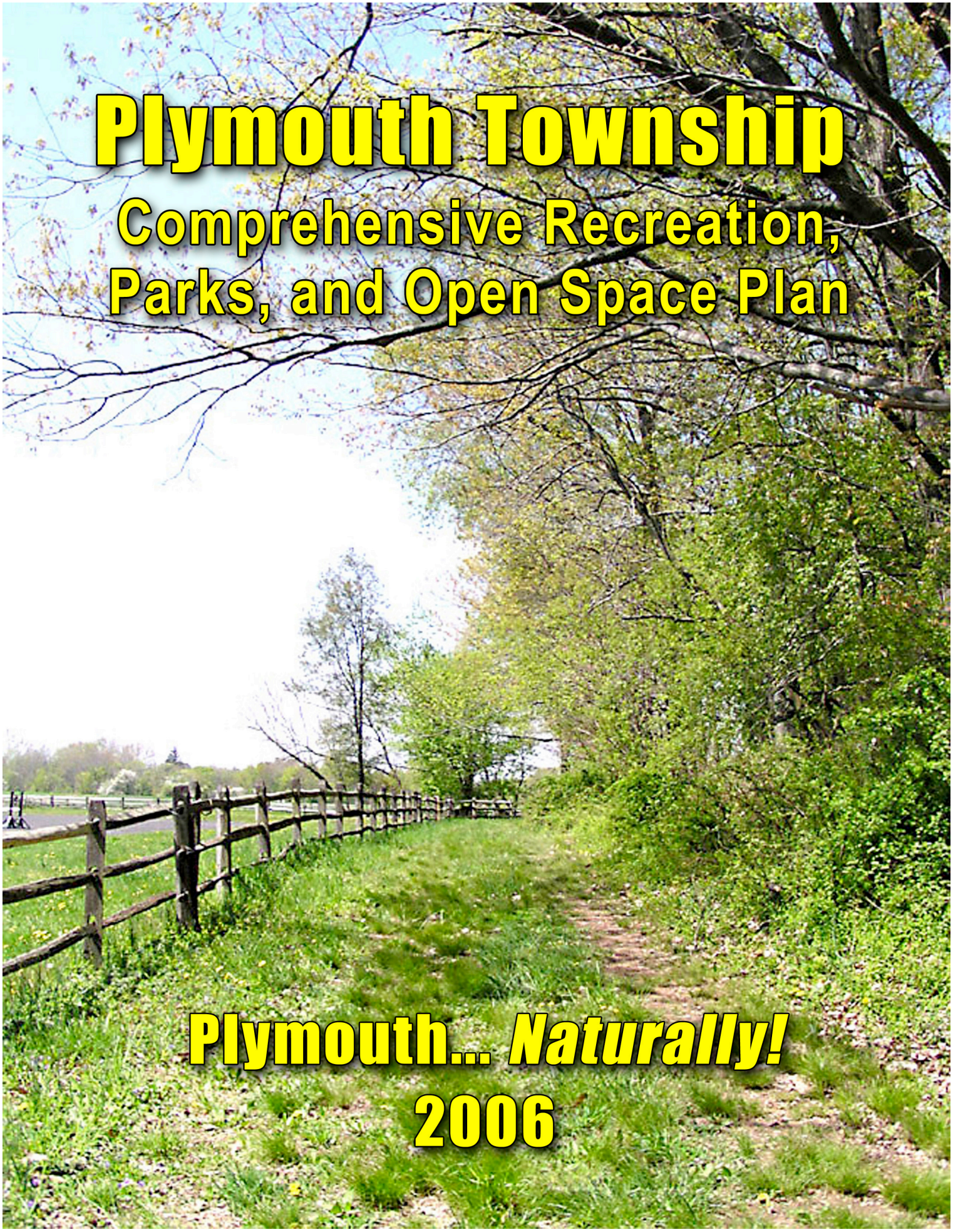

Plymouth Township
Comprehensive Recreation, Parks, and Open Space Plan
Plymouth... Naturally!
2006

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Plymouth...*Naturally!*

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Executive Summary

Recreation, Parks & Open Space Plan: Plymouth...*Naturally!*

Greater Plymouth Community Center

Vibrant parks and recreation facilities

Over 2,000 programs a year

Lifetime activities for families, fun and fitness

Preserved natural areas...

...Plymouth...*Naturally!*

Plymouth Township's Park, Recreation and Open Space System

Plymouth Township has a 134 acre park system with another 15 acres under negotiation for a total of 149 acres. This includes a mix of community parks, natural areas, and indoor recreation facilities.

