, School’s Out Summer Bash, Talent Nights, themed holiday events, and family programs.

## Recreational, Educational and Historical Attractions

The *Golden Age Air Museum* at the 160-acre Grimes Airport in Bethel Township entertains and educates visitors about the early days of aviation, through its special events and daily operations. The museum offers the chance to learn how and what the early aviators flew and the lost art of early aircraft construction. Museum displays include full-size operational aircraft and automobiles, as well as displays of artifacts from the golden age of aviation, the two decades between World War 1 and 2, the 1920’s and 1930’s. The Grimes Airfield has been in continuous operation since 1946. Bi-plane rides are available by reservation. Special events include: Wings and Wheels, Big Swing Hangar Dance, Radio-Controlled Model Meet, Flying Circus Air Shows and Great Pumpkin Fly-In. The Museum is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization and receives its financial support through donations, admission fees and memberships.

The *Andulhea Heritage Center* in Rehrersburg collects, preserves, researches, and exhibits objects, artifacts and documents relating to the history and cultural heritage of the people past and present living

in Tulpehocken and Bethel Townships and the surrounding area. The Heritage Center hosts public educational programs, Sunday afternoon lectures at the Altalaha Lutheran Church, craft workshops, a quilt show, Christmas open house, and chorus concerts. The Center's library is open on the last Saturday of every month from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

## Outdoor Self-Directed Recreation

There are two Township-owned public park areas, one in Marion Township and one in Bethel Township. The *Marion Township Playground* is a 5.9-acre site with a ball field, concession stand, basketball court, two tennis courts, a gazebo, and children's play equipment. Marion Township is in negotiations to receive a donation of an adjacent 2.5-acre property with access to the Tulpehocken Creek.

The *Frystown Playground* in Bethel Township features two basketball courts, a picnic pavilion, ball field and children's play equipment on 2.1 acres. Bethel Township owns a 15.3-acre undeveloped wooded property on Airport Road with plans to develop it as a passive park. Bethel Township is also in negotiations to purchase a 2-acre parcel of land adjacent to the Bethel-Tulpehocken Public Library.

Tulpehocken Township does not have a public park. However, it owns a .9-acre property adjacent to the Rehrersburg Lion's Club Park.

The 3.3-acre *Rehrersburg Lion's Club Park* in Tulpehocken Township includes a club building, children's play equipment, and a pavilion.

*Mt. Aetna Rescue Fire Company* in Tulpehocken Township owns a small .8-acre park that contains a tennis court and children's play equipment. The fire company owns an additional 4.3-acre property with a ball field, picnic pavilion and band shell.

*Union Fire Company of Bethel* has a ball field which is not currently used.

The Tulpehocken Area School District *Sara Kurr Zock Administration Building* in Tulpehocken Township has 7.4 acres of outdoor space with a large open lawn area and a ball field. Approximately one-half of the building is currently unoccupied. *Bethel Elementary School* in Bethel Township has play equipment, pavement games, a ball field, and a lawn area on its 15.7 acres.

Bethel Township contains *Pennsylvania Game Lands #80 and #110*, which total 8,513 acres; 1,515 acres of the *Weiser State Forest*, and 1,376 acres of the *Appalachian National Scenic Trail*. One of the outstanding features of the Appalachian Trail in Bethel Township is '*Showers' Steps*.' Lloyd Showers had the vision of a side trail from Route 501 leading up to the Appalachian Trail. Under his guidance and with labor he recruited, huge boulders were moved to form 500 steps up a steep slope to an outstanding view at the summit. Time has taken its toll on the steps and volunteers are enlisted at times to maintain them.

A historical marker in Bethel Township marks the site of *Fort Henry*. Several attacks by Indians on settlers during the French and Indian War in October 1755 resulted in the Governor of Pennsylvania establishing a series of forts along the Blue Mountains (the approximate boundary between the white settlement and Indian territory). One of the largest of these provincial forts was Fort Henry, located on a farm in Bethel Township and constructed in 1756. The location was a key strategic position for defending Berks County and the southeastern quadrant of Pennsylvania from Indian attacks. Fort Henry's main use during the French and Indian War was to provide a base for patrolling and roaming the area between the adjacent forts along the Blue Mountains, as well as northwest toward Shamokin in search of the Indians. It was the primary source of shelter for local residents during Indian attacks until it was abandoned about 1759.

Marion Township has a Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission site, the 22.4-acre *Charming Forge Access Area* for the Tulpehocken Creek.

Private schools and churches throughout the Townships including the *Lebanon Valley Christian School* and *Mt. Aetna Mennonite School* offer additional outdoor areas with some recreational facilities.

Located just outside of Marion Township is the 26-acre *Conrad Weiser Homestead and Memorial Park*. It is administered by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission in partnership with the Friends of the Conrad Weiser Homestead and is a designated National Historic Landmark. Seven buildings exist on the property; three are open for touring. Two large monuments, a gazebo, the Weiser Family Cemetery, and a pond are also on the site. Two picnic areas in the western section of the park can be utilized at any time without reservation. Public restroom facilities are available.

Also located very close to the Townships is the *Blue Marsh National Recreation Area*, an artificial lake managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Philadelphia District. It is in western Berks County, fed into by the Tulpehocken Creek. The main span of the lake is along the border between Bern and Lower Heidelberg Townships; the northwesternmost portions lie in North Heidelberg and Penn Townships. The lake is a popular recreation area in the summer, where people can fish, swim and boat. It has 36 miles of trails, 6,200 acres of land and 1,147 acres of water. The Dry Brooks Day Use Area contains a swimming beach, numerous picnic tables and grills, concession stand, public restrooms, and three picnic pavilions. Blue Marsh Lake has three boat launches: Dry Brooks and State Hill Boat Launches (operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers), and Sheidy Boat Launch (operated by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission). The Stilling Basin is where the water is released from the dam and is a popular fishing location with a universally accessible fishing platform. A multi-use (hiking, biking, horseback riding) loop trail encircles the lake and is recognized as a National Recreation Trail. Skinners Loop and Foxtrot Hiking Trail are connected to the multi-use trail. The Squirrel Run Nature Trail is near the State Hill Boat Ramp. There also is a universally accessible Eyes of the Eagle Sensory Trail and the Great Oak Nature Trail located within the Day Use Area. The Union Canal Connector Trail provides a path to the Schuylkill River Trail and the Berks County Parks and Recreation Department trail system. The Tulpehocken Creek Valley Geo Trail is a geocaching interpretive trail consisting of 20 caches along the scenic Tulpehocken Creek and around Blue Marsh Lake. Three large programs held at Blue Marsh are Take Pride in Blue Marsh (April), Get Outdoors Day (June), and National Public Lands Day (September).

## Recreation Programming Analysis

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Below is an analysis of the strengths, challenges and opportunities associated with the recreation programming in Bethel, Marion and Tulpehocken Townships.

### Strengths

- A variety of community special events are sponsored throughout the year by fire companies, churches and other organizations.
- Recreation Boards have been formed to focus on parks and recreation in Bethel and Tulpehocken Townships. Marion Township has a Community Association that works to improve the Township's playground and sponsors activities to strengthen the sense of community among residents.

- Bethel and Marion Townships own outdoor park areas and recreation facilities that can serve as locations for recreation programs and special events.
- The Rehrersburg Lion’s Club Park and Mt. Aetna Rescue Fire Company in Tulpehocken Township are open for public use.
- The Tulpehocken Area School District Sara Kurr Zock Administration Building in Tulpehocken Township has outdoor space with a large open lawn area and a ball field. Approximately one-half of the building is currently unoccupied.
- The Bethel-Tulpehocken Public Library is a vibrant community library that sponsors a variety of educational and recreational programs. It is the third best attended library in Berks County and has a strong curriculum for home schoolers.
- The Conrad Weiser Community Association serves as an umbrella organization to sponsor youth sports activities, providing coordinated registration, program promotion, and field use.
- The Tulpehocken Area and Conrad Weiser Area School Districts are sources of recreational activities, especially for families with school-age children and for residents as spectators at athletic and performing arts events. Both School Districts allow community use of their indoor and outdoor recreation facilities.
- Bethel Elementary School offers free before and after school clubs for its students.
- Churches in the Townships are actively involved in improving the health, education, recreation and quality of life of residents. Little Swatara Church of the Brethren and Tri-County Worship Center serve in community center-like capacities.
- Camp Swatara in Bethel Township allows public use of its campground and recreation facilities.
- The abundance of significant natural resources in the region such as the Tulpehocken Creek, Appalachian Trail, and state game lands and forests provide opportunities for self-directed outdoor recreation.
- Northern Lebanon Little League Baseball is utilizing the ball field at Frystown Playground, which allows Bethel Township youth to participate. Conrad Weiser Little League baseball utilizes the ball field at the Marion Township Playground for practices and games.

## Challenges

- The Townships currently sponsor a very limited number of public recreation programs. Bethel Township sponsors one program, a holiday Tree Lighting event; Tulpehocken Township sponsors no programs, and Marion Township programming is sponsored by a non-profit community association.
- Very few recreation and activity programs are offered in the Townships, by any provider. There is a real lack of significant, structured activities for youth, adults and seniors. Beyond youth sports, there are few recreation program opportunities for children. Although they are popular activities for many children, not all children participate in youth sports. Active program opportunities for

adults are limited, including sports programs. Few recreation programs are offered for preschoolers and seniors. Family special events are limited.

- There are major gaps in the types of recreation programs and services offered in the three Townships. Residents must travel outside of the Townships for programs such as health and fitness classes, youth instructional classes, aquatics programs, environmental education, visual arts, adult sports, non-league sports, summer playgrounds and day camps, youth sports, performing arts, teen programming, self-improvement and educational classes, holiday events, senior adult activities, parent-child special events, outdoor adventure, and social recreation.
- The populations of the three Townships individually and combined are not large enough to support a full-time public parks and recreation department. In addition, there is no public parks and recreation department within the municipalities of either of the two School Districts.
- The Townships have no large community park, outdoor swimming pool, fitness center, or indoor community center to house recreation programs and community activities. Residents must travel out of the Townships to find these attractions. In particular, the lack of a dedicated indoor facility limits the quantity and types of recreation programs the Townships can offer.
- Tulpehocken and Marion Townships do not have websites to inform residents about community parks and recreation assets and opportunities.
- The only two park-like properties in Tulpehocken Township are owned by a fire company and Lion's Club. Both properties need major improvements for self-directed use and programmed use.
- There is no coordinating mechanism for the volunteer youth sports groups in the Tulpehocken Area School District. There is communication between some of the groups to coordinate shared use of facilities.

## Opportunities

- The Bethel and Tulpehocken Township Recreation Boards and Marion Township Community Association are important entities which can be strengthened to improve parks and recreation services for residents.
- The two Township Recreation Boards can work together to offer family special events and community programming.
- The Townships can pursue partnerships with their churches and fire companies to increase recreation programs for their residents, especially for indoor facility use.
- Tulpehocken Township can begin and continue discussions with the Mt. Aetna Rescue Fire Company and Rehrersburg Lion's Club to work together to improve the park land they own for public use.
- Websites can be developed for Marion and Tulpehocken Townships, and Bethel Township's website can be improved. This will help to build public awareness of parks and recreation opportunities. The Township park areas are significant financially supported assets that can be

more actively promoted for self-directed resident use. The same holds true for non-Township-owned park areas that are available for public use.

- Residents can be made more aware of the recreation program opportunities currently available to them, whether the programs are sponsored by the library, school district, senior center, youth sports group or other groups, by expanding marketing and promotion efforts. This can also include the volunteer opportunities available to residents. Social media and email blasts can be more widely used. An online community newsletter can be effective.
- Four recreation program areas would be successful if offered – summer day camps, preschool programs, senior adult activities, and family special events. Since the number of recreation programs for all ages is low, many opportunities exist to add to what is currently offered.
- Creating an intergovernmental recreation agency to share use of facilities and sponsor community recreation programs is an opportunity that the five Tulpehocken Area School District municipalities may want to explore in partnership with the School District. None of the municipalities alone can financially support a recreation agency, but by pooling funds together they could do so. The number of recreation programs provided to residents, and the number of program locations, would greatly expand through an intergovernmental partnership. A DCNR Peer-to-Peer grant of \$10,000 is available to hire an experienced parks and recreation professional to help with agency creation and the hiring of a parks and recreation director. One municipality would need to apply for this grant on behalf of the group. The \$1,000 match can be shared among the five municipalities and the school district. The Peer would work with a committee of representatives from each entity over a nine-month to one-year period.
- The Tulpehocken Area School District Sara Kurr Zock Administration Building in Tulpehocken Township has outdoor space that could be used for community recreation. In addition, the interior of the building has space that could potentially be used for recreation programs such as a senior center.
- The Marion Township Volunteer Fire Company has a social hall that is currently used infrequently, which could serve as a community center for Township residents.
- Bethel Township is exploring the possibility of building a community center behind the Bethel-Tulpehocken Public Library.

# Chapter 6 - Administration & Financing

## Administration

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### Administrative Structure and Authority

Bethel, Marion and Tulpehocken Townships are second class Townships; each are governed by a three-member elected Board of Supervisors.

