

Tomorrow's Palmer

Sustaining the Legacy



2020 Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan

Prepared in cooperation with:
Environmental Planning & Design, LLC
and Johnson, Mirmiran & Thompson, Inc.

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*** The Township thanks all of the residents and business
owners for participating in the planning process*

Enhancing the Network

Overview

COMMITMENT TO THE COMMUNITY

One of Palmer Township's passions is providing its residents quality parks, recreation and open spaces. Offering active and passive recreation-oriented parks as well as a series of open spaces, the Township understands a variety of activities, amenities and experiences are important ingredients of a responsive system. With these factors in mind and the progress of the 2004 Comprehensive Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan's implementation, the Township has updated its analysis and recommendations associated with community parks, programming, maintenance practices and management system. With the extensive and far-reaching programming the Township offers, the review of recreation programming remained at a high level as part of this work.

To ensure the community's needs are being satisfied in context of resident growth and land use changes, the Township assessed the current state of parks and open space in conjunction with its comprehensive land use plan. This cross examination of land use with parks/open space enables the Township to see how past and future land use changes have influenced the community's park and recreation system. In examining development patterns and demographics, changes emerge.

In reflecting on the changes, the Township translated them into realistic goals and recommendations. The set of goals reflects the Township's aspirations of how its parks and recreation system can best function and benefit its citizens.



Goals

1. Provide recreation opportunities that balance the protection of open space and natural resources with the need for active recreation.
2. Maintain parks and open space with appropriate levels of care to optimize facility impact and honor how different park types serve different functions.
3. Preserve open space and environmental resources that are sensitive to flooding and stormwater management impacts.
4. Provide spaces that are flexible and adaptable to current and future recreation desires.
5. Extend the legacy of quality parks and recreation services by using innovative, non-traditional partnerships and means to support the delivery of recreation and the protection of the Township's park and open space system.
6. Be strategic when making decisions on expenditures that involve everyday maintenance, capital replacement and capital improvements.
7. Continue to enhance connections and segments of the pedestrian trail network throughout the Township.
8. Encourage continuity between parks, recreation and open space planning and the Township's Comprehensive Plan and other policy documents.

Key Components

Keeping community planning goals in mind, the Township assessed existing parks and recreation facilities to outline a series of broad recommendations that will help shape the focus of actions over the course of the next decade. The Plan's recommendations are rooted in the community's commitment to balancing resources of land, facilities, time and investments.

ALLOCATING PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

Of the 442 acres of park and open space in the Township, approximately 335 acres are publicly oriented/accessible (non-school/non-private). The locations and extent of park and open space land located throughout the community provide a wide variety of recreation opportunities to both Palmer residents and those traveling from the greater Lehigh Valley region. A few Township facilities, including Riverview Park and Penn Pump Park attract visitors from points well beyond the community because of attractive amenities related to the D&L Corridor and Lehigh River.

When examining recommended acreage benchmarks, such as those framed out by the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA), Palmer Township provides sufficient park and open space land for its current and potential population. In completing a "back of the napkin" type of analysis using long established NRPA criteria, a general understanding of sufficiency emerges. Although the NRPA criteria has not been updated recently, it still provides a rule of thumb calculation to portray the extent in which the community is satisfying its needs.

With approximately 20,100 residents (2015 US Census estimate) and utilizing the NRPA's Gold Medal Community standard of 10 acres per 1,000 residents, a recommended 200 acres of park and open space is recommended to exist. This, of course, is well under the Township's current 335 publicly oriented/accessible acres. Secondly, in considering the potential influence of future population growth, the Township can project what population growth would generally necessitate. The Comprehensive Plan's land





use analysis and growth scenarios project that population could expand anywhere between 635 and 3,300 residents depending upon development proposals that could come to fruition. In context of the NRPA's 10 acres per 1,000 resident ratio, between 6 and 33 additional acres would be recommended. These acres added with the 200 acres recommended to service the 2015 population results in 206 to 233 total recommended acres of park and open space.

So, mathematically, the Township has protected ample acreage. A notable portion of the acreage within the current parks and open space networks was obtained through the Township development approval process either with fees-in-lieu of land or land dedication itself. A few examples of these types of dedications are Penn's Grant and Howard Lane. As the community is nearing its build-out, the pattern of these dedications is anticipated to slow and, ultimately, come to an end.

The following acquisition of fees-in-lieu of dedicated land have occurred in recent years:

YEARS	AMOUNT
2009	\$ 17,700.00
2010	\$ 143,850.00
2012	\$ 13,800.00
2013	\$ 511,800.00
2014	\$ 110,100.00
2015	\$ 213,000.00
2016	\$ 478,050.00
2017	\$ 13,260.00
2018	\$229,980.00
2019	\$128,060.00
2020	\$150,000.00 (budgeted)
TOTAL	\$2,009,600.00

Over the course of this time, the average annual fees the Township received were \$182,690. Since the recent change in Pennsylvania law as to how these dollars may be used, the Township has utilized them for completing capital

improvements, such as adding a new amenity to a park, or covering operational costs.

For future dedications, the Township has an opportunity in the short-term to evaluate and amend the Subdivision and Land Development to incentivize either fee-in-lieu options and/or quality open spaces that are connected or connectible to the Township's existing parks and open space networks.