Since 1994, Plymouth Township has invested over $25 million in open space acquisition, revitalization of township parks, planning or creation of two new parks, and the development of the Greater Plymouth Community Center. Plymouth Township acquired a regionally important property: the Harriet Wetherill Park. The Harriet Wetherill Park is a 52 acre intact culturally significant landscape. It will become a nature based park, largely designed to remain as it appears. The park will do two things: preserve an important natural resource and enable the public to enjoy the Harriet Wetherill Park.

Plymouth*... Naturally!* : The Planning Process

Plymouth Township undertook a fifteen month planning process to develop this comprehensive park, recreation and open space plan. The process included an inventory of open space and natural resource areas, parks, recreation facilities, programs, management, financing, and community needs.

The public participation process was the foundation of the plan. It included a Study Committee, a community wide survey, key person interviews, focus groups, and public meetings.

Public Opinion

The public expressed appreciation and support for the Township's accomplishments since the last plan was undertaken. The citizens have great pride in their community. Uniformly, people expressed the need to protect the remaining open space and Plymouth Township's natural resources. Organized sports groups need additional athletic fields to accommodate the growing number of participants, year round sports, and emerging leagues such as lacrosse.

Physical Inventory

Plymouth Township is nearly fully developed. Remaining land that is vacant or developable totals 592 acres. The build-out analysis projects the possibility of an additional 284 families and 4,241,066 square feet of new non-residential uses. Several significant large parcels remain as estates. The remaining land in Plymouth Township is under great pressure for development.

In addition to an assessment of land, the planning process also addressed river access, farmland preservation and trail connections.

Riverfront Access

Access to the Schuylkill River in Plymouth Township is extremely difficult because of the topography featuring bluffs, industrial development and the active rail line running adjacent to the river. Access to the river will best be achieved through neighboring communities of Norristown and Conshohocken. Another possibility for riverfront access could occur in the future through the redevelopment of the industrial area along the river. Gaining riverfront access as part of future land use and redevelopment plans would be important for this Township.

Farmland Preservation

Plymouth Township contains about 87 acres of farmland. Maple Acres Farm is particularly important as a cultural heritage resource in this part of Montgomery County. As a result of the planning process, Plymouth Township is working in partnership with Whitpain, Whitemarsh and Springfield to form a regional agricultural security area, the first in Montgomery County.

Trail Connections

The Cross County Trail and the Schuylkill River Trail developed by Montgomery County provide the opportunity for direct connection in Plymouth Township. These trails enable citizens to go long distances north and south in Montgomery and beyond. Seven additional trails in Plymouth Township are identified in this plan for future planning and development.

Programs and Services

Plymouth Township offers year round recreation opportunties for people of all ages, interest and abilities. About 2,000 programs, events and activities are offered annually. A typical department offers about 200-300. The Township offers both scheduled and drop-in recreation opportunties in diverse program areas. The next area that should be considered is nature and environmental education.

Management and Financing

Plymouth Township has a fully-staffed and professionally managed parks and recreation department. The Parks and Recreation Department has planned and developed efficient and effective operating systems that provide fiscal accountability as well as sound information for decision-making. The next system to put into place will be a formalized maintenance management system.

The Township invests about $58.58 per capita in parks and recreation to support operations. The Greater Plymouth Community Center recovers about 80 percent of its operating budget through non-tax sources. The Township aggressively seeks non-tax support for parks and recreation through partnerships, sponsorships, fund-raising, fees & charges, grants, gifts and donations. This plan recommends a ten year capital improvement program for the parks and the GPCC. A capital reserve fund should be established for GPCC and annual appropriations for park capital improvements should continue.

The Plan

The plan is intended to be a "living document." It will serve as a guide for elected officials, community groups, and citizens regarding parks, recreation and open space. The following 11 point blueprint outlines **Plymouth…*Naturally!*** strategies for open, space, parks and recreation.

1. Continue to **be the model for high quality management**, facilities, programs, and services.

2. Maintain **the standard for state-of-the-art customer service**. The relationship with the community and individual participants is notably unique.

3. **Pursue the conservation of open space** through a variety of means including acquisition, easements and conservation by design. This encompasses both the immediate needs to conserve important sites within the narrow window of opportunity of the next five years as well as the generational approach to land redevelopment along the river and around the GPCC campus. Establish open space and natural resource management as a departmental function. Consider how to add 98 acres of parkland to meet community needs through 2020.