Bethel Township employs a Township Secretary, Office Assistant, three full-time Police Officers, three part-time Police Officers, Roadmaster and Public Works employees. The Township owns one developed park property, Frystown Playground. Rules and regulations and a permit agreement for recreation facility requests are in place. Use of facilities is at no cost to the public.

Marion Township staff includes a Township Secretary, Township Treasurer, Roadmaster and Road Crew. The Township operates one park area, Marion Township Park, which is adjacent to the Township building. There are no rules and regulations for the use of the park. The Conrad Weiser Baseball Club uses the park ball field for youth practices and games at no cost. The park gazebo pavilion is rented for \$25 per day.

Tulpehocken Township employs a Township Secretary-Treasurer, Sewer Secretary, Police Chief, three Police Officers, Police Secretary, Roadmaster, one Public Works employee, and several seasonal Public Works employees. The Township currently operates no park areas.

Three Township committees play a role in public parks and recreation:

- The Bethel Township Recreation Board is an advisory body to the Board of Supervisors and the Planning Commission in matters regarding development of recreational areas within the Township. The Recreation Board reviews all applications for subdivision and land development and gives its recommendations to the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors regarding open space issues and recreational areas. Five members are appointed by the Township Supervisors for staggered five-year terms; alternate members may also be appointed for two-year terms. The Recreation Board meets monthly at the Bethel Township office. By-laws have been adopted for its operation.
- The Tulpehocken Township Recreation Board was formed by Township ordinance in 2008. The Recreation Board consists of five members appointed by the Township Board of Supervisors who serve five-year terms. As delegated by the Township Supervisors, the Recreation Board has the power and authority to supervise, regulate, equip and maintain Township-funded recreation programs and facilities. The Recreation Board is required to submit an annual report of its activities by October 1<sup>st</sup>, with a proposed budget for parks and recreation purposes for the following year. The Recreation Board meets quarterly at the Tulpehocken Township building.

- The Marion Township Community Association (MTCA) is a 501(c)(3) organization, formed in 2016 for the purpose of improving the Marion Township Playground and developing a broader sense of community among the residents of Marion Township. Updating the playground equipment will be the first portion of a multi-phased process to create an inviting and useful space for residents to enjoy, while also making the facilities accessible to all. MCTA has six board members who meet monthly at the Marion Township building.

## Financing

### Financing Parks and Recreation

In each Pennsylvania municipality, finding the financial resources needed to meet required mandates and provide public services, including parks and recreation, while balancing the tax burden on residents and businesses, is an annual challenge. Like most municipalities, the three Townships operate within a climate of fiscal conservatism and increasing demands.

This financial analysis includes a review of each Township’s parks and recreation revenues and expenditures. Understanding the current financial conditions, when viewed together with other portions of this Plan, will help to develop financial recommendations for the future.

The three Townships adopt their annual operating budgets no later than December 31 for the next calendar year. Revenues are estimated so that projections will be met and likely exceeded. Expenditures are budgeted with the expectation that the full amount will not be expended unless there are unanticipated circumstances that occur during the year. Unused budget funds remaining at the end of the year become part of the cash reserves available for allocation by Township Supervisors in the following year’s budget. None of the Townships have a capital budget in place for parks and recreation. Table 6-1 contains a summary of the Townships’ actual year-end revenues and expenses for 2017.

|                                | Bethel             | Marion           | Tulpehocken        |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| <b>REVENUES</b>                |                    |                  |                    |
| Taxes                          | \$1,127,829        | \$337,278        | \$622,591          |
| Licenses and Permits           | \$38,173           | \$13,324         | \$15,987           |
| Fines and Forfeits             | \$16,276           | \$3,333          | \$14,456           |
| Interest, Rents and Royalties  | \$28,717           | \$5,381          | \$6,827            |
| Intergovernmental Revenue      | \$1,416,732        | \$457,943        | \$295,599          |
| Charges for Services           | *\$191,325         | \$79,785         | \$490,537          |
| Unclassified Operating Revenue | \$822,252          | \$5,538          | \$16,674           |
| Other Financing Sources        | \$134,252          | \$11,682         | \$29,601           |
| <b>TOTAL REVENUES</b>          | <b>\$3,775,556</b> | <b>\$914,264</b> | <b>\$1,492,272</b> |
| <b>EXPENSES</b>                |                    |                  |                    |
| General Government             | \$295,314          | \$138,682        | \$104,514          |
| Public Safety                  | \$494,357          | \$262,785        | \$349,456          |
| Sanitation                     | \$800              | \$7,324          | \$197,367          |
| Highways and Streets           | \$1,623,361        | \$667,535        | \$318,788          |
| Culture and Recreation         | \$30,245           | \$1,382          | \$1,380            |
| Libraries                      | \$10,000           | \$0              | \$5,000            |

|  |                    |                    |                    |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Debt Service   | \$115,796          | \$9,195            | \$221,164          |
| Employee Benefits and Insurance                          | \$12,784           | \$20,171           | \$147,498          |
| Community Development                                    | \$440              | \$0                | \$1,620            |
| Unclassified Operating Expenditures                      | \$10,107           | \$0                | \$0                |
| Other Financing Uses                                     | \$133,528          | \$15,566           | \$0                |
| <b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>                                    | <b>\$2,726,732</b> | <b>\$1,122,640</b> | <b>\$1,346,787</b> |
| <b>EXCESS (DEFICIENCY) OF REVENUES OVER EXPENDITURES</b> | <b>\$1,048,824</b> | <b>(\$208,376)</b> | <b>\$145,485</b>   |

\*Includes \$11,925 in Culture and Recreation Revenue

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, Municipal Annual Financial Reports, 2017

## Municipal Comparisons

Local municipal spending on parks and recreation in Pennsylvania is extremely diverse and therefore challenging to capture and compare. Listed below in Table 6-2 is data for similarly-sized nearby Townships. The per capita expense for each municipality is calculated using the net parks and recreation expenses of the municipality and the 2010 census figures. Bethel Township was the only one of the three Townships involved in this Plan to have parks and recreation revenue, which totaled \$11,925.

| Table 6-2<br>Municipal Spending Comparison for Parks and Recreation<br>Townships in Berks, Lebanon, and Lancaster Counties |                 |                                  |   |
|--|-----------------|----------------------------------|---|
| Municipality   | 2010 Population | 2017 Parks & Recreation Spending | Per Capita Spending on Parks & Recreation |
| Bethel   | 4,112           | \$18,320                         | \$4.45                                    |
| Marion   | 1,688           | \$1,382                          | \$.82                                     |
| Tulpehocken  | 3,274           | \$1,380                          | \$.42                                     |
| <b>Berks County</b>  |                 |                                  |   |
| Brecknock  | 4,585           | \$13,736                         | \$2.99                                    |
| Caernarvon   | 4,006           | \$48,590                         | \$12.13                                   |
| Centre   | 4,036           | \$9,036                          | \$2.24                                    |
| Douglass   | 3,306           | \$142,548                        | \$43.12                                   |
| Earl   | 3,195           | \$102,437                        | \$32.06                                   |
| Heidelberg   | 1,724           | \$5,925                          | \$3.44                                    |
| Jefferson  | 1,977           | \$8,451                          | \$4.27                                    |
| Ontelaunee   | 1,646           | \$18,778                         | \$11.41                                   |
| Penn   | 1,949           | \$11,445                         | \$5.87                                    |
| Tilden   | 3,597           | \$13,775                         | \$3.83                                    |
| Union  | 3,503           | \$92,772                         | \$26.48                                   |
| Upper Bern   | 1,734           | \$19,104                         | \$11.02                                   |
| Upper Tulpehocken  | 1,575           | \$2,288                          | \$1.45                                    |
| <b>Lebanon County</b>  |                 |                                  |   |
| Bethel   | 5,007           | \$51,302                         | \$10.25                                   |
| Jackson  | 8,173           | \$567,656                        | \$69.45                                   |
| Millcreek  | 3,982           | \$50,776                         | \$12.75                                   |
| <b>Lancaster County</b>  |                 |                                  |   |
| Clay   | 6,308           | \$28,162                         | \$4.46                                    |
| Elizabeth  | 3,886           | \$67,595                         | \$17.39                                   |
| West Cocalico  | 7,280           | \$60,082                         | \$8.25                                    |

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, Municipal Annual Financial Reports, 2017

## Statewide Municipal Spending for Parks and Recreation

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Based on the data from the PA Department of Community and Economic Development, from 2008-2012, municipalities spent about \$457 million in operating budget funds on parks and recreation, or \$36 annually per capita. Municipalities spent an average of three percent of their total expenditures on parks and recreation. It's important to note, however, that two-thirds of Pennsylvania municipalities either had no recreation expenditures or spent less than \$25,000. Pennsylvania municipal parks and recreation spending is closely correlated to population; the larger the municipal population, the higher the spending. The PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources recommends that a minimum of five percent of a municipality's operating budget be spent on parks and recreation. The national average per capita operating budget spending by municipalities on parks and recreation is \$83.

Table 6-3 presents the percentage of the total operating budget spent by the three Townships on parks and recreation in 2017.

| Municipality | 2017 Parks & Recreation Spending | 2017 Total Operating Budget | Percent of Total Operating Budget Spent on Parks & Recreation |
|--------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| Bethel       | \$18,320                         | \$2,724,732                 | .7%   |
| Marion       | \$1,382                          | \$1,122,640                 | .1%   |
| Tulpehocken  | \$1,380                          | \$1,346,787                 | .1%   |

## Administration and Financing Analysis

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### Strengths

- The Bethel and Tulpehocken Boards of Supervisors, through their Recreation Boards, and the Marion Township Board of Supervisors, through their support of the Marion Township Community Association, have begun to place an emphasis on improving parks and recreation services.
- Grants are being pursued for park development and improvements by Bethel and Marion Townships. Tulpehocken Township led the effort to apply for the DCNR planning grant for this project.
- Bethel and Marion Townships own park areas that provide a focus for volunteer resident efforts.
- The Marion Township Community Association actively fund raises for park improvements by holding community special events and applying for grants.
- Marion Township charges a \$25 fee to rent its playground gazebo.
- Marion Township's relationship with Conrad Weiser Little League provides volunteer support and funds to maintain the ball field at the park.
- Bethel Township's relationship with Northern Lebanon Little League is improving the ball field at Frystown Playground.

- Bethel Township has a mandatory dedication ordinance in place to accept park land or fees-in-lieu of park land donation by developers.

## Challenges

- Spending on parks and recreation is considerably less than that of other nearby Townships with similarly sized populations. In 2017, Bethel Township spent .7% of its operating budget on parks and recreation or \$4.45 per capita. Marion Township spent .1% of its operating budget on parks and recreation or \$.82 per capita. Tulpehocken Township spent .1% of its operating budget on parks and recreation or \$.42 per capita. Spending is well below the \$36 per capita average spending on parks and recreation by Pennsylvania municipalities.
- Very little parks and recreation revenue is generated to help to offset any parks and recreation expenses of the Townships.
- The Townships have no capital budgets in place for parks and recreation.
- No rules and regulations are in place for the Marion Township Playground.
- Tulpehocken Township owns no park areas and as a result does not budget for parks and recreation. The Tulpehocken Township Recreation Board does not have a focus for its efforts.
- Marion and Tulpehocken Townships do not have park land mandatory dedication ordinances in place.

## Opportunities

- Municipal allocation of funds by the three Townships for parks and recreation can be increased by a percentage each year, until it reaches a realistic amount.
- The Marion Township Community Association is a 501 c (3) non-profit which allows it to apply for grants and foundation funds not available to governmental agencies.
- Bethel Township could begin charging for the rental of the Frystown Playground picnic pavilion to begin to generate revenue for its Recreation Board.
- Bethel Township has hired a fundraising firm to help its Recreation Board begin fundraising to support park improvements.
- Marion and Tulpehocken Townships can approve mandatory dedication ordinances, which will allow them to accept park land or fees-in-lieu of land donation by residential and business developers.
- Rules and regulations for the use of the Marion Township Playground can be put in place so that any infractions can be enforced.
- Funding of \$10,000 for joint training and strategic planning for the Bethel and Tulpehocken Township Recreation Boards and the Marion Township Community Association members to provide guidance, structure and direction for their efforts is available from DCNR through its Peer-to-Peer grant program with a shared \$1,000 investment by the municipalities.



# Chapter 7 - Park Maintenance & Security

The purpose of a park maintenance and security program is to meet the following goals:

1. Provide areas and facilities that are safe and accessible for everyone.
2. Provide areas and facilities that allow park visitors the opportunity to enjoy the park experience as it was designed.
3. Provide clean and attractive areas and facilities.

These goals can best be achieved with trained personnel that are equipped with the needed equipment and supplies to perform each park maintenance function in an organized and efficient manner.

The information below describes Bethel and Marion Township approaches to providing park maintenance and security. Since Tulpehocken Township owns no park areas, its staff have no park maintenance duties.

## Park Maintenance

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### Park Maintenance Personnel

The Bethel and Marion Township Public Works Road Crews are responsible for park maintenance. These full-time employees possess the general knowledge, ability, and skills to operate a variety of large and small equipment, complete building projects and repairs; and perform routine equipment maintenance.