In the long-term, such types of dedication will not exist because the community will reach build-out and given the current rate of development, it is anticipated this could occur within the next 20 years. Other economic factors could shape this rate, but the notion that the Township will reach build-out is highly likely. No matter the timing, the Township will need to find a way to replace the type of income that currently is folded into the Township budget or otherwise adjust for the difference in income.

The impacts of these land and fee dedications has the potential to affect both the character of the community and the way in which operational expenses are managed. At first blush, the diminishing value of land dedication may not appear to be a big deal. However, when digging deeper, the community recognized that a significant amount of the larger Township open spaces — those accommodating flooding issues and those enriching the intrinsic character of the community — have been reliant on the dedication model. Conversely to the land dedication, in receiving fees, the Township has utilized them for both capital improvements and on-going maintenance.

Further, in evaluating build-out, future land development capacity/patterns (permissible per zoning) anticipate 244 additional dwelling units and 450 acres of non-residential development. Build-out is anticipated to occur in the next 15-20 years.





Applying the build-out calculations, developed as part of the Comprehensive Plan, to the fees-in-lieu option for new development, there is potential residential-related fee income of approximately \$366,000 and potential non-residential income of approximately \$1,350,000. With build-out anticipated in the next 15-20 years, this revenue stream associated with new development has a limited lifespan — likely coming to an end in our generation.

The Township has the opportunity to be proactive in this evolution of anticipated shifts in income. In being proactive, stresses on the legacy of delivering quality parks, recreation and open space to the community can be minimized.

RECOMMENDATION: Develop a long-term financial strategy for the overall parks and recreation system in order to maintain a legacy that has been created.

Revenue sources and necessary expenditures should be customized and balanced within a strategy that aims to account for ever-changing facility improvement, operational and maintenance needs throughout the entire park and recreation system. The delivery of healthy, viable park and recreation services for the next generation of residents and those following them is dependent upon such a strategy. Foremost, the strategy established should aid in the Township in its ability to:

- Practice the prudent use of resources
- Maximize return on investment
- Assure achievement of objectives
- Improve cost control and revenue generation
- Provide measures of performance and accountability
- Provide data which can be used to modify goals and objectives

In looking at the park and open space system as a whole, several other system-wide recommendations emerge:

RECOMMENDATION: Prioritize new amenities and maintenance.

The Township has the opportunity to take a forward step for long-term planning by assessing the priority of new recreational amenities in comparison with the maintenance of existing facilities. To ensure that priorities are objectively identified, the Township will need to develop criteria by which the significance of new amenities versus maintenance can be compared.

RECOMMENDATION: Prepare a Capital Improvement Plan.

Prepare a Capital Improvement Plan specifically for parks and playgrounds. The Plan can reference identified parameters for the life-span of amenities and site master plan update needs. In typical park, recreation and open space terms, improvements are often categorized into the following six areas:

- New Parks refers to securing or purchasing land, easements, etc. to create or protect new open space areas for future generations. Funding may go towards the purchase of real estate, conservation easements, or paying for donation expenses.
- Park Maintenance refers to dedicating funds towards general park maintenance practices like mowing park grass, field and playground upkeep, litter pick-up, etc.
- Existing Park Improvements refers to expanding the facility offerings in existing parks, developing new facilities in existing parks, developing trails/pathways within existing parks.
- Recreation Services refers to developing recreational facilities and programming typically outside of physical park improvements.
- Trail and Greenway Development refers to improving the connectivity by expanding the trail system outside of the parks themselves. This system connects parks to other parks, parks to neighborhoods, neighborhoods to neighborhoods, parks to historic districts, etc.
- Capital Reserve/Sinking Fund refers to contributing annually to a savings account which will typically be used within 5-10 years for capital improvements/replacements such as an existing pavilion, playground equipment, etc. Palmer Township does not currently have such an allocation.

Palmer Township also has one other unique aspect of its fiscal portfolio — contributions to the Athletic Association. In past years, this has equated to an annual \$200,000 contribution. Most recently, this contribution totals \$100,000 annually.

RECOMMENDATION: Adopt Park Classification Standards.

Palmer Township has a diverse range of parks and open space which serve different functions and encourage different recreational activities. In assigning different classifications of facilities, the Township can distinguish customized maintenance practices and expectations based upon facility types/activities. Despite the contrasting functions of potentially very different functions, many park facilities are in many ways treated and



maintained the same. Palmer Township strives to make sure all parks and open spaces can be used by all its residents, but in the process may have inadvertently forgotten that parks do not have to be serve-all spaces. By designating appropriate park classifications, the Township's parks and open spaces can better serve their intrinsic functions. Different park classifications will result in different recreational uses and maintenance methods. In turn, this park classification system will also make it easier for the Township to understand what type of open space and/or facilities are satisfying the community, what types can be expanded, and promote a diversified recreation system.

The following are classifications that are recommended to be adopted by the Township:

- Regional Parks and Facilities
- Active Community Parks
- Passive Community Parks
- Neighborhood Parks
- Natural and Open Spaces
- Trails

Each of these classifications should be related to the common types of activities in which people may participate, the suitability for scale and impact of development or conservation, and the general nature of the service area.

RECOMMENDATION: Creation of a Capital Reserve Fund/Sinking Fund.

With the creation of a Capital Reserve Fund/Sinking Fund, the Township can proactively plan for longer-term capital replacement needs and improvements. Examples of such improvements include replacing an existing restroom or re-roofing an existing pavilion. Currently, the Township does not have a sinking fund incorporated into their budget which is intended for high-expense, long-term capital investments. For those communities that do not have such a fund, they might seek grants that will finance larger projects. While grants are a strategic, low to no cost way to fund projects, it is not a sustainable method for planning recreation investments far into the future. By reserving a portion of the budget for a sinking fund, the Township can accumulate funding for facility development without having to rely solely on undetermined, unpredictable sources.