At this time, Township employees are not certified to apply weed or turf chemicals, and no one has received the Certified Playground Safety Inspector certification. The Chair of the Bethel Township Recreation Board is a certified pesticide applicator.

Marion Township contracts the mowing of grass at the Marion Township Playground. The mower used is owned by the Township. Bethel Township does not rely on the use of contracted services to maintain the Frystown Playground. Township staff does the routine maintenances including mowing and trash removal.

### Park Maintenance Equipment

Public Works equipment, such as mowers, weed whackers, front end loaders and graders, is available for park maintenance as needed. The Townships do not depreciate equipment and have no formal equipment replacement schedule.

Requests for added and replacement equipment are presented annually as part of the budget discussion. The need to replace equipment is normally based on the cost of recent repairs together with the age and record of use in miles or hours. Added equipment is requested when there is recurring need for a piece of equipment that will enhance maintenance operations.

## Park Maintenance Planning

Maintenance is the single largest expenditure for a park that will greatly exceed the combined cost for acquisition, design, and construction. The amount and frequency of maintenance required at each park is very much related to its design, construction, intensity of use, type of activities, age of facilities and community expectations.

Work is scheduled based on knowledge of what routine work needs to be accomplished, requests received in the offices, inclement weather, vandalism, or other circumstances. Mowing and trash removal are done weekly.

There is no database maintained or reports created to track the time or expense for park maintenance functions.

There is no written program in place that identifies a schedule of routine recurring tasks and preventative maintenance requirements needed for each park facility.

There are no standards established that describe what adequate park maintenance should look like to the staff or facility user when a task is completed. Simple written standards are a useful training tool when staff changes occur or when volunteers are going to perform a task on a one-time or recurring basis. The use of standards is also a good method for the staff to learn if the level of maintenance for an item is meeting the expectations of citizens and elected officials.

A simple calendar is another useful tool that will enhance the consistency, effectiveness, and efficiency of the park maintenance program over time. The calendar in Table 7-1 quickly depicts what park maintenance tasks need to be completed, their frequency and when the work is scheduled. This tool can be expanded over time to include all the maintenance and administrative tasks for the Township employees to form a more complete picture of the total workload and staffing requirements.

|                                     | Frequency  | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|-------------------------------------|------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| <b>A. Courts - Outdoors</b>         |            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| All Courts - inspect                | Annual     |     |     | X   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| All Courts – sweep as needed        | 1x / mo.   |     |     |     | X   | X   | X   | X   | X   | X   |     |     |     |
| Basketball – inspect / install nets | 2x's / yr. |     |     |     | X   |     |     | X   |     |     |     |     |     |
| <b>B. Misc. Park Maintenance</b>    |            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Annual Park inspection / clean up   | Annual     |     |     | X   | X   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Storm - inspection / clean up       | As needed  | X   | X   | X   | X   | X   | X   | X   | X   | X   | X   | X   | X   |
| Trash / Litter Control              | Weekly     | X   | X   | X   | X   | X   | X   | X   | X   | X   | X   | X   | X   |

|   |                   |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |             |            |            |            |
|---|-------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Vandalism Repair (report to Police)         | ASAP              | X          | X          | X          | X          | X          | X          | X          | X          | X           | X          | X          | X          |
| Graffiti Removal (report to Police)         | 24 hours          | X          | X          | X          | X          | X          | X          | X          | X          | X           | X          | X          | X          |
| <b>C. Park Equipment</b>                    | <b>Frequency</b>  | <b>Jan</b> | <b>Feb</b> | <b>Mar</b> | <b>Apr</b> | <b>May</b> | <b>Jun</b> | <b>Jul</b> | <b>Aug</b> | <b>Sept</b> | <b>Oct</b> | <b>Nov</b> | <b>Dec</b> |
| Benches – portable put out / bring in       | Annual            |            |            | X          |            |            |            |            |            |             |            | X          |            |
| Benches – portable repair / paint as needed | Annual            | X          | X          |            |            |            |            |            |            |             |            |            | X          |
| Benches – outdoor inspect / repair          | Annual            |            |            | X          | X          |            |            |            |            |             |            |            |            |
| Benches – outdoor paint                     | As needed         |            |            |            |            | X          | X          |            |            |             |            |            |            |
| Fences / Railings - paint                   | As needed         |            |            |            |            | X          | X          |            |            |             |            |            |            |
| Fences / Railings - repair                  | As needed         |            |            |            | X          |            |            |            |            |             |            |            |            |
| Fences/ Railings - inspect                  | Annual            |            |            | X          |            |            |            |            |            |             |            |            |            |
| Picnic Tables – paint / stain / repair      | Annual            | X          | X          |            |            |            |            |            |            |             |            |            | X          |
| Picnic Tables – put out / take in           | Annual            |            |            | X          |            |            |            |            |            |             |            | X          |            |
| <b>D. Picnic Areas and Pavilions</b>        | <b>Frequency</b>  | <b>Jan</b> | <b>Feb</b> | <b>Mar</b> | <b>Apr</b> | <b>May</b> | <b>Jun</b> | <b>Jul</b> | <b>Aug</b> | <b>Sept</b> | <b>Oct</b> | <b>Nov</b> | <b>Dec</b> |
| Pavilion – inspection / repair              | Annual            |            |            | X          | X          |            |            |            |            |             |            |            |            |
| Pavilion – paint as needed                  | As needed         |            |            |            |            |            |            |            | X          | X           |            |            |            |
| Pavilion – sweep / wash as needed           | Weekly            |            |            |            | X          | X          | X          | X          | X          | X           |            |            |            |
| Picnic Tables – wash as needed              | weekly            |            |            |            | X          | X          | X          | X          | X          | X           |            |            |            |
| <b>E. Play Equipment</b>                    | <b>Frequency</b>  | <b>Jan</b> | <b>Feb</b> | <b>Mar</b> | <b>Apr</b> | <b>May</b> | <b>Jun</b> | <b>Jul</b> | <b>Aug</b> | <b>Sept</b> | <b>Oct</b> | <b>Nov</b> | <b>Dec</b> |
| Play Equipment – rake surfacing as needed   | Weekly            |            |            | X          | X          | X          | X          | X          | X          | X           | X          | X          |            |
| Play Equipment – refill surfacing           | Annual            |            |            |            | X          | X          |            |            |            |             |            |            |            |
| Play Equipment – informal safety inspection | Each time at site |            |            | x          | X          | X          | x          | x          | x          | x           | x          | x          |            |
| <b>F. Drives and Parking</b>                | <b>Frequency</b>  | <b>Jan</b> | <b>Feb</b> | <b>Mar</b> | <b>Apr</b> | <b>May</b> | <b>Jun</b> | <b>Jul</b> | <b>Aug</b> | <b>Sept</b> | <b>Oct</b> | <b>Nov</b> | <b>Dec</b> |
| Drains & Catch Basins - Inspect & clean     | 3x's / yr.        |            |            | X          |            |            |            | X          |            |             |            | X          |            |

|   |                  |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |             |            |            |            |
|---|------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Drives & Parking – inspect                              | Annual           |            |            | X          |            |            |            |            |            |             |            |            |            |
| Drives & Parking – paint lines                          | As needed        |            |            |            |            | X          | X          | X          |            |             |            |            |            |
| Drives & Parking – repair                               | As needed        |            |            |            | X          | X          |            |            |            |             |            |            |            |
| Drives & Parking – sweep pavement                       | 3x's / yr.       |            |            |            | X          |            | X          |            |            | X           |            |            |            |
| <b>G. Trees, Shrubs, and Flowers</b>                    | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Jan</b> | <b>Feb</b> | <b>Mar</b> | <b>Apr</b> | <b>May</b> | <b>Jun</b> | <b>Jul</b> | <b>Aug</b> | <b>Sept</b> | <b>Oct</b> | <b>Nov</b> | <b>Dec</b> |
| Mulch all landscape areas                               | Annual           |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |             | X          | X          |            |
| Flower Beds - weed                                      | 2x's / mo.       |            |            |            | X          | X          | X          | X          | X          | X           | X          |            |            |
| Flower Beds – annuals planted / removed                 | Annual           |            |            |            |            | X          |            |            |            |             | X          | X          |            |
| Shrub – trimming  | Annual           |            |            |            |            |            | X          |            |            |             |            |            |            |
| Tree – trimming/removal                                 | As needed        | X          | X          | X          |            |            |            |            |            |             |            | X          | X          |
| <b>H. Turf</b>  | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Jan</b> | <b>Feb</b> | <b>Mar</b> | <b>Apr</b> | <b>May</b> | <b>Jun</b> | <b>Jul</b> | <b>Aug</b> | <b>Sept</b> | <b>Oct</b> | <b>Nov</b> | <b>Dec</b> |
| Lawn drains – clean and repair                          | 4x's / yr.       |            |            | X          | X          |            |            |            |            | X           | X          |            |            |
| Turf – aeration (contracted)                            | 2x's / yr.       |            |            |            |            | X          |            |            |            | X           | X          |            |            |
| Turf – mowing / trimming                                | Weekly           |            |            |            | X          | X          | X          | X          | X          | X           | X          |            |            |
| Turf – seeding as needed                                | As needed        |            |            | X          | X          | X          |            |            |            | X           | X          |            |            |
| Turf – soil test (contracted)                           | Every 2 years    |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |             | X          | X          |            |
| Turf – fertilize, weed and disease control (contracted) | As needed        |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |             |            |            |            |
| <b>I. Walks, Trails, and Bridges</b>                    | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Jan</b> | <b>Feb</b> | <b>Mar</b> | <b>Apr</b> | <b>May</b> | <b>Jun</b> | <b>Jul</b> | <b>Aug</b> | <b>Sept</b> | <b>Oct</b> | <b>Nov</b> | <b>Dec</b> |
| Add wood chips, stone, etc. / grade surface             | Annual           |            |            | X          | X          | X          |            |            |            |             |            |            |            |
| Inspect / repair  | Monthly          | X          | X          | X          | X          | X          | X          | X          | X          | X           | X          | X          | X          |
| Paint / stain bridges                                   | As needed        |            |            |            |            |            |            |            | X          | X           |            |            |            |

## Major Park Maintenance and Capital Replacement

In addition to routine maintenance duties that are performed each year, there are other tasks that are required during the lifetime of any recreation facility. These tasks deal with periodic maintenance such as painting and sealing and the normal replacement of minor and major equipment such as play equipment, park benches and picnic tables. The

timing for these repairs/replacements is determined largely by the materials used, weather, use of the facility, and the maintenance performed during its life. Table 7-2 lists examples of such items without estimated costs. Costs are not estimated because the time frame is years away and an exercise in projecting these expenses would not be accurate.

| Item                    | Time Frame    |
|-------------------------|---------------|
| Restriping Parking Lots | 5 years       |
| Resealing Pavements     | 5 years       |
| Pavilions               | 20 years      |
| Repaving                | 15 plus years |
| Playground Equipment    | 10 years      |
| Park Benches            | 15 years      |

The American Public Works Association recommends budgeting two to four percent of a park's capital development costs annually to establish as a capital reserve account for major capital repairs/replacements.

## Security

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### Park Safety and Security

One of the most important duties of the maintenance staff is to provide parks and recreation facilities that are secure and free of danger for both visitors and employees. This sense of security can be the difference between having a successful, well-used park or one that is seldom frequented by Township residents. In addition to protection of people, the park should be protected from vandalism, theft, or other degradation.

Maintenance and safety are synonymous because parks are can only remain safe (and useable) when a quality maintenance and inspection program is in place. The informal inspection of each park area and recreation facility is completed by the staff each time that they visit a site to identify hazards as well as other issues that need to be addressed. Minor issues are resolved immediately provided the staff has the needed tools, equipment, and materials on-hand to complete the repair. Some issues require later scheduling of work, perhaps closing access to facilities or equipment that pose a serious hazard, and notification of the Police Department.

Written records of inspections are not maintained by the Townships. Currently, no alarm or surveillance systems are in use in any of the parks.

Vandalism is one of the most frequent crimes committed in parks and can end up being a costly problem. Vandalism is not reported to be a significant problem for either Township. Incidents are both infrequent and minor in terms of repair expense. Incidents are reported to the Police Departments.

### Park Maintenance and Security Analysis

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#### Strengths

- Vandalism is not a significant problem.

- The Township employees possess the general knowledge, ability, and skills to operate a variety of large and small equipment, complete building projects and repairs, and perform routine equipment maintenance.
- The Townships own the basic equipment needed for park maintenance tasks.

## Challenges

- The Township Public Works Road Crews split their time between parks and public works duties including roads, signs, and storm sewers. Park maintenance responsibilities may suffer at times due to the staff workload.
- There is no written program in place that identifies a schedule of routine recurring tasks and preventative maintenance requirements needed for each facility.
- There are no standards established that describe what adequate maintenance should look like to the staff or facility user when a task is completed.
- The Townships do not depreciate equipment and have no formal equipment replacement schedule.
- An annual inspection of the parks is not conducted.
- Written records of park and playground inspections are not maintained by the Townships.
- Township employees are not certified to apply weed or turf chemicals, and no one has received the Certified Playground Safety Inspector certification.

## Opportunities

- The Townships could assist and enhance the maintenance program by seeking volunteer groups who are willing to assist with one-time and recurring maintenance tasks either by performing the work themselves or by contributing the funds needed to contract the maintenance service. Potential partners could include local service organizations, scout organizations, and churches.
- An equipment depreciation/replacement schedule could be put in place to include a description of each piece of equipment, the purchase price, replacement cost and year. The schedule would also specify the amount of money that needs to be set aside for each piece of equipment annually to ensure that the monies are available to replace equipment on schedule.
- Because no one on the Bethel or Marion Township staff is a Certified Playground Safety Inspector (CPSI), the play equipment could be inspected at least annually by a contracted, certified inspector. The inspector could also train the maintenance staff to complete weekly inspections. One member of each Township's staff could obtain the CPSI certification in the future.
- Written park facility and play equipment inspections could be completed whenever the maintenance staff is on-site to mow the grass or perform other duties. In case of a deficiency, the staff could provide a written summary of what was or still needs to be corrected, tasks to be performed, written responses required, and then follow-up required for any deficiency recorded. Such a program will work best if the

same staff member is responsible for the inspection each time. The staff member will become very familiar with the park facilities.

- The annual inspection of the parks by staff during early Spring is an excellent procedure that helps to identify and correct problems. During the inspection, a list of items to be completed could be prepared. Township insurance carrier loss control representatives should be requested to participate in the annual inspections to obtain their input into the park maintenance and risk management program.



# Chapter 8 – Vision, Goals & Recommendations

## The Vision for the Future of Parks and Recreation

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Bethel, Marion and Tulpehocken Townships enhance the quality of life of residents and strengthen the bonds of community by providing safe, accessible and well-maintained parks, trails, and recreation facilities, preserving historic and natural resources, and providing affordable and inclusive recreation activities and experiences for all ages. Residents enjoy close-to-home open spaces, park areas, trails, playgrounds, sports fields, and recreation programs that reflect their needs and interests.

Residents and Township officials support financial investment in parks and recreation as it becomes a defining feature of the communities. With a focus on partnerships, resident involvement and regional cooperation, exceptional parks and recreation opportunities are developed in the three Townships.

## Realizing the Vision

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The Vision for the Future of Parks and Recreation will become a reality with the enthusiasm and support of Township elected and appointed officials, staff, community organizations, and residents. Success will require:

- A commitment to the funding necessary to acquire, improve, and enhance park areas, trails, recreation facilities, and recreation programs;
- Continued resident involvement in parks and recreation, through volunteering, fund-raising, advocacy groups, oversight of Plan implementation, and support for new initiatives;
- Cooperation, communication, and partnerships among Township officials and staff, Bethel and Tulpehocken Township Recreation Boards, Marion Township Community Association, School Districts, Bethel-Tulpehocken Public Library, fire companies, churches, Lions club, and other local organizations.

## Goals and Recommendations

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The Plan recommendations are specific actions for Bethel, Marion, and Tulpehocken Townships to pursue over the next 10 years to enhance and expand parks and recreation opportunities for residents.

By adopting these recommendations, elected and appointed officials, community organizations, and residents have a common reference for the Townships' goals and future plans for parks, recreation, greenways and trails, and open space. The Plan recommendations serve as a road map for the Townships to follow.

After careful listening and evaluation, issues concerning parks and recreation have been identified. It is essential that the Townships, along with community partners, address these issues over the next 10 years to develop parks and recreation systems that meet the needs of residents.

Strategies to address the findings that emerged from the planning process are organized around the Plan's seven goals. These goals represent what Bethel, Marion, and Tulpehocken Townships will accomplish to address the parks and recreation needs of their residents.

***Goal 1 – Develop and operate the Township parks and recreation systems effectively and efficiently through volunteer leadership and community partnerships.***

**Recommendation 1.1 – Focus on the villages of Bethel, Frystown, Mt. Aetna, Rehrersburg, and Stouchburg as the hubs of parkland and recreation facilities in the Townships and improve the existing parks and recreation facilities in the villages through lease agreements with community organizations.**

In Tulpehocken Township, the Rehrersburg Lions Club and Mt. Aetna Rescue Fire Company provide recreation areas that are used by the public. Tulpehocken Township should proactively approach these organizations to explore the possibility of leasing these recreation sites for public use. Long-term leases will allow the Township to apply for state grants for the enhancement, renovation, and improvement of the parks and to allocate Township funds for these improvements. Tulpehocken Township should address safety and accessibility issues, renovate facilities as needed, and expand recreation opportunities.

**Recommendation 1.2 – Partner with the Tulpehocken Area School District to expand recreation opportunities in Tulpehocken and Bethel Township through the use of School District facilities.**

Because of the lack of parkland and recreation facilities in Bethel and Tulpehocken Townships, the building and grounds of the Tulpehocken Area School District are important recreational resources for residents.

## Key Issues to Address

(not in order of importance)

- Few Township-owned parks and recreation facilities
- Privately-owned park areas used by the public need major renovation to address safety and accessibility concerns
- The existing parks are very small in size
- Lack of recreation programs for all age groups
- Lack of indoor community programming space
- Lack of resident awareness of existing park areas and recreation opportunities
- Lack of tax-supported funding for parks and recreation
- Residents must travel outside of the Townships to enjoy community park amenities
- Lack of linear man-made features to support trail development
- The amount of parkland is insufficient for the current and projected population

The Tulpehocken Area School District Sara Kurr Zock Administration Building in Tulpehocken Township has indoor space that could potentially be used for community recreation programs in partnership with Bethel and Tulpehocken Townships through a lease agreement. The grounds could be improved to provide for outdoor recreation use by upgrading the playing fields and adding a playground, game courts, and other facilities as appropriate.

Through a partnership with the Tulpehocken Area School District, the playground, game courts, and athletic fields at Bethel Elementary School could be upgraded for public use after school hours, by adding sitting areas, shaded areas, a pavilion, etc. to meet the needs of the public. An accessible walkway between the recreation facilities and parking area is needed as well.

Lease agreements with the Townships for public use of these School District facilities would allow the Townships to seek state grant funds for improvements.

### **Recommendation 1.3 – Strengthen the operation of the Township Recreation Boards and Community Association.**

The Bethel and Tulpehocken Township Recreation Boards and Marion Township Community Association are important entities which can be strengthened to improve parks and recreation services for residents. These groups are the chief advocates for parks and recreation and will be the leading forces behind implementation of this Plan to ensure that parks, trails, natural areas, open space, recreation facilities, and recreation programs are provided to meet community needs.

Funding of \$10,000 for joint training and strategic planning for the Bethel and Tulpehocken Township Recreation Boards and the Marion Township Community Association members to provide guidance, structure, and direction for their efforts is available from DCNR through its Peer-to-Peer grant program with a shared \$1,000 investment by the municipalities. Applications for this grant program are available at any time throughout the year on-line. One Township will need to apply for this grant program on behalf of all three Townships.

The DCNR Peer is an experienced parks and recreation professional who would assist the Township Recreation Boards and Community Association with tasks such as:

- Working to implement this Plan’s recommendations
- Developing strategic plans including establishing goals and objectives for operation
- Recruiting volunteers

## **Investing in Quality of Life**

Local parks deliver opportunities for play and physical activities and promote mental and spiritual well-being and environmental stewardship. Local parks provide a sense of place and a gathering space and are the heart of a community. Public parks and recreation amenities have a distinct value in the way they build community identity, cohesion, and pride.

Close-to-home parks and recreation facilities serve many essential functions. They build community and provide opportunities for residents to improve their health. They improve nearby property values and encourage new development and investment. They provide an affordable source of recreation and they preserve the environment.

Given these extensive benefits, increased funding for parks and recreation in Bethel, Marion, and Tulpehocken Townships should be a priority over the next 10 years.

- Defining the Recreation Board/Community Association roles, responsibilities, and expectations for service
- Adopting position descriptions and by-laws
- Coordinating the promotion of the recreation opportunities available to residents including improvement of Township website parks and recreation information
- Planning and conducting recreation programs and family special events
- Drafting an annual budget for parks and recreation for Township approval
- Strengthening communication between the Recreation Boards and Community Association

**Recommendation 1.4 – Join the Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society (PRPS).**

PRPS is the leading source for parks and recreation educational opportunities in Pennsylvania. Members have access, at special rates, to quality continuing education programs, conferences, workshops, and webinars on a wide range of topics. PRPS offers the Certified Playground Safety Inspector course and exam, park resource operations workshops, information on grants and funding programs, and legislative advocacy and alliances. Individual members of the Township Recreation Boards and Community Association should join PRPS and share the resources with their fellow members. The membership cost is only \$20 per year for individual board members.

**Recommendation 1.5 – Begin joint meetings between the Township Recreation Boards and Community Association.**

The three Townships working together on this Plan is a positive beginning for future collaboration and cooperation for parks and recreation.

Holding informal roundtable meetings a few times a year with the members of the Township Recreation Boards and Community Association is an excellent way to continue progress, share information, and discover how the groups can work together and help each other. These discussions will lead to future opportunities to collaborate to best serve Township residents with parks and recreation services.

***Goal 2 – Secure adequate financing to maintain existing parks, acquire parkland, develop trails and recreation facilities, and provide recreation programs for residents.***

**Recommendation 2.1 – Increase Township general fund operating budget parks and recreation funding incrementally each year with a goal to reach a minimum spending of \$5 per capita over the next five years.**

Tax-supported spending on parks and recreation by Bethel, Marion, and Tulpehocken Townships is considerably less than that of other nearby Townships with similarly sized populations and is well below the \$36 per capita average spending on parks and recreation by Pennsylvania municipalities.

Township funds should be allocated for parkland acquisition and park area and recreation facility enhancements, and to provide and support community recreation programming.

**Recommendation 2.2 – Approve mandatory dedication ordinances in Marion and Tulpehocken Townships, which will allow them to accept parkland or fees-in-lieu of land donation by residential and business developers.**

Land donation or fees-in-lieu of land donation allows municipalities to provide parks and recreation facilities as the population grows. Bethel Township has a mandatory dedication ordinance in place; Marion and Tulpehocken Townships do not.

**Recommendation 2.3 – Develop capital budgets and prepare a multi-year capital improvement plan for the acquisition of parkland, the addition of new park facilities, and the replacement and repair of existing park facilities and maintenance equipment.**

Conducting an annual walk-through of the parks prior to budget preparation will help to identify projects for funding.

**Recommendation 2.4 – Continue to seek DCNR and DCED grants for park development and improvements, matching these funds with Township funds.**

Township-owned and Township-leased parkland in all three municipalities need development and improvement to better meet the needs of residents and to make the recreation facilities safer for residents. Funding from DCNR and DCED is available each year to help with the costs of these improvements.

**Recommendation 2.5 – Educate residents, community leaders, and elected and appointed officials about the benefits of providing park areas, trails, recreation facilities, and recreation programs for their Townships.**

Parks and recreation are an essential public service valued by residents. Health and wellness, social equity, and conservation are priorities that public parks and recreation directly addresses. Financial support for parks and recreation increases as the public better understands how parks and recreation benefits their community.

The Township Recreation Boards and Community Association should lead the way to educate the public about the importance of parks and recreation.

***Goal 3 – Expand promotion of Township park and trail areas, recreation facilities, recreation programs, and special events to increase public awareness of them and encourage resident use and participation.***

**Recommendation 3.1 – Develop and improve Township websites and social media outlets.**

The Township park areas should be actively promoted for resident use. The same holds true for non-Township-owned park areas. Residents should also be made aware of the recreation program opportunities currently available to them, whether the programs are sponsored by the library, school district, youth sports group, or other groups. Improvements to the Township websites should:

- Promote the Township parks with a listing and photos of the recreation facilities available at the parks, such as picnic pavilions and playground equipment, including a map showing the park locations.
- Promote the services and programs of other community recreation providers such as the library and youth sports groups with website links.
- Promote regional outdoor recreation opportunities including the Appalachian Trail, State Game Lands, and Blue Marsh Lake.
- Advertise volunteer opportunities in the Townships.
- Promote the area's special events.
- Establish links on the School District, youth sports groups, and the public library websites to the Township websites.
- Include meeting minutes for the Recreation Boards and Community Association.

***Goal 4 – Work in partnership with the Townships and with community groups to fund and provide a coordinated schedule of recreation programs and special events for residents.***

**Recommendation 4.1 – Improve the capacity of the Township Recreation Boards and Community Association to provide community recreation programs and special events.**

Other than youth sports programs, there is a major lack of recreation program opportunities for Township residents. At least one Township-sponsored community event or recreation program should be held at each park every year. Family special events such as outdoor movie nights and family game days should be the first type of programs to offer. To accomplish this, additional volunteers and partnerships with local businesses, libraries, churches, and community groups will be needed.

To offer indoor recreation programs, it will be important to work with the school districts to obtain facility use. The Tulpehocken Area School District administration building, Rehrersburg Lions Club building, and Marion Township municipal building are also potential indoor program locations.