RECOMMENDATION: Adopt a per capita park/acreage standard.

As the Township's population continues to grow, it remains important for the community to retain sufficient acreage for its residents' recreational use. The Township has worked diligently over the years to acquire lands for parks and recreation purposes. In tandem with the park classifications, the Township should consider the adoption of a park/acreage standard per capita. This would apply to new population and ensure that adequate acreage remains available for the current population.

RECOMMENDATION: Update universal accessibility.

Access to recreational opportunities by all citizens, regardless of ability, is a basic right of all Americans under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Palmer Township, with an extensive network of facilities, has the capabilities to accommodate all citizens. For those facilities not currently ADA accessible, the Township, through this planning process has identified that there are a number of items that will require attention for compliance. By

acknowledging these conditions, the Township has taken its first steps in identifying its transition plan. When there is opportunity for improving other portions of park facilities, ADA items can be folded into the identified work. As facilities in existing parks are updated, particular attention should be made towards making the new facilities ADA accessible. Update universal accessibility, as applicable, in all public areas.

RECOMMENDATION: Explore partnerships for 'win-wins'.

The Township has the opportunity to continue exploring ways in which similar partnership with Palmer Elementary School (in the development of the multi-purpose field) can result in balanced 'win-wins.' As the costs for providing services continue to rise, the notion of partnerships in parks and recreation is increasingly more common in municipal planning.

RECOMMENDATION: Expand partnerships for natural spaces.

The Township should evaluate the benefits of expanding relationships and cooperation with resource conservation-oriented groups in the maintenance of the Township's unique open spaces and natural resource areas. This type of approach, done in the past at Mill Race, can enable the community to realize effective and efficient ways in which maintenance practices proactively address stormwater management.

MANAGEMENT & FINANCING

Management reflects how parks and recreation are planned, administered, directed and evaluated in meeting community goals and with respect to Township resources. Organizational structure, staffing, public involvement, partnerships, information management, maintenance, revenues and expenditures all come together. The Palmer Township Parks Department has 8 full time employees and averages about 5-8 seasonal employees each summer. When larger projects demand, the Public Works Superintendent involves additional employees from Roads and/or Public Utilities into Park-associated work. With the creation of a capital improvements/capital replacement sinking fund, this fund becomes part of the Township's planning strategy so that long-term capital investments can be pursued in context of the community's management and maintenance capacities.

THE EXISTING NETWORK

Pursuing improvements and installation of trail segments is of high priority to the Township's overall park and recreation offerings and will go toward developing a more cohesive network of recreational amenities. Additionally, an integrated system of signage and navigation can be an important component of this goal. Where there is opportunity over time to establish or update signage, the Township should pursue a streamlined signage and wayfinding system that categorizes destinations, directional elements, trail connections, and park amenities/features alike.

The Township examined the overall existing network of parks, trails and open spaces. The following tables and mapping identifies these facility locations.



Current Categories	MAP ID	NAME	SIZE (ACRES)
Neighborhood Parks	8	Newburg Park	0.6
	18	Stephens Street Park	0.6
	33	Hay Terrace Tot Lot	0.3
	28	Villages At Mill Race Tot Lot	0.5
Subtotal			2
Community Parks	0	Briarcliffe Park	17.6
	4	Fairview Park	13.2
	24	Fox Hill (Run) Park	7.9
	5	Keystone Park	10.3
	6	Labarre Park	7.4
	27	Mill Race Park	11.6
	9	Old Orchard Park	5.3
	15	Penn Pump Park	11.8
	17	Riverview Park	62.1
	22	Wolf's Run Park & Open Space	36.6
Subtotal			183.8
School Parks	2	Easton Area H.S. Athletic Fields & Open Space	48.8
	3	Edward Tracy Elementary School Rec Area	12
	11	Palmer Athletic Complex	15.9
	13	Palmer Elementary School Rec Area	12.4
Subtotal			89.1
Civic Parks & Centers	1	Charles Chrin Community Center	33.9
	19	Stone's Crossing Swimming Club	4.8
	34	St. Jane's Church Fields	12.2
Subtotal			50.9

PARKS, TRAILS & OPEN SPACE MAP

LEGEND

- Neighborhood Parks
- Community Parks
- School Parks
- Civic Parks and Centers
- Open Space
- Trails



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Current Categories	MAP ID	NAME	SIZE (ACRES)
Open Spaces	25	Fox Hill (Run) Open Space	15.5
	32	Knob Hill Open Space	10.5
	7	Mine Lane Road Open Space	4.3
	26	Palmer view Open Space	5.2
	16	Penn's Grant Open Space	34.9
	31	Schafer Place Open Space	1.8
	29	Village At Mill Race Open Space	39.1
	21	Weller Complex	15.1
	10	Wildlands Conservancy Open Space	9.4
	23	Woodridge Falls Open Space	7
Total open space			116.8
TOTAL PARKS AND OPEN SPACE ACREAGE			442.6
	MAP ID	NAME	SIZE (ACRES)
Trails		Delaware & Lehigh Trail	2.21
		Hackett's Park Trail	0.1
		Lehigh River Water Trail	0.27
		Palmer/Bethlehem Township Bikeway	3.76
		Palmer Township Bike Path - Crest Blvd Spur	1.42
		Palmer Township Bike Path	4.27
		Schoeneck Creek Trail	3.12
		Wilson Borough Bike Path	0.01
Total Township trail mileage			15.16
*Private facilities with Athletic Association use are included in the above listing.			