The Township Recreation Boards and Community Association should work with each other and with partners to begin to offer these types of recreation programs in indoor and outdoor locations:

- Preschool and youth activities such as sports, music, and dance instruction classes
- Adult classes such as art, fitness, crafts, and cooking classes
- Senior activities such as bus trips, bridge lessons, and gardening classes
- Summer day camps and summer drop-in playground programs

The Township Recreation Boards and Community Association should work in partnership with community groups to continue and enhance the special events and activities that are currently held in the Townships.

**Recommendation 4.2 – Explore hiring joint summer staff to coordinate recreation programs for children at each Township park.**

The Townships should share the cost of hiring two to three supervisors to plan summer outdoor activities for children, including family special events. A weekly schedule should be set with one day each week spent by program supervisors at the park area in each village in the Townships – Bethel, Frystown, Mt. Aetna, Rehdersburg, and Stouchburg.

**Recommendation 4.3 – Explore sponsorship of recreation programs by the Bethel-Tulpehocken Public Library held outdoors at the Township park areas.**

Learning and recreation go together. In cooperation with the library, the Bethel and Tulpehocken Township Recreation Boards should sponsor joint nature-oriented programming for children, families, and adults at outdoor park locations.

**Goal 5 – Ensure that park areas and recreation facilities are well-maintained, meet current safety standards, and provide an enjoyable environment for residents.**

**Recommendation 5.1 – Write park maintenance tasks down to begin to develop a maintenance management plan and calendar that describes the annual routine work and preventative maintenance that is needed at the Township park areas.**

Providing safe, clean, and well-maintained parks and recreation facilities takes planning. A park maintenance management plan includes an inventory of the facilities at each park, along with what time of year and how frequently each maintenance task should be performed. An acceptable standard of care should be adopted for each park area and recreation facility that describes what they should look like when maintenance is completed.

### Keeping Playgrounds Safe

Playgrounds should be inspected monthly for these issues:

- Make sure surfaces around playground equipment have at least 12 inches of wood chips, mulch, sand, or pea gravel, or are mats made of safety-tested rubber or rubber-like materials.
- Check that protective surfacing extends at least 6 feet in all directions from play equipment. For swings, be sure surfacing extends in back and front twice the height of the suspending bar.
- Make sure play structures more than 30 inches high are spaced at least 9 feet apart.
- Check for dangerous hardware like open ‘S’ hooks or protruding bolt ends.
- Make sure spaces that could trap children, such as openings in guardrails or between ladder rings, measure less than 3.5 inches or more than 9 inches.
- Check for sharp points or edges in equipment.
- Look for tripping hazards like exposed concrete footings, tree stumps, and rocks.
- Make sure elevated surfaces, like platforms and ramps, have guardrails to prevent falls.

### Recommendation 5.2 – Have one Township employee obtain the Certified Playground Safety Inspector (CPSI) credential and share the services with the other Townships.

No one on the three Township staffs is a Certified Playground Safety Inspector (CPSI). Each park's play equipment should be inspected at least annually by a certified inspector with written records kept. The CPSI should provide training to Township staff so that they can recognize hazards and identify unsafe conditions during routine playground inspections. Ultimately, one employee in each Township should become a CPSI.

### Recommendation 5.3 – Seek volunteer groups to assist with one-time and recurring park maintenance tasks.

Potential park partners include local service organizations, park neighbors, garden clubs, scout organizations, and churches. These groups could perform the work themselves or contribute the funds needed to contract the park maintenance service. For example, because of time-consuming maintenance, flower beds at park entrances are a good project for a volunteer group.

### Recommendation 5.4 – Perform annual and routine park inspections.

The annual inspection of parks during early spring is an excellent procedure that helps to identify and correct problems. Township insurance carrier loss control representatives should be requested to participate in the annual inspections to obtain their input into the park maintenance program. Annual inspections should be documented in writing.

When Township staff is on-site to mow the grass or perform other duties, routine park inspections should be done and documented in writing. In case of a deficiency, the staff should provide a written summary of what was or still needs to be corrected, tasks to be performed, and follow-up required. The same staff member should be responsible for the inspection each time.

Sample park inspection checklists are included in Appendix B.

## *Goal 6 – Provide parks and recreation facilities to meet the needs of residents where they can have fun, socialize, experience nature, and lead active, healthy lifestyles.*

### Recommendation 6.1 – Improve existing park sites to maximize recreation benefits, incorporating improvements to address safety concerns, meet accessibility requirements, and enhance the convenience and enjoyment of visiting the park.

- Add a loop trail in Marion Township Playground that encircles the park site and connects recreation facilities.
- Create gathering areas and shade for caregivers at existing playgrounds.
- Rehabilitate outdated play equipment and recreation facilities. Prioritize the removal of outdated playground equipment at Mt. Aetna Playground and replace with play equipment and safety surfacing that is compliant with the Consumer Product Safety Commission safety guidelines for public playgrounds.

- Add opportunities for picnicking at park sites by introducing picnic pavilions and informal picnic areas with picnic tables in shaded settings.

**Recommendation 6.2 – Master plan existing and future parks to align park improvements with the needs and interests of residents and to be compatible with the characteristics of the park site.**

- Develop a master plan for Rehrersburg Lions Club Park, if a lease agreement with Tulpehocken Township is in place, integrating improvements to the 0.9-acre contiguous tract owned by Tulpehocken Township.
- Develop a master plan for Marion Township Playground.
- Develop a master plan for Mt. Aetna Playground and Rescue Fire Co. land following execution of a lease agreement between the Fire Co. and Tulpehocken Township.

**Recommendation 6.3 – Acquire parkland to meet current and future active recreation needs, prioritizing acquisition of land contiguous to existing park sites as possible.**

Additional parkland acreage recommendations to meet the projected 2030 populations are:

- Bethel Township – 42 acres
- Marion Township – 12 acres
- Tulpehocken Township – 35 acres

**Recommendation 6.4 – Explore the potential of acquiring and developing a joint community park to serve Bethel and Tulpehocken Townships.**

Build upon the partnership with the Tulpehocken Area School District described in Recommendation 1.2 to prioritize the acquisition of contiguous acreage to the Sara Kurr Zock Administration Building and/or the Bethel Elementary School, targeting a combined recreation area of 20 or more acres. The community park should be developed with a variety of recreation opportunities for all ages and abilities, competitive and self-directed facilities, and opportunities for family and group gatherings.

**Recommendation 6.5 – Explore opportunities to provide indoor recreation program use of existing buildings.**

Indoor space at the Marion Township building, Rehrersburg Lions Club building, and Sara Kurr Zock Administration Building of the Tulpehocken Area School District could be used for community recreation programs, youth and senior activities, organization meetings, and other recreation uses.

**Recommendation 6.6 – Develop Airport Road Park as a passive recreation destination as envisioned by the Bethel Township Recreation Board, prioritizing the development of looped walking trails.**

Recommendation 6.7 – Explore the need to upgrade the existing ballfields and flat fields in the Townships that are currently not being used.

Contact the Tulpehocken baseball, softball, and soccer youth groups to determine if they would use the fields if they were upgraded. If so, work with the fire companies and other owners of these properties to coordinate upgrades and use.

Goal 7 – *Connect the region through greenways, trails, and protected open space.*

Recommendation 7.1 – Work with willing landowners along designated trail corridors to provide public access via access easements.

Many farms in the region are enrolled in the Clean and Green Program, which allows for recreational use of the property. According to the Pennsylvania Farmland and Forest Land Clean and Green Law, land enrolled in either the agricultural use or forest reserve land use category that is eligible for preferential assessment remains eligible if the landowner permits or authorizes a recreational activity on the land, including but not limited to: hunting, fishing, swimming, access for boating, animal riding, camping, picnicking, hiking, agritainment activities, operation of nonmotorized vehicles, and viewing or exploring a site for aesthetic or historical benefit.

In addition, Pennsylvania has a law that limits the legal liability of landowners who make their land available to the public for free recreation. The purpose of the law is to supplement the availability of publicly owned parks and forests by encouraging landowners to allow hikers, fishermen, and other recreational users onto their properties. The Recreational Use of Land and Water Act creates that incentive by limiting the traditional duty of care that landowners owe to entrants upon their land. So long as no entrance or use fee is charged, the Act provides that landowners owe no duty of care to keep their land safe for recreational users and have no duty to warn of dangerous conditions.

Recommendation 7.2 – Develop trails in existing parks such as Airport Road Park and Marion Township Playground.

Recommendation 7.3 – Coordinate with municipal public works, PennDOT, Berks County, and others to provide bicycle and pedestrian friendly facilities and accommodations along public roads when completing road and bridge projects.

# Chapter 9 – Action Plan

The Action Plan sets forth the time frame for the actions that the Bethel, Marion, and Tulpehocken region will undertake over the short, medium, and long term through 2030 to address the recommendations of this Plan. The Action Plan is organized around the Plan’s seven goals.

## Goal 1 – Develop and operate the Township parks and recreation systems effectively and efficiently through volunteer leadership and community partnerships.

| Action Item<br>Symbol: √ Start Project → Continue Implementation   | Cost/Source/Responsibilities                                       | 2020-2022 | 2023-2026 | 2027-2030+ |
|--|--|-----------|-----------|------------|
| <b>1.1 Focus on the villages of Bethel, Frystown, Mt. Aetna, Rehrersburg, and Stouchburg as the hubs of parkland and recreation facilities in the Townships and improve the existing parks and recreation facilities in the villages through lease agreements with community organizations.</b>  |  |           |           |            |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Tulpehocken Township negotiate a lease with Rehrersburg Lions Club for its park property in Rehrersburg.</li> </ul>   | Tulpehocken Township and Rehrersburg Lions Club                    | √         | →         | →          |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Allocate Township funds to address safety and accessibility issues at the Rehrersburg park and expand recreation facilities.</li> </ul>   | Tulpehocken Township   | √         | →         | →          |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Seek matching funds for park improvements from DCNR and DCED.</li> </ul>  | Tulpehocken Township   | √         | →         | →          |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Tulpehocken Township negotiate a lease with the Mt. Aetna Fire Company for its park property in Mt. Aetna.</li> </ul>   | Tulpehocken Township and Mt. Aetna Fire Company                    | √         | →         | →          |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Allocate Township funds to address safety and accessibility issues at the Mt. Aetna park site and expand recreation facilities.</li> </ul>  | Tulpehocken Township   | √         | →         | →          |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Seek matching funds for park improvements from DCNR and DCED.</li> </ul>  | Tulpehocken Township   | √         | →         | →          |
| <b>1.2 Partner with the Tulpehocken Area School District to expand recreation opportunities in Tulpehocken and Bethel Township using School District facilities.</b>   |  |           |           |            |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Utilize the indoor space at the Tulpehocken Area School District Sara Kurr Zock Administration Building for community recreation programs in partnership with Bethel and Tulpehocken Townships through a lease agreement with the School District.</li> </ul>   | Tulpehocken Area School District, Bethel and Tulpehocken Townships | √         | →         | →          |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improve the grounds at the Administration Building to provide for outdoor recreation use by upgrading the playing fields and adding a playground, game courts, and other facilities as appropriate through a lease agreement between the School District and Bethel and Tulpehocken Townships.</li> </ul>                                     |  | √         | →         | →          |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Upgrade the playground, game courts, and athletic fields at Bethel Elementary School for public use after school hours, by adding sitting areas, shaded areas, a pavilion, an accessible walkway, etc. to meet the needs of the public through a lease agreement between the School District and Bethel and Tulpehocken Townships.</li> </ul> |  | √         | →         | →          |
| <b>1.3 Strengthen the operation of the Township Recreation Boards and Community Association.</b>   |  |           |           |            |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Apply for a \$10,000 DCNR Peer-to-Peer Technical Assistance Grant for joint training and strategic</li> </ul>   | Bethel, Tulpehocken, and Marion Townships                          | √         | →         | →          |

|  |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| planning for Bethel and Tulpehocken Township Recreation Boards and Marion Township Community Association. One Township should apply on behalf of all three; all three should split the cost of the \$1,000 match requirement.  |   |   |   |   |
| <b>1.4 Join the Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society (PRPS)</b>  |   |   |   |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Townships allocate \$20 per year in annual budgets per Bethel and Tulpehocken Township Recreation Board and Marion Township Community Association member for membership dues for PRPS, the leading source for parks and recreation educational opportunities in Pennsylvania. PRPS offers the Certified Playground Safety Inspector course and exam, park resource operations workshops, information on grants and funding programs, and legislative advocacy and alliances.</li> </ul> | Bethel, Tulpehocken, and Marion Townships   | √ | → | → |
| <b>1.5 Begin joint meetings between the Township Recreation Boards and Community Association.</b>  |   |   |   |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hold informal roundtable meetings a few times each year to continue progress, share information, and define how the groups can work together and help each other.</li> </ul>  | Bethel and Tulpehocken Township Recreation Boards and Marion Township Community Association | √ | → | → |

| <b>Goal 2 – Secure adequate financing to maintain existing parks, acquire parkland, develop trails and recreation facilities, and provide recreation programs for residents.</b>   |   |                  |                  |                   |
|--|---|------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Action Item</b>   | <b>Cost/Source/Responsibilities</b>   | <b>2020-2022</b> | <b>2023-2026</b> | <b>2027-2030+</b> |
| Symbol: √ Start Project → Continue Implementation  |   |                  |                  |                   |
| <b>2.1 Increase Township general fund operating budget parks and recreation funding incrementally each year with a goal to reach a minimum spending of \$5 per capita over the next five years.</b>  |   |                  |                  |                   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allocate Township funds for park area and recreation facility enhancement, parkland acquisition, and community recreation programming.</li> </ul>   | Bethel, Tulpehocken, and Marion Townships   | √                | →                | →                 |
| <b>2.2 Approve mandatory dedication ordinances in Marion and Tulpehocken Townships, which will allow them to accept parkland or fees-in-lieu of land donation by residential and business developers.</b>  |   |                  |                  |                   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adopt mandatory dedication ordinances to allow land donation and fees-in-lieu of land donation to provide parks and recreation facilities.</li> </ul>   | Marion and Tulpehocken Townships  | √                | →                | →                 |
| <b>2.3 Develop capital budgets and prepare a multi-year capital improvement plan for the acquisition of parkland, the addition of new park facilities, and the replacement and repair of existing park facilities and maintenance equipment.</b> |   |                  |                  |                   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify capital projects for funding by conducting walk-throughs of the parks and a review of maintenance equipment prior to budget season.</li> </ul>   | Bethel, Tulpehocken, and Marion Townships   | √                | →                | →                 |
| <b>2.4 Continue to seek DCNR and DCED grants for park development and improvements, matching these funds with Township funds.</b>  |   |                  |                  |                   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek grants for Township-owned and Township-leased parkland with the matching fund requirements provided by the municipalities.</li> </ul>  | Bethel, Tulpehocken, and Marion Townships   | √                | →                | →                 |
| <b>2.5 Educate residents, community leaders, and elected and appointed officials about the benefits of providing park areas, trails, recreation facilities, and recreation programs for their Townships.</b>                                     |   |                  |                  |                   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have a presence at community special events to promote the park systems and how they benefit residents.</li> </ul>  | Bethel and Tulpehocken Township Recreation Boards and Marion Township Community Association | √                | →                | →                 |

**Goal 3 – Expand promotion of Township park and trail areas, recreation facilities, recreation programs, and special events to increase public awareness of them and encourage resident use and participation.**

| Action Item<br>Symbol: √ Start Project → Continue Implementation   | Cost/Source/Responsibilities              | 2020-2022 | 2023-2026 | 2027-2030+ |
|--|---|-----------|-----------|------------|
| <b>3.1 Develop and improve Township websites and social media outlets.</b>   |   |           |           |            |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Make residents aware of the parks and recreation opportunities available in the Townships by developing and updating Township websites. Improvements to the Township websites should:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promote the Township parks with a listing and photos of the recreation facilities available at the parks, such as picnic pavilions and playground equipment, including a map showing the park locations.</li> <li>- Promote the services and programs of other community recreation providers such as the library and youth sports groups with website links.</li> <li>- Promote regional outdoor recreation opportunities including the Appalachian Trail, State Game Lands, and Blue Marsh Lake.</li> <li>- Advertise volunteer opportunities in the Townships.</li> <li>- Promote the area’s special events.</li> <li>- Establish links on the School District, youth sports groups, and the public library websites to the Township websites.</li> <li>- Include meeting minutes for the Recreation Boards and Community Association.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | Bethel, Tulpehocken, and Marion Townships | √         | →         | →          |

**Goal 4 – Work in partnership with the Townships and with community groups to fund and provide a coordinated schedule of recreation programs and special events for residents.**

| Action Item<br>Symbol: √ Start Project → Continue Implementation  | Cost/Source/Responsibilities  | 2020-2022 | 2023-2026 | 2027-2030+ |
|---|---|-----------|-----------|------------|
| <b>4.1 Improve the capacity of the Township Recreation Boards and Community Association to provide community recreation programs and special events.</b>  |   |           |           |            |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Hold at least one Township-sponsored community event or recreation program at each park every year by partnering with local businesses, libraries, churches, and community groups.</li> <li>▪ Work in partnership with community groups to continue and enhance the special events and activities that are currently held in the Townships by other organizations.</li> <li>▪ Work with the school districts to obtain facilities for indoor recreation programs.</li> <li>▪ Utilize the Rehrersburg Lions Club building and Marion Township municipal building as indoor program locations.</li> <li>▪ Work together to begin to offer these types of recreation programs in indoor and outdoor locations:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Preschool and youth activities such as sports, music, and dance instruction classes</li> <li>▪ Adult classes such as art, fitness, crafts, and cooking classes</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | Bethel and Tulpehocken Township Recreation Boards and Marion Township Community Association | √         | →         | →          |
|   |   | √         | →         | →          |
|   |   | √         | →         | →          |
|   |   | √         | →         | →          |
|   |   | √         | →         | →          |

|  |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Senior activities such as bus trips, bridge lessons, and gardening classes</li> <li>Summer day camps and summer drop-in playground programs</li> </ul>  |   |   |   |   |
| <b>4.2 Explore hiring joint summer staff to coordinate recreation programs for children at each Township park.</b>   |   |   |   |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share the cost among the Townships of hiring two to three supervisors to plan summer outdoor activities for children, including family special events. Set a weekly schedule with one day each week spent by program supervisors at the park area in each village in the Townships – Bethel, Frystown, Mt. Aetna, Rehrersburg, and Stouchburg.</li> </ul> | Bethel, Tulpehocken, and Marion Townships         | √ | → | → |
| <b>4.3 Explore sponsorship of recreation programs by the Bethel-Tulpehocken Public Library held outdoors at the Township park areas.</b>   |   |   |   |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work in cooperation with the Bethel-Tulpehocken Township Public Library to sponsor joint nature-oriented programming for children, families, and adults at outdoor park locations.</li> </ul>   | Bethel and Tulpehocken Township Recreation Boards | √ | → | → |

**Goal 5 – Ensure that park areas and recreation facilities are well-maintained, meet current safety standards, and provide an enjoyable environment for residents.**

| Action Item<br>Symbol: √ Start Project → Continue Implementation   | Cost/Source/Responsibilities                                | 2020-2022 | 2023-2026 | 2027-2030+ |
|--|---|-----------|-----------|------------|
| <b>5.1 Write park maintenance tasks down to begin to develop a maintenance management plan and calendar that describes the annual routine work and preventative maintenance that is needed at the Township park areas.</b>   |   |           |           |            |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a park maintenance management plan that includes an inventory of the facilities at each park, along with what time of year and how frequently each maintenance task should be performed.</li> <li>Adopt an acceptable standard of care for each park area and recreation facility that describes what they should look like when maintenance is completed.</li> </ul> | Bethel, Tulpehocken, and Marion Township Public Works Staff | √         | →         | →          |
|  |   | √         | →         | →          |
| <b>5.2 Have one Township employee obtain the Certified Playground Safety Inspector (CPSI) credential and share the services with the other Townships.</b>  |   |           |           |            |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inspect each park’s play equipment at least annually by a CPSI with written records kept.</li> <li>Provide training to Township staff so that they can recognize hazards and identify unsafe conditions during routine playground inspections.</li> <li>Work towards having one employee in each Township becoming a CPSI.</li> </ul>   | Bethel, Tulpehocken, and Marion Township Public Works Staff | √         | →         | →          |
|  |   | √         | →         | →          |
|  |   | √         | →         | →          |
| <b>5.3 Seek volunteer groups to assist with one-time and recurring park maintenance tasks.</b>   |   |           |           |            |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and contact potential park partners including local service organizations, park neighbors, garden clubs, scout organizations, and churches, to perform the work themselves or contribute the funds needed to contract the park maintenance service.</li> </ul>   | Bethel, Tulpehocken, and Marion Townships                   | √         | →         | →          |
| <b>5.4 Perform annual and routine park inspections.</b>  |   |           |           |            |

|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perform routine park inspections when Township staff is on-site to mow the grass or perform other duties.</li> <li>Provide a written summary of what was or still needs to be corrected, tasks to be performed, and follow-up required. The same staff member should be responsible for the inspection each time.</li> <li>Document annual park inspections in writing.</li> <li>Request that Township insurance carrier loss control representatives participate in annual park inspections.</li> </ul> | Bethel, Tulpehocken, and Marion Township Public Works Staff | √ | → | → |
|   |   | √ | → | → |
|   |   | √ | → | → |
|   |   | √ | → | → |

## Goal 6 – Provide parks and recreation facilities to meet the needs of residents where they can have fun, socialize, experience nature, and lead active, healthy lifestyles.

| Action Item<br>Symbol: √ Start Project → Continue Implementation   | Cost/Source/Responsibilities   | 2020-2022 | 2023-2026 | 2027-2030+ |
|--|--|-----------|-----------|------------|
| <b>6.1 Improve existing park sites to maximize recreation benefits, incorporating improvements to address safety concerns, meet accessibility requirements, and enhance the convenience and enjoyment of visiting the parks.</b>   |  |           |           |            |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Add a loop trail in Marion Township Park that encircles the park site and connects recreation facilities.</li> <li>Create gathering areas and provide shade for caregivers at playgrounds.</li> <li>Rehabilitate outdated playgrounds. Prioritize the removal of outdated playground equipment at Mt. Aetna Playground and replace with play equipment and safety surfacing that is compliant with the Consumer Product Safety Commission safety guidelines for public playgrounds.</li> <li>Add opportunities for picnicking at park sites by introducing picnic pavilions and informal picnic areas with picnic tables in shaded settings.</li> </ul> | \$38,650/Marion Township   | √         |           |            |
|  | \$TBD/Bethel, Tulpehocken and Marion Townships<br>\$TBD/Tulpehocken Township | √         | √         |            |
|  | \$TBD/Bethel, Tulpehocken and Marion Townships                               |           | √         |            |
| <b>6.2 Master plan existing and future parks to align park improvements with the needs and interests of residents and to be compatible with the characteristics of the park site.</b>  |  |           |           |            |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a Site Design and Grading Study for Frystown Playground which illustrates accessibility accommodations and recreation improvements.</li> <li>Master plan Rehrersburg Lions Club Park, following execution of a lease agreement with Tulpehocken Township. Integrate the 0.9-acre contiguous tract owned by Tulpehocken Township into the master plan.</li> <li>Master plan Marion Township Playground.</li> <li>Master plan Mt. Aetna Playground and Rescue Fire Company following lease agreement between the Fire Co. and Tulpehocken Township.</li> </ul>  | \$12,000-\$20,000/Bethel Township  | √         |           |            |
|  | \$18,000-\$25,000/Tulpehocken Township                                       | √         |           |            |
|  | \$18,000-\$25,000/Marion Twp.<br>\$18,000-\$25,000/Tulpehocken Township      | √         | √         |            |
|  |  |           |           | √          |
| <b>6.3 Acquire parkland to meet current and future active recreation needs, prioritizing acquisition of land contiguous to existing park sites as possible.</b>  |  |           |           |            |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bethel Township acquire 42 acres of additional parkland acreage over the next 10 years.</li> <li>Marion Township acquire 12 acres of additional parkland acreage over the next 10 years.</li> <li>Tulpehocken Township acquire 35 acres of parkland over the next 10 years.</li> </ul>  | \$TBD, grants /Bethel Township, DCNR   | √         | →         | →          |
|  | \$TBD, grants/Marion Township, DCNR  | √         | →         | →          |
|  | \$TBD, grants/Tulpehocken Township, DCNR                                     | √         | →         | →          |
| <b>6.4 Explore the potential of acquiring and developing a joint community park to serve Bethel and Tulpehocken Townships.</b>   |  |           |           |            |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore acquisition of land contiguous to the Sara Kurr Zock Administration Building and/or the Bethel Elementary School to create a joint community park</li> </ul>  | Bethel and Tulpehocken Townships   | √         |           |            |

|   |   |  |   |   |   |
|---|---|--|---|---|---|
| of 20 acres or more to serve Bethel and Tulpehocken Townships.  |   |  |   |   |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Master plan and develop the joint community park with facilities and activity areas that target all ages and abilities and include facilities for competition and self-directed play and family and group gathering areas.</li> </ul>  | \$TBD/Bethel and Tulpehocken Townships                  |  | √ | → |   |
| <b>6.5 Explore opportunities to provide indoor recreation program use of existing buildings.</b>  |   |  |   |   |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore the possibility of using the Marion Township building, Rehrersburg Lions Club building, and Sara Kurr Zock Administration Building of the Tulpehocken School District for community recreation programs, youth and senior activities, organization meetings, and other recreation uses.</li> </ul> | Tulpehocken and Marion Townships                        |  | √ |   |   |
| <b>6.6 Develop Airport Road Park as a passive recreation destination as envisioned by the Bethel Township Recreation Board, prioritizing the development of loop walking trails.</b>  |   |  |   |   |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop Airport Road Park as a passive recreation destination as envisioned by the Bethel Township Recreation Board, prioritizing the development of loop walking trails.</li> </ul>   | \$TBD/Bethel Township                                   |  | √ | → | → |
| <b>6.7 Explore the need to upgrade the existing ballfields and flat fields in the Townships that are currently not being used.</b>  |   |  |   |   |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contact Tulpehocken baseball, softball, and soccer youth groups to determine if they would use the fields in existing parks if they were upgraded.</li> <li>If use is planned, upgrade existing fields for competitive play.</li> </ul>  | Bethel and Tulpehocken Township Recreation Boards       |  | √ |   |   |
|   | \$TBD/Bethel and Tulpehocken Township Recreation Boards |  |   | √ |   |

| <b>Goal 7 – Connect the region through greenways, trails, and protected open space.</b>   |  |           |           |            |   |
|---|--|-----------|-----------|------------|---|
| Action Item   | Cost/Source/Responsibilities             | 2020-2022 | 2023-2026 | 2027-2030+ |   |
| Symbol: √ Start Project → Continue Implementation   |  |           |           |            |   |
| <b>7.1 Work with willing landowners along designated trail corridors to provide public access via access easements.</b>   |  |           |           |            |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reach out to landowners along designated trail corridors to discuss the benefits of trails and greenways and the potential of granting an easement for trail development and public access.</li> </ul>                     | Bethel, Tulpehocken and Marion Townships |           | √         | →          | → |
| <b>7.2 Develop trails in existing parks such as Airport Road Park and Marion Township Playground.</b>   |  |           |           |            |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop trails to provide accessible routes to park facilities and activity areas.</li> <li>Develop trails that expand throughout park sites. Configure with multiple loops of various lengths.</li> </ul>                 | \$TBD/Bethel Township                    |           | √         | →          | → |
|   | \$TBD/Bethel Township                    |           | √         | →          | → |
| <b>7.3 Coordinate with municipal public works, PennDOT, Berks County, and others to provide bicycle and pedestrian friendly facilities and accommodations along public roads when completing road and bridge projects.</b>  |  |           |           |            |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinate with municipal public works, PennDOT, Berks County, and others to provide bicycle and pedestrian friendly facilities and accommodations along public roads when completing road and bridge projects.</li> </ul> | Bethel, Tulpehocken and Marion Townships |           | √         | →          | → |