CONNECTION STATUS MAP

LEGEND

 Palmer Township (6,614 Acres)


 Rivers/Streams/Ponds

 Schools

 Parks/Dedicated Open Space

CONNECTION STATUS

 Existing Trail/Bikeway (12.1 Miles)

 Proposed Trail/Bikeway (18 Miles)

Note: Lengths are for trails/bikeways situated wholly within Palmer Township.



Utility Easement Trail Option
(1.4 Miles)



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CONNECTION TYPE MAP

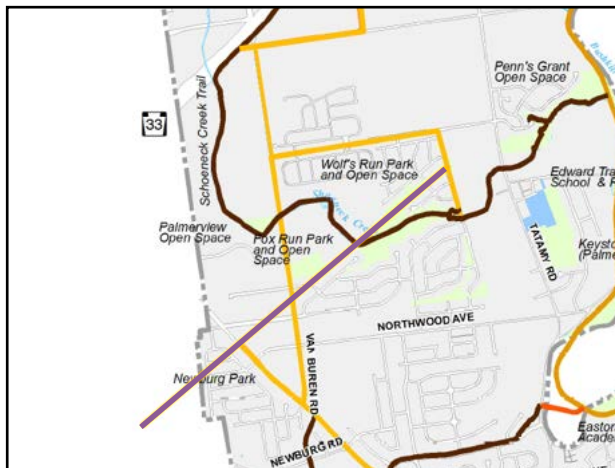
LEGEND

- Palmer Township (6,614 Acres)
- Rivers/Streams/Ponds
- Schools
- Parks/Dedicated Open Space

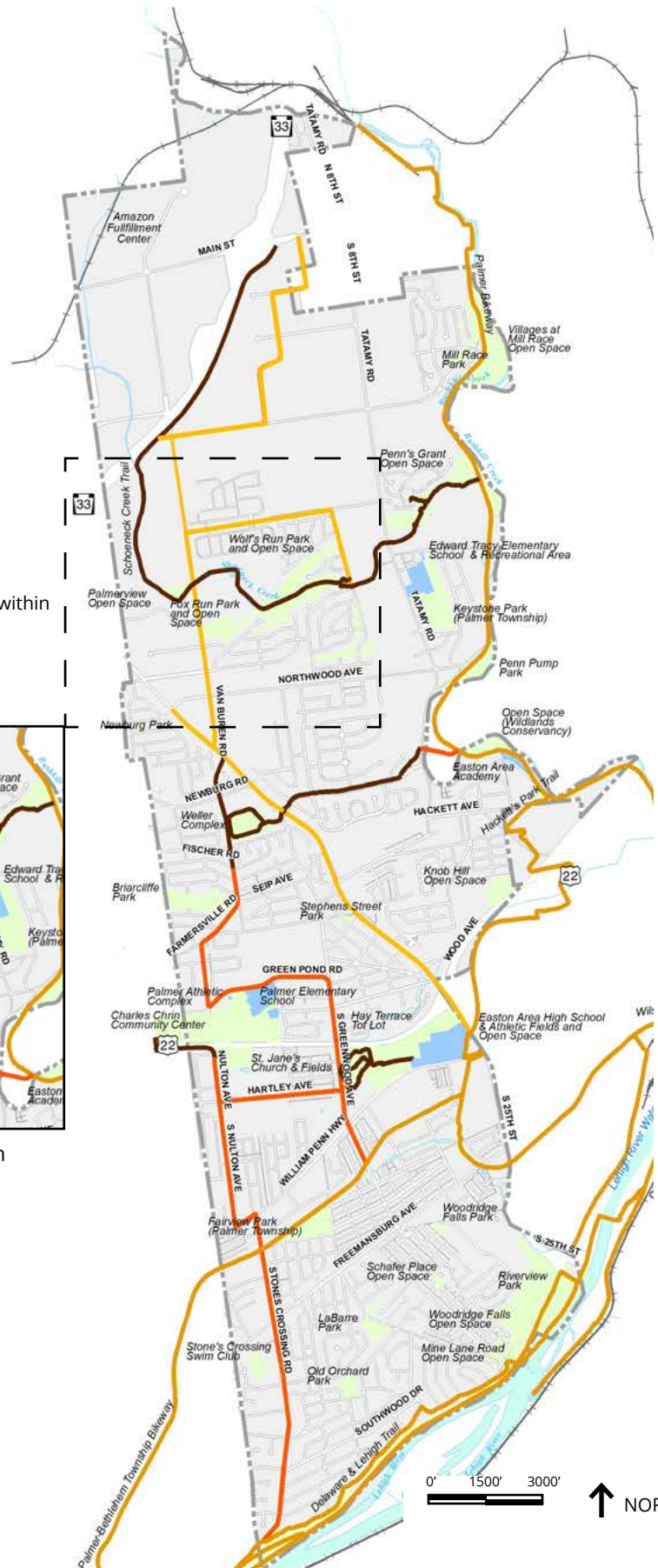
CONNECTION TYPE

- Off-Road Trail (7.6 Miles)
- On-Road Bikeway (5.6 Miles)
- Rail-Trail/Canalway (10.4 Miles)
- Sidewalk (6.5 Miles)

Note: Lengths are for trails/bikeways situated wholly within Palmer Township.



Utility Easement Trail Option
(1.4 Miles)



Prepared by:

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Planning & Design, LLC

0' 1500' 3000'

↑ NORTH

Existing Park Facilities

Overview

The following pages outline observations as well as major findings and recommended items to be addressed as part of future park maintenance and capital improvements.

Recommendations that are considered priorities are *shown in green and starred* ✱.





Playground

Briarcliffe Park & Municipal Pool

(17.6 Acres)

OVERVIEW:

This park serves the community as a major recreational destination due to a variety of recreational amenities and its central location within Palmer Township. The ease of access by car and pedestrians from the surrounding neighborhoods make it an attractive community destination. Ample parking, sports fields and courts, playground, pavilion and open maintained lawn areas offer diverse and dynamic public spaces for both active and passive recreation.



Stone Seating Area

This Park Contains:

- Playground facilities
- Swimming pool with an open pavilion, restrooms and bathhouse
- Youth playground
- Picnic tables
- Three softball fields
- One lighted pavilion, with one large and three small grills
- One tennis court
- One basketball court



Softball Field

Major Findings and Items to be Addressed:

- The recent expansion and improvement of the pool has generated significant increases in pool and park users.

RECOMMENDATION: Considerations should be given to designating an overflow parking area.

- Flanked by mature trees with maintained open lawn



Tennis and Basketball Courts

areas on either side, the park entry drive creates a unique arrival sequence. The open lawn areas are not fully utilized for recreational uses.

RECOMMENDATION: Re-purpose the open lawn areas by developing wildlife meadows to enhance the park's arrival sequence by improving the visual quality of entryway. The meadows will also reduce mowing and maintenance costs for the park while providing additional wildlife habitat.

- Pavilion reservations are required from the months of May through mid-October for group gatherings. Reservations are accepted at the Charles Chrin Community Center of Palmer Township. See <https://palmertwp.com/park-reservations.html> .

RECOMMENDATION: A new pavilion was constructed as part of the pool improvements.



Diane Road - Site Drainage / Erosion



Terraced One-Way Lawn Parking



Lighted Pavilion and Grills



Consider designating an overflow parking



ADA Parking and Pavilion



Pavilion, 3 large grills and covered grill



Basketball Courts



Restroom, Mature Trees

Fairview Park

(13.2 Acres)

OVERVIEW:

This park is classified as a community park and contains a wide range of recreational facilities and amenities. The park is also adjacent to the Palmer Bethlehem Township Bikeway and serves as a trailhead. Ballfields are located towards the eastern end of the park, the central core contains a restroom building, pavilion and a large covered community grilling station and sports courts. The park is served by two parking areas with access from Mine Lane Road and Fairview Avenue.

This Park Contains:

- One softball field
- One adult baseball field
- Two lighted basketball courts
- Four lighted color coated tennis courts
- Four shuffleboard courts
- Age 5-12 playground and equipment
- Tot lot playground and 3 swings
- Picnic Tables
- Benches
- Two pavilions
- Two Restrooms
- Drinking fountains
- Wood stump amphitheater / outdoor classroom
- A section of the bike/walking path passes through the park
- Signage
- Dedicated memorial bench and garden
- Trash and recycling receptacles
- Lighting
- Ornamental and mature trees
- Large covered grill station
- Palmer-Bethlehem Township Bikeway

Major Findings and Items to be Addressed:

- The bikeway runs along the park perimeter and is adjacent to the east parking area.
RECOMMENDATION: Considerations should be given to announcing the park as a trailhead and providing bike amenities that would include a rest stop, bike station, jug filler and bike racks.
- The park includes a wide variety of amenities for all types of recreational users.
As amenities age in this long-established park, explore ideas for re-purposing of these amenities.



Ballfield and Bleachers



Tennis Courts



Dedicated Memorial Bench and Garden



Stump Outdoor Classroom



Ages 5-12 Playground / Equipment



Swings



Keystone Park (10.3 Acres)

OVERVIEW:

Keystone Park is in Northern Palmer Township, sharing a boundary with Tracy Elementary School. The park contains a multi-purpose field, lighted paved volleyball courts, softball fields, restrooms and a playground. There is paved, on-site parking with 108 standard and 3 ADA spaces. An unlit pavilion is located adjacent to the parking lot and restrooms are centrally located amongst the baseball field, volleyball courts and multi-purpose field. A picnic area is located between the concession stand and the softball fields at the northern edge of the park with mature shade trees.

This Park Contains:

- Three softball fields (outfields of each are overlaid with a youth soccer field)
- Three soccer fields
- Two lighted volleyball courts
- Children's play area with equipment which is part of the Tracy School playground
- Restrooms
- Water fountain
- Trash receptacles

Major Findings and Items to be Addressed:

- The existing field conditions reflect over-use.

RECOMMENDATION: Over-use and over-scheduling must be addressed in order to minimize costly major repairs and lower ongoing maintenance costs.



Entrance



One-Way Looping Parking



Restroom - Men's Room Hidden



Water Fountain



Soccer Field



Lighted Volleyball Courts



Keystone Field



Pavilion



LaBarre Park (7.4 Acres)

OVERVIEW:

LaBarre Park serves as a small community park surrounded by residential neighborhoods in the southern end of Palmer Township. The park is situated on two parcels, separated by Mine Lane Road, with parking on the northern parcel and park features on the southern parcel. The existing park layout, features and details are cohesive and indicate that this park was designed by a park designer and was once a premier park. An asphalt trail encircles the primary activity area and serves to link the various activity areas and park amenities.