# Appendix A – Capital Improvement Program

The recommendations of this **Plan** will require Bethel, Marion, and Tulpehocken Townships to make both capital and operating expenditures. Determining capital costs can be somewhat nebulous. Many communities use their own work forces and can save considerable costs. Others are very resourceful and able to secure alternative sources of funding through business contributions, grants, individual donations, or other means. The following table provides costs estimates for proposed capital improvements identified in this Plan. These are generalized opinions based on the best available information and are subject to change when each project is further evaluated based on accurate survey information and design and engineering documents. Master Plans are recommended for several parks and cost estimates should be provided as part of the park planning process.

Projected costs are based on 2019 construction costs and do not consider the source of revenue. Design, survey, engineering, contractor bond, insurance, and contingency costs have been included based on typical percentage of the projected development costs. These costs should be re-defined after an approach and scope are determined for each project.

| Bethel, Marion, and Tulpehocken Region - CIP Summary |                              |                 |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------|
| Park   | CIP Estimate                 | Priority        |
| Frystown Playground Park                             | \$12,000 - \$20,000          | 1 <sup>st</sup> |
| Airport Road Park                                    | \$447,900                    | 3 <sup>rd</sup> |
| Marion Township Playground                           | \$389,850                    | 2 <sup>nd</sup> |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   | <b>\$849,750 - \$857,750</b> |                 |

| Bethel, Marion and Tulpehocken Region Parks and Recreation Facilities<br>Capital Improvement Program (CIP)   |                          |               |               |                |
|--|--------------------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| Park Improvement   | Cost Opinion             | 2020-<br>2022 | 2023-<br>2026 | 2027-<br>2030+ |
| <b>Frystown Playground</b>   |                          |               |               |                |
| Complete a Site Design and Grading Study to address accessibility and improvement to the Frystown Playground.<br>Suggested improvements include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop two areas of HC parking spaces, accessible routes to recreation amenities, and crosswalk.</li> <li>▪ Develop a gathering area at the playground and add shade.</li> <li>▪ Develop spectator seating behind the ballfield backstop.</li> <li>▪ Plant street trees.</li> </ul> |                          |               |               |                |
| <b>Site Design and Grading Plan</b>  |                          |               |               |                |
| Site design and grading plan   | \$12,000-\$20,000        |               |               |                |
| <b>TOTAL Frystown Playground</b>   | <b>\$12,000-\$20,000</b> | <b>√</b>      |               |                |

| Bethel, Marion and Tulpehocken Region Parks and Recreation Facilities<br>Capital Improvement Program (CIP)  |              |                  |               |                |
|---|--------------|------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Park Improvement  | Cost Opinion | 2020-<br>2022    | 2023-<br>2026 | 2027-<br>2030+ |
| <b>Airport Road Park</b>  |              |                  |               |                |
| Improvements provide access and initial development of recreation enhancements. Suggested improvements include:   |              |                  |               |                |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop access drive, parking, and trail system</li> <li>▪ Develop an age-segregated playground</li> <li>▪ Develop picnic areas</li> </ul> |              |                  |               |                |
| <b>Site Preparation, Earthwork, Erosion Control</b>   |              |                  |               |                |
| Site preparation  |              | \$1,000          |               |                |
| Earthwork   |              | \$7,500          |               |                |
| Erosion control & SWM   |              | \$41,700         |               |                |
| Sub-Total   |              | \$50,200         |               |                |
| <b>Aggregate Drive, Parking, and Trail and HC Paved Spaces</b>  |              |                  |               |                |
| Aggregate drive pavement  |              | \$3,000          |               |                |
| Aggregate parking area (18 spaces)  |              | \$8,200          |               |                |
| Bituminous HC parking spaces (2 spaces), sign and markings  |              | \$3,000          |               |                |
| Stone-dust trail – 6' wide (3,250 LF)   |              | \$24,500         |               |                |
| Sub-Total   |              | \$36,000         |               |                |
| <b>Amenities</b>  |              |                  |               |                |
| Benches (6)   |              | \$9,000          |               |                |
| Picnic tables (8)   |              | \$9,600          |               |                |
| Acknowledgement sign  |              | \$250            |               |                |
| Amenities installation  |              | \$7,550          |               |                |
| Sub-Total   |              | \$26,400         |               |                |
| <b>Playground</b>   |              |                  |               |                |
| Tot equipment   |              | \$28,000         |               |                |
| Youth equipment   |              | \$32,000         |               |                |
| Edging  |              | \$12,000         |               |                |
| Safety Surfacing  |              | \$6,000          |               |                |
| Stone base, filter fabric, underdrain   |              | \$4,000          |               |                |
| Concrete plaza gathering area   |              | \$9,000          |               |                |
| Sub-Total   |              | \$91,000         |               |                |
| <b>Picnic Area</b>  |              |                  |               |                |
| Medium pavilion and concrete pad (1)  |              | \$48,000         |               |                |
| Single picnic table pavilions and concrete pad (2)  |              | \$30,000         |               |                |
| Horseshoe pits (1 set)  |              | \$2,800          |               |                |
| Sub-Total   |              | \$80,800         |               |                |
| <b>Landscaping</b>  |              |                  |               |                |
| Seeding at improvements   |              | \$18,000         |               |                |
| Sub-Total   |              | \$18,000         |               |                |
| <b>General Project Costs</b>  |              |                  |               |                |
| Contingency (15%)   |              | \$45,350         |               |                |
| Bond, mobilization, and layout (12%)  |              | \$41,750         |               |                |
| Design, engineering, and permitting (15%)   |              | \$58,400         |               |                |
| Sub-Total   |              | \$145,500        |               |                |
| <b>TOTAL Airport Road Park</b>  |              | <b>\$447,900</b> | <b>√</b>      |                |

**Bethel, Marion and Tulpehocken Region Parks and Recreation Facilities  
Capital Improvement Program (CIP)**

| Park Improvement   | Cost Opinion     | 2020-<br>2022 | 2023-<br>2026 | 2027-<br>2030+ |
|--|------------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| <b>Marion Township Playground</b>  |                  |               |               |                |
| Develop a master plan for the park that explores resident needs and interests. The following general improvements are proposed for the site and additional improvements should be identified through the master planning process: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop a parking area with HC parking spaces.</li> <li>▪ Develop an accessible trail that extends from the parking area to recreation amenities and encircles the park site.</li> <li>▪ Develop an age-segregated playground with benches and a gathering area.</li> <li>▪ Plant street trees along roadways.</li> </ul> |                  |               |               |                |
| <b>Site Preparation, Earthwork, Erosion Control</b>  |                  |               |               |                |
| Site preparation   | \$1,000          |               |               |                |
| Earthwork  | \$3,000          |               |               |                |
| Erosion control & SWM  | \$36,300         |               |               |                |
| Sub-Total  | \$40,300         |               |               |                |
| <b>Paved Parking and Trail</b>   |                  |               |               |                |
| Paved parking area (12 spaces)   | \$7,200          |               |               |                |
| HC parking spaces (2 spaces) signs and markings  | \$1,200          |               |               |                |
| Paved trail – 6’ wide (2,150 LF)   | \$38,650         |               |               |                |
| Sub-Total  | \$47,050         |               |               |                |
| <b>Playground</b>  |                  |               |               |                |
| Tot equipment  | \$28,000         |               |               |                |
| Youth equipment  | \$32,000         |               |               |                |
| Edging   | \$12,000         |               |               |                |
| Safety Surfacing   | \$6,000          |               |               |                |
| Stone base, filter fabric, underdrain  | \$4,000          |               |               |                |
| Concrete pavement gathering area   | \$9,000          |               |               |                |
| Sub-Total  | \$91,000         |               |               |                |
| <b>Amenities</b>   |                  |               |               |                |
| Benches (6)  | \$9,000          |               |               |                |
| Exercise stations (9)  | \$37,800         |               |               |                |
| Acknowledgement sign   | \$250            |               |               |                |
| Amenities installation   | \$18,800         |               |               |                |
| Sub-Total  | \$65,850         |               |               |                |
| <b>Landscaping</b>   |                  |               |               |                |
| Street trees   | \$8,500          |               |               |                |
| Seeding  | \$10,500         |               |               |                |
| Sub-Total  | \$19,000         |               |               |                |
| <b>General Project Costs</b>   |                  |               |               |                |
| Contingency (10%)  | \$39,500         |               |               |                |
| Bond, mobilization, and layout (12%)   | \$36,300         |               |               |                |
| Design, engineering, and permitting (12%)  | \$50,850         |               |               |                |
| Sub-Total  | \$126,650        |               |               |                |
| <i>TOTAL Marion Township Playground</i>  | <i>\$389,850</i> | <i>√</i>      |               |                |



# Appendix B – Park Inspection Checklists



## Monthly Rowlett Playground Inspection Report

Location: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Inspected By: \_\_\_\_\_

| Items To Be Checked   | Condition | Date Repaired | Required Repairs |
|---|-----------|---------------|------------------|
| Posts and footings are not exposed, cracked or loose  |           |               |                  |
| Screws, bolts and nuts are tight and secure   |           |               |                  |
| Welds are intact and free of cracks<br>✓ Slide and deck enclosures<br>✓ Challenge ladders<br>✓ Swings, ring trek, track ride<br>✓ Cross beams |           |               |                  |
| No rust or corrosion on equipment   |           |               |                  |
| No splintered, cracked or deteriorating wood  |           |               |                  |
| No chipped or peeling paint   |           |               |                  |
| Metal parts show no sign of cracks, bending, warping, or breakage   |           |               |                  |
| All joints secure   |           |               |                  |
| No sharp edges or unsafe protrusions  |           |               |                  |
| No exposed moving parts, pinch or crush points  |           |               |                  |
| Plastic is not cut or cracked   |           |               |                  |
| All slide supports are anchored and secure  |           |               |                  |
| S-hooks and chains are closed and not excessively worn  |           |               |                  |
| Fall zone free of<br>✓ Trash Glass Weeds Pet debris   |           |               |                  |
| Fall zone material is adequately deep   |           |               |                  |
| Transition carpet covered with adequate fall zone material.   |           |               |                  |

Comments:

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**Maintenance Inspection Checklist**

**Playgrounds**

Location:

Date:

Inspected By:

PLACE A "Y" IN THE BOX IF THE ITEM MEETS THE STANDARD OR "N" IF IT DOES NOT. MARK SECTIONS "N/A" THAT ARE NOT APPLICABLE.

**A. Play Equipment**

- Play equipment meets ASTM and National Playground Safety Institute standards.
- Play equipment is free of graffiti.
- Age appropriateness for the play equipment is noted with the proper signage.

**B. Benches & Picnic Tables**

- Hardware and bracing are structurally sound and intact.
- Seating surface and table tops are clean and free of protrusions. No catch points or sharp edges are exposed.
- Nails, bolts, or screws are flush with the surface.
- Painted surfaces are in good repair with no rotten wood or rusted metal visible.
- No graffiti is visible.

**C. Surfacing**

- Fall surface is clean and free of litter and debris.
- Wood Carpet surfaces are loose, level, and free of compaction.
- Surface material is well drained and no evidence of standing water is apparent.
- Rubber surfaces are free of major holes and tears with minimal deterioration.
- Rubber surfaces are secure to the base material and curbing.