Pavilion and Playgrounds

This Park Contains:

- Playground
- Pavilion
- Benches
- One basketball court
- One youth baseball/softball field
- Swing sets
- Restrooms
- Mounded hill
- Signage
- Bike rack
- Water fountain
- Trash receptacles

Major Findings and Items to be Addressed:

- The softball field located at the southern end of the park is screened with mature evergreen trees from the adjacent homes. The softball field is not connected to the pedestrian path network and there is no sideline fencing between the field and the players bench areas.

*** PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION: *Install sideline fencing and provide ADA routes and pedestrian connections to the field area.***

- The basketball court is not fenced and slopes toward Greenway Street.

RECOMMENDATION: Install fencing at the top of the slope between the basketball court and Greenway Street.

- The existing restroom building is isolated from the main activity areas and is not accessible from the adjacent ADA parking spaces.

RECOMMENDATION: Consider expanding the parking area adjacent to the existing restroom to provide on-site parking and make ADA accessibility more convenient. Develop a pathway to connect the restroom building to the main park activity area

and remove the existing landscaping that was intended to screen the restroom entrances.

- The play areas have been edged and repaired with multiple materials overtime. There are numerous randomly-placed benches, and the asphalt pavement has been patched in several locations over the years. There is an isolated swing located near Mine Lane.

RECOMMENDATION: Remove the isolated swing and benches. Resurface the play areas and asphalt pavement.

- The mounded hill is the central focal point of the park and used for informal play by the younger kids. During the winter this mound has also been used for sledding.

RECOMMENDATION: Consider landscape treatments for this area. Additionally, explore opportunities to re-purpose existing areas of lawn throughout the park and develop a long-term landscape maintenance plan.



Separated Parking



Mounded Hill



Ballfield



Restrooms



Newburg Park (0.6 Acres)

OVERVIEW:

This neighborhood park sits at the Township's western edge within a residential community. The park is situated on two separate parcels, one located on the north side of Kingston Road and the other on the south side of this residential street. A tennis court is located on the south parcel, while the northern parcel includes a fenced basketball court and several play structures. There is a wood and concrete bench located near the tennis courts with an asphalt path connecting to the adjacent street. An expanse of maintained open lawn surrounds the facilities and a picnic table and water fountain are available for park users.

This Park Contains:

- One basketball court
- One tennis court
- Picnic table
- Playground
- Benches
- Lighting
- Trash receptacle

Major Findings and Items to be Addressed:

- The park is located directly under power lines and signs are posted stating no kite flying is allowed. As a result, the park boundaries are not clearly defined.

RECOMMENDATION: Define the park boundaries with fencing or shrubbery.

- There are three small-scale pedestrian lights in the park.

RECOMMENDATION: The need and function of these lights should be re-evaluated and removed if not necessary.



Fenced Basketball Court



Playground



Fenced Tennis Courts



Old Orchard Park (5.3 Acres)

OVERVIEW:

This park is designated as a community park but primarily serves as a neighborhood park, providing a range of both active and passive recreational amenities. An internal pathway runs through the park but does not provide complete access to all facilities.

This Park Contains:

- One softball field
- An open lawn area
- One basketball court (a third basketball standard is located outside main court area)
- One tennis court
- Youth playground
- Pavilion
- Water fountain
- Benches
- Bike rack



Fenced Tennis and Basketball Courts



Ballfield



Playground, Trees and Benches



Multi-Purpose Field

Major Findings and Items to be Addressed:

- Parking is limited along the road and there is no parking between 9pm and 6am.

*** PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION: Provide a marked ADA space and accessible route to the parks internal pathway.**

- There is graffiti in the pavilion and on the existing picnic tables. Drainage and ponding issues exist along the pathway and in the athletic fields areas.

RECOMMENDATION: Upgrade and repair the site amenities, field areas and provide updated players benches and sideline fencing between the field and the players bench area. Address stormwater management accordingly throughout the site.

- Several residences are directly bordering the park with some fencing along the perimeter of the sports fields that defines the edge of the park.

RECOMMENDATION: Update and expand the fencing and landscaping to further define the park boundary.

- The original park design appears to have included two tennis courts. One of the courts has been converted to a basketball court. Basketball and tennis are incompatible uses and are generally not located adjacent to each other.

RECOMMENDATION: Evaluate the need for both a tennis court and a basketball court at this location and determine if the community would be better served by two tennis courts or two basketball courts at this location.



Trail and Playground



Pavilion



Penn Pump Park (11.8 Acres)

OVERVIEW:

Penn Pump Park is located within the floodplain and adjacent to Bushkill Creek along the eastern border. There is a dense mature tree canopy covering most of the site. The park is within close proximity to Keystone Park and offers recreation amenities that are complementary to those at Keystone Park. The park offers a range of park activities to serve different age groups including a playground, picnic areas, grilling, fishing, bocce courts, dedication benches, a tee-ball field and a small maintained open lawn area.

This Park Contains:

- One tee-ballfield
- Youth playground
- Picnic tables
- Large stone and wood pavilion
- Restrooms
- Bushkill Creek along eastern park edge
- Interpretive signage – wild brown trout
- A section of the Palmer Bikeway passes through the park
- Entrance gate

Major Findings and Items to be Addressed:

- Flooding and drainage issues are present, and due to the amount of shade in the park, certain areas are not capable of supporting lawn. As a result, there are many areas that exist as bare earth which leads to increased erosion and runoff. The Bushkill Creek bank's, opposite the park, are posted for no trespassing. There are no defined access points to Bushkill Creek within the park and there is evidence that users are finding access to the creek at various points along the shoreline and increasing degradation of creek banks.

RECOMMENDATION: Develop a management plan for this park to specifically address erosion, redefine use areas, creek access, flood mitigation and re-establish of the bank and riparian buffer along the shoreline.

- High visitor activity presents challenges to facility use and maintenance.



PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION: Develop a facility services plan to align visitor needs with restroom and pavilion use; implement applicable upgrades. Address ballfield updates as applicable in context of overall demand and usage levels.



Parking



Pavilion



Picnic



Bocce Ball



Playground



Bushkill Creek



Ball Field



Utility



Riverview Park (62.1 Acres)

OVERVIEW:

This park is the largest in the Township and provides a variety of active and passive recreational amenities including walking trail, ballfields, large group pavilion, picnic areas, playground and a fishing pier. Its unique location allows the park to serve as a trailhead offering connections to the adjacent Lehigh River and D&L Trail, further promoting bike and pedestrian access and connectivity.

This Park Contains:

- Two lighted adult softball fields
- Children's play area with equipment for ages 5-12
- Picnic tables
- Lighted pavilion
- Concessions building / restrooms
- Handicap accessible fishing pier
- Chain dam fish ladder
- Looping bike/walking path passes through the park



Paved Parking



Accessible Fishing Pier



Picnic Tables and Grills



Looping Bike / Walk Path

Major Findings and Items to be Addressed:

Many observations were made during the site visit to this park. The accessible fishing pier provides a spacious area for fishing. The location of the picnic area is organic in layout and directly adjacent to the lower paved parking area. Dogs are allowed in park, but not on the ballfields. There are many signs throughout the park.

RECOMMENDATION: Develop an overall improvement plan to keep the park up-to-date:

- Repave the parking areas and pathways to address general wear.
- Complete a stormwater drainage assessment of the park and surrounding drainage area. Seek to incorporate green stormwater infrastructure treatments to manage and treat runoff while promoting infiltration and slowing drainage that is subsequently conveyed by the existing on-site drainage systems.
- Develop a plan to reduce mowing to those areas required for park use.
- Improve and address wear patterns on the existing ballfields.
- Remove unneeded trail segments as deemed appropriate.



Concessions / Restroom and Path



Ballfields



Bulletin Board



Pedestrian, Bike and Vehicular Access



Riverview Park continued



Lighted Pavilion



Swings



Play Equipment and Open Lawn



Playground

Stephen's Street Park (0.6 Acres)

OVERVIEW:

Mature trees frame the perimeter of the park, providing shade and a natural edge that depicts the park's boundaries. Park amenities include various play equipment for kids ages 5-12, benches, a pavilion and basketball court all near each other with a maintained lawn separating each recreation area. There are no sidewalks in the surrounding neighborhood. Some residential driveways, properties and businesses are directly bordering the park. The park is open and allows for full visibility across the site and from Stephen's Street. Park boundaries are defined mainly by vegetation that provides shade and screening and a safety fence and a landscape screen is provided between the basketball court and Jewel Street.

This Park Contains:

- One basketball court
- Children's play area with equipment
- Small hexagonal pavilion – two picnic tables
- Mature trees
- Benches
- Trash receptacles
- Signage – safety and park rules
- Water fountain

Major Findings and Items to be Addressed:

- Playground equipment does not function as a cohesive play unit.

RECOMMENDATION: Incorporate into one play area to reduce the amount of safety mulch required and reduce mowing times in a around structures.



Parking along Stephen's Street



Park Play Equipment and Views



Park Pavilion



Wolf's Run Park & Open Space

(36.6 Acres)

OVERVIEW:

This park is a compilation of varied open spaces located in and around the Wolf's Run housing development. The park area appears to comprise land that was acquired over time and includes portions of utility corridors, environmental areas and smaller separated spaces with traditional park amenities. The park is fragmented and dispersed through the central divisions between adjacent neighborhoods.

This Park Contains:

- One tennis court
- Picnic tables
- Small pavilion
- Walking path
- Free play area – open field
- Cautionary signage
- Two tot lots
- Two basketball courts

Major Findings and Items to be Addressed:

- This park has limited capacity for active recreation and recreational areas are fragmented within the neighborhood. The overall park area has many limitations including the easement limitations associated with the overhead and underground utilities, potential wetlands, floodplains and existing drainage, conveyance systems and stormwater management facilities. It is not clear where the boundary is between the public areas of the park and the residential and utility areas.

RECOMMENDATION: A master plan should be developed for Wolf's Run Park. An overall strategy is needed to provide both short and long term recommendations to develop a cohesive park facility, define parking requirements, address interior circulation and connectivity beyond the park and most importantly define the areas of the park that should be maintained as usable park spaces. The master plan must include a management component that addresses routine maintenance for the park — this is critical since this park is comprised of a variety of landscapes and spaces that require various modes and levels of investments for routine and long term maintenance.