**D. Trash Receptacles**

- Sufficient barrels are available in high traffic areas.
- Barrels are not overflowing and have liners in place.
- Receptacles are cleanly painted with no rusted metal or graffiti visible.
- Lids are in place where appropriate.

**E. Signage**

- Emergency and Parks Hotline signs are in visible locations and secured properly.
- Signs are readable and not faded or broken.

**F. Fences**

- Fence fabric is free of holes and is properly tied to the upright and crossing supports.
- Fence posts are secure in the ground and are straight upright. Crossbars are properly tied to the uprights.
- Posts have caps in place.
- Gates and hardware are functional with all hardware in place.

CRANBERRY TOWNSHIP built for you.

**Maintenance Inspection Checklist**

**Athletic Field Envelope**

Field:

Date:

Inspected By:

PLACE A "Y" IN THE BOX IF THE ITEM MEETS THE STANDARD OR "N" IF IT DOES NOT. MARK SECTIONS "N/A" THAT ARE NOT APPLICABLE.

**A. Grounds**

- Grass is mowed and trimmed.
- Surfaces do not present trip and fall hazards.
- Ground is free of litter and debris.

**B. Bleachers & Benches**

- Hardware and bracing are structurally sound and intact.
- Seating surface is clean and free of protrusions. No catch points or sharp edges are exposed.
- Nails, bolts, or screws are flush with the surface.
- Painted surfaces are in good repair without major chipping, peeling, or cracking.
- Handrails are secure with a smooth surface free of protrusions or sharp edges.

**C. Field Accessories**

- Goals, tackling sleds, pitching screens, etc. are in good repair and do not present a safety hazard. Refer problems to correct Athletic Association.
- Scoreboards are structurally sound and exterior repairs are not apparent. Associations will inspect electronic function.

**D. Fences/Netting/Screens**

- Fence fabric is free of holes and is properly tied to the upright and crossing supports.
- Fence posts are secure in the ground and are straight upright. Crossbars are properly tied to the uprights.
- Safety caps are on all chain link style fences surrounding playing surfaces.
- Netting is secure on uprights and does not have holes.
- Backstop screens are properly secured and do not have rips or holes. Refer problems to correct Athletic Association for repair.

**E. Dugouts**

- Structure is sound. Roofing appears intact and no leaks are evident. All lumber appears solid with no rotting visible.
- Seating surface is clean and free of protrusions. No catch points or sharp edges are exposed.
- All surfaces are cleanly painted with no rotten lumber or rusted metal evident. No graffiti in sight.
- All electrical enclosures are secure, GFI's have covers in place, lights and electrical plugs work, no wires are exposed.

**F. Lights**

- Musco lights are operational.
- Light poles are structually sound with no visible damage at the connection to the concrete footer.
- Electrical junction boxes and conduit are secure.

**G. Trash Receptacles**

- Sufficient barrels are available in high traffic areas such as dugouts and bleachers.
- Barrels are not overflowing and have liners in place.
- Receptacles are cleanly painted with no rusted metal or graffiti visible.
- Lids are in place where appropriate.

**H. Signage**

- Emergency and Parks Hotline signs are in visible locations and secured properly.
- Signs are readable and not faded or broken.

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**Maintenance Inspection Checklist**  
**Hard Surface Courts and Sand Volleyball**

Location:

Date:

Inspected By:

PLACE A "Y" IN THE BOX IF THE ITEM MEETS THE STANDARD OR "N" IF IT DOES NOT. MARK SECTIONS "N/A" THAT ARE NOT APPLICABLE.

**A. Hard Surface Courts**

- Surface is smooth, level, and well drained.
- Surface is free of large cracks, holes, and trip hazards.
- Surface is painted and striped as per court specifications.
- Worn painted surfaces do not exceed 25% of the total court surface.
- Surface is free of litter, debris, and gravel.

**B. Sand Courts**

- Sand is loose.
- Surface is smooth, level, and well drained.
- Surface is relatively free of weeds, grass, litter, and debris.
- Court endlines and sidelines are secured properly.

**C. Nets & Poles**

- Nets are free from excessive tears that could interfere with game play.
- Nets are properly installed and secured to support poles.
- Tennis: nets have center straps installed at the regulated height and are anchored to the court.
- Basketball: rims are straight and attached to backboards properly. Backboards are in good repair with no defects visible.
- Support poles have hardware intact, properly anchored, and installed.

**D. Fences & Screens**

- Fence fabric is free of holes and is properly tied to the upright and crossing supports.
- Fence posts are secure in the ground and are straight upright. Crossbars are properly tied to the uprights.
- Gates and hardware are functional with all hardware in place.
- Screens are properly secured and do not have rips or holes.

**E. Lights**

- Lights are operational with at least 90% of all bulbs working.
- Light poles are structurally sound with no visible damage at the connection to the concrete footer.
- Electrical junction boxes and conduit are secure with no electric conducting wire exposed.
- Lights provide uniform coverage to the courts and avoid dark or blind spots.

**F. Trash Receptacles**

- Sufficient barrels are available in high traffic areas.
- Barrels are not overflowing and have liners in place.
- Receptacles are cleanly painted with no rusted metal or graffiti visible.
- Lids are in place where appropriate.

**G. Signage**

- Emergency and Parks Hotline signs are in visible locations and secured properly.
- Signs are readable and not faded or broken.

**H. Benches & Picnic Tables**

- Hardware and bracing are structurally sound and intact.
- Seating surface and table tops are clean and free of protrusions. No catch points or sharp edges are exposed.
- Nails, bolts, or screws are flush with the surface.
- Painted surfaces are in good repair with no rotten wood or rusted metal visible.
- No graffiti is visible.

**I. Grounds**

- Grass is mowed and trimmed.
- Surfaces do not present trip and fall hazards.
- Ground is free of litter and debris.

**Maintenance Inspection Checklist**

**Shelters**

Location:

Date:

Inspected By:

PLACE A "Y" IN THE BOX IF THE ITEM MEETS THE STANDARD OR "N" IF IT DOES NOT. MARK SECTIONS "N/A" THAT ARE NOT APPLICABLE.

**A. Grounds**

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Grass is mowed and trimmed.  
Surfaces do not present trip and fall hazards.  
Ground is free of litter and debris.

**B. Shelter Structure**

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All surfaces are clean, sanitary, and free of graffiti.  
Electrical panels, plugs, and lights have safety covers in place and are working properly.  
All surfaces are cleanly painted with no rotten lumber or rusted metal evident, no loose siding or trim pieces.  
Concrete has a smooth surface and no large cracks or holes that may cause tripping.  
Roof is free of leaves and branches and shingles are intact. No leaking or holes are observed.  
Staples and nails from temporary signage or banners are removed and do not cause any protrusions or sharp edges.

**C. Grills**

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Grills are operational and have minimal rust and metal deterioration.  
Grill racks are operational and secure to main body and have minimal grease build-up. Used charcoal is removed.  
Grill foundations are intact and do not create a tripping hazard. Grill is secure, sturdy, and no vandalism is observed.

**D. Tables**

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Tables are clean, free of rust, broken or rotten lumber. No graffiti is evident.  
Table tops and seats are smooth with no protrusions and have no sharp edges that present a hazard. All staples are removed.  
Correct amount of tables are present for the shelter.

**E. Trash Receptacles**

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Sufficient barrels are available in high traffic areas.  
Barrels are not overflowing and have liners in place.  
Receptacles are cleanly painted with no rusted metal or graffiti visible.  
Lids are in place where appropriate.

**F. Signage**

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- 

Emergency and Parks Hotline signs are in visible locations and secured properly.  
Signs are readable and not faded or broken.

**G. Water Fountains & Hose Bibs**

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Drinking fountains are operational and no leaks are present.  
Drinking fountain bowl and drain are clean, working, and free of debris.  
Hose bibs are operational and no leaks are present.

**CRANBERRY TOWNSHIP built for you.**

**Maintenance Inspection Checklist**  
**Restroom and Concession Buildings**

Location:

Date:

Inspected By:

PLACE A "Y" IN THE BOX IF THE ITEM MEETS THE STANDARD OR "N" IF IT DOES NOT. MARK SECTIONS "N/A" THAT ARE NOT APPLICABLE.

**A. Grounds**

- Grass is mowed and trimmed.
- Surfaces do not present trip and fall hazards.
- Ground is free of litter and debris.

**B. Building & Utilities**

- All surfaces are clean, sanitary, and free of graffiti.
- All surfaces are cleanly painted with no rotten lumber or rusted metal evident, no loose siding or trim pieces.
- Doors, windows, screens, and locks are operational.
- Electrical panels, plugs, and lights have safety covers in place and are working properly.
- Plumbing fixtures and drains, including hot water tanks, are working properly.
- Fire extinguishers are mounted in their proper locations with a current inspection tag.
- HVAC, appliances, and ventilation are working properly.
- Concrete has a smooth surface and no large cracks or holes that may cause tripping.
- Roof is free of leaves and branches and shingles are intact. No leaking or holes are observed.
- Staples and nails from temporary signage or banners are removed and do not cause any protrusions or sharp edges.

**C. Restrooms**

- All surfaces are clean, sanitary, and free of graffiti. Paper products are stocked.
- Lights and ventilation system are operational.
- Toilets and sinks are operating properly and no leaks are observed.
- Hand dryers are operational.
- Stalls are secure and sturdy. All hardware is present and works correctly.

**D. Benches & Picnic Tables**

- Hardware and bracing are structurally sound and intact.
- Seating surface and table tops are clean and free of protrusions. No catch points or sharp edges are exposed.
- Nails, bolts, or screws are flush with the surface.
- Painted surfaces are in good repair with no rotten wood or rusted metal visible.
- No graffiti is visible.

**E. Trash Receptacles**

- Sufficient barrels are available in high traffic areas.
- Barrels are not overflowing and have liners in place.
- Receptacles are cleanly painted with no rusted metal or graffiti visible.
- Lids are in place where appropriate.

**F. Signage**

- Emergency and Parks Hotline signs are in visible locations and secured properly.
- Restrooms are clearly marked by gender or family changing room.
- Signs are readable and not faded or broken.

**G. Water Fountains & Hose Bibs**

- Drinking fountains are operational and no leaks are present.
- Drinking fountain bowl and drain are clean, working, and free of debris.
- Hose bibs are operational and no leaks are present.

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## Maintenance Inspection Checklist

### Park Common Areas

Location:

Date:

Inspected By:

PLACE A "Y" IN THE BOX IF THE ITEM MEETS THE STANDARD OR "N" IF IT DOES NOT. MARK SECTIONS "N/A" THAT ARE NOT APPLICABLE.

**A. Grounds**

- Grass is mowed and trimmed.
- Surfaces do not present trip and fall hazards.
- Ground is free of litter and debris.

**B. Picnic Tables & Benches**

- Tables and benches are clean, free of rust, broken or rotten lumber. No graffiti is evident.
- Seating surface and table tops are clean and free of protrusions. No catch points or sharp edges are exposed.
- Nails, bolts, or screws are flush with the surface.
- Hardware and bracing are structurally sound and intact.

**C. Water Fountains & Hose Bibs**

- Drinking fountains are operational and no leaks are present.
- Drinking fountain bowl and drain are clean, working, and free of debris.
- Hose bibs are operational and no leaks are present.

**D. Fences**

- Fence fabric is free of holes and is properly tied to the upright and crossing supports.
- Fence posts are secure in the ground and are straight upright. Crossbars are properly tied to the uprights.
- Posts have caps in place.
- Gates and hardware are functional with all hardware in place.

**E. Parking Lots & Walking Paths**

- Walkways and lots have a uniform surface and are level with the ground and free of trip hazards.
- Drains installed in walking or parking surfaces have grates free of debris, basins that are clean and functional.
- Evidence of ponding water is not observed on any walking or parking surfaces.
- Paint markings are easily visible and bright. Handicapped parking is marked clearly and correctly.
- Walkways and lots are clear and free of debris. Overhanging branches are pruned to an acceptable height.
- Walkways and lots are free of weeds and grass growing in cracks and expansion joints.

**F. Lights**

- Lights are working properly.
- Light poles are structurally sound with no visible damage at the connection to the concrete footer.
- Electrical junction boxes and conduit are secure.

**G. Trash Receptacles & Dumpster Areas**

- Sufficient barrels are available in high traffic areas.
- Barrels are not overflowing and have liners in place.
- Receptacles are cleanly painted with no rusted metal or graffiti visible.
- Lids are in place where appropriate.
- Dumpster enclosures are in good repair. Gates and hardware are working properly.
- Dumpster areas are clean and free of debris. Visible dumpsters are aesthetically acceptable and have working lids.

**H. Signage**

- Emergency and Parks Hotline signs are in visible locations and secured properly.
- Signs are readable and not faded or broken.

**I. Ornamental Mulch Beds**

- Plant material appears healthy and properly pruned.
- Planting beds are free of litter, weeds, or other debris.
- Mulch material is consistent in appearance and distribution.
- Plants are mulched to an appropriate depth. No mounding is evident at the crown of the plant.
- Bed edges are defined with either a neatly trimmed grass border or other installed edging that is in good repair.

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