Playground, Tennis and Pavilion - Images from website: <http://www.palmertwp.com/parks>



Howard Lane North Tot Lot



Basketball Court



Fox Run Park (7.9 Acres)

OVERVIEW:

Fox Run Park is a large maintained open space currently being utilized for soccer. The park contains 58 on-site parking spaces that includes 3 ADA spaces. An overflow gravel parking area extends from the paved portion of the parking lot and provides access to an existing storage shed. The parking lot has direct access to Van Buren Road. Four residential homes are located along the parks southern boundary. A sanitary sewer line runs along the edge of the property between the parking lot and bordering homes.

This Park Contains:

- Two soccer/multi-use fields
- Paved and gravel parking
- Benches, wooden bleachers and metal benches
- Equipment storage shed and lock box
- Trash receptacles



Park Sign



Gravel Parking Area



Storage Shed

Major Findings and Items to be Addressed:

- While defined as a community park, this park currently serves one user group.
✱ ***PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION: Develop an overall master plan that considers the future applicability of existing amenities in relation to a youth playground, a tot lot, a dog park, and/or walking trails to enhance and provide additional recreation amenities that support the existing active uses.***
- The park is maintained from edge to edge.
RECOMMENDATION: Develop a plan to reduce mowing to those areas required for park use. Transition and buffer areas such as the area along Van Buren Road should be re-established with meadows plantings to reduce mowing.



Paved Parking Area



Playing Field Surface



Parking



Restrooms



Trail Connection



Playground

Mill Race Park

(11.6 Acres)

OVERVIEW:

This community park supports a variety of activities. Opportunities for active, passive, educational and interpretive play are provided. The variety of recreational activities serves to expand the depth of the overall park experience. The naturalized areas of the park demonstrate alternatives to maintained lawn areas and the naturalized detention basin and informational signage showcase the environmental benefits to reduced maintenance, adding to the park's function and appeal within the Bushkill Watershed. The proximity, connectivity and ease of access to the park is an asset to the Mill Race Community and to the rest of the Township. This park is well maintained and provides open field multi-use recreation areas with its four soccer/lacrosse fields. Vehicular circulation provides a two-way looping system to support the parking needs of the recreational amenities. The Palmer Township bike/walking path travels along the western boundary of the park, providing views down and across the entire site. No barriers exist between adjacent homes, bike/walking path, parking, athletic fields, playground and maintained environmental areas, creating an open viewshed across the site. The playground provides some interactive problem solving and environmental education puzzles and form, two tot swings, two regular swings with wood mulch safety surface and a bench.

This Park Contains:

- Four soccer / lacrosse fields
- Youth playground
- Picnic tables
- Large pavilion area
- Large paved area
- Restrooms
- Storage shed
- Flagpole dedicated to coaches Gordon A. Evans and John R. Wunderly

- Palmer Township bike/walking path passes through the park
- Environmental areas – meadow and naturalized detention basin with interpretive signage

Major Findings and Items to be Addressed:

- The bikeway runs along the park's perimeter and is adjacent to eastern parking area.

RECOMMENDATION: Considerations should be given to designating the park as a trailhead and providing bike amenities that would include a rest stop, bike station, jug filler and bike racks.

- There are several areas of the park that are being maintained as open lawn areas that offer no recreational benefits. These areas should be converted to meadows to support wildlife and provide environmental benefits for the watershed. The areas south and north of the existing pavilion, between the bikeway and the existing parking areas are not suitable and are not currently utilized for recreational uses.

RECOMMENDATION: Re-purpose the open lawn areas by developing wildlife meadows to enhance sustainability efforts. A wildlife meadow at each of the parks entrances would enhance views to and across the site for those coming to the park and those riding along the bikeway. A plan should also be considered to implement additional meadow areas along the existing creek to expand and enhance the existing riparian buffer. Additionally, explore opportunities to transform/re-purpose underutilized paved areas.



Multi-Use Fields



Pavilion



Villages at Mill Race Tot Lot

(0.5 Acres)

OVERVIEW:

This neighborhood park is in the Villages at Mill Race neighborhood and within 700 feet of Mill Race Community Park. The park contains relatively new tot lot equipment. Neighborhood sidewalk networks tie this park to the surrounding homes and nearby recreation amenities.

This Park Contains:

- Playground
- Adjacent street lighting
- Bench
- Adjacent parking
- Signage
- Trash receptacle

Major Findings and Items to be Addressed:

- Since this tot lot is situated in a neighborhood setting, it gives the impression of being owned by the adjacent homes and potential users might not realize the park is open to the public.

RECOMMENDATION: Define the park boundaries with fencing or shrubbery. Additionally, a fence or barrier should be provided adjacent to the access drive for the parking areas.



Playground



Hay Terrace Tot Lot (0.3 Acres)

OVERVIEW:

Hay Terrace Tot Lot is in a residential neighborhood near the intersection of US 22 and PA 248. There is no on-site parking, but on-street parallel parking is available and sidewalks connect pedestrians to the park from nearby homes. The site contains open grass areas, a fenced retention basin and a tot lot that includes climbers, a fireman's pole, monkey bars and three sliding boards.

This Park Contains:

- Playground
- Adjacent sidewalk
- Signage
- Trash receptacle

Major Findings and Items to be Addressed:

- The park area is small and only contains a small tot lot which is in close proximity to the adjacent residents on either side.

RECOMMENDATION: *Define the park boundaries with fencing or shrubbery.*

- There are no seating areas in the park.

RECOMMENDATION: *Provide benches adjacent to the tot lot.*



Playground