4. **Develop natural resource preservation and education program** in Plymouth Township to complement the full range of services already available. This will be a major initiative representing a whole new area of public service, recreation, education and partnerships for Plymouth Township. The foundation of this area will be Harriet Wetherill Park.

    - Master plan Harriet Wetherill Park. Address design, maintenance, and programs.
    - Phase in programs and facilities over the next ten years. This would range from a basic park with walking paths to programs in the outdoor setting and then to potentially a nature center depending on resources and philosophy determined through the master planning process.
    - Consider a partnership with the Colonial School District to serve school groups as the primary client group for programs.
    - Consider a partnership with Montgomery County Parks and Heritage Services.
    - Consider partnership programs with private schools, scouts, environmental agencies, etc
    - Enhance natural areas in existing parks.

5. **Create a Management Impact Statement** (MIS) prior to undertaking additional projects. Projects would include programs, services, and facilities. See attached MIS. Do not add projects for which it would not be possible to maintain the high level of quality now provided or that would negatively impact other existing programs, facilities and human resources. Modify the current program proposal form to include concepts from the MIS to create an Impact Statement for Programs (ISP)

6. **Place reasonable expectations regarding workload and projects for management team and staff**. Recognize the need to avoid overtaxing our resources especially staff. Provide a professionally rewarding work experience. Offer competitive compensation, flexible hours fitting a recreation mission, training and professional development opportunities. There is a tendency in excellent systems to increase expectations and assignments that eventually overtax human resources and diminish the quality of public service.

7. **Formalize the maintenance management system** for parks and recreation facilities. Establish and implement park maintenance standards. Establish a computerized information tracking system to generate information about cost centers. This will enable the Township to make real-time informed decisions about planning, directing, controlling and evaluating maintenance in much the same way that the GPCC is managed. Consider seeking a Peer Grant to formalize the system.

8. **Stay within the current parameter of programming with the exception of the addition of nature and environmental education.** Develop Management Impact Statements (MIS) for significant changes or additions to programs including locations, staffing and funding impacts that would affect workload and other programs.

9. **Plan for the regular revitalization of parks on a ten year schedule**. Since the parks have been master planned, designed and revitalized over the last ten years, the focus will be on the replacement and upgrading of individual components in the parks such as playground equipment, resurfacing of game courts, re-roofing, and keeping up with the ever-changing needs and interests of the community. Develop additional athletic fields to meet present and future community needs.

10. **Develop a strategic marketing plan.** Create a written statement of outreach goals and results for identified target areas. Major focus should be on the community center. Consider involving a professional marketing firm should the need arise.

11. **Continue to use a mix of public and private funds for parks, recreation and open space.** For capital development, the four main areas are Open Space Preservation, Harriet Wetherill Park, Park Improvements and GPCC improvements or additions “within the box” of the center. The key message for operating funds is to continue to set 80 percent operating cost recovery as the goal for GPCC. Recognize that GPCC might exceed this revenue goal in any given year but that this should be considered an exception with praiseworthy results not the level of expectation.

Funding Plan

The implementation of the recommendations of this plan will make a significant positive impact on the Township's livability through the social, environmental, economic, and environmental benefits, but not without investment. Projects range in cost from volunteer time to thousands of dollars for facility development, operations, and maintenance.

1. Continue to budget about $400,000 annually for park capital improvements and $600,000 for park maintenance.

2. Create a capital reserve fund for GPCC of about $400,000 annually while subsidizing operations at $400,000 per year.

3. Expect to budget about $200,000 annually for recreation operations outside of GPCC.

4. Continue to generate non-tax revenues to offset all parks and recreation functions including GPCC.

5. Develop an impact statement for any new project or program. Investigate alternatives for supporting the identified project through non-tax dollars. Only undertake the project if sufficient resources are available.

6. Seek state and federal grants for park planning and development.

7. Establish partnerships for recreation facility development and operation.

8. Since the Parks and Recreation Department already uses sponsorships and partnerships, consider developing a strategic plan for corporate involvement and grants. Most community partners and sponsors have been identified and appear to be contributing as much as they are willing to give for township programs, including all municipal programs beyond parks and recreation. Finding additional corporate partners will be increasingly difficult in the future if new programs or projects are added.

Implementation Schedule

The township's accomplishments in parks, recreation, and open space in the last decade have been substantial. The implementation schedule for the next ten years is configured to maximize the accomplishments of the Township prior to this Plan. The schedule is set forth to make the best use of existing facilities and lands, work within the structure of township staffing, and respect the limitations of township resources. The schedule is based on a philosophy that municipal government cannot do everything on its own and that more can be accomplished through public and private partnerships and funding alternatives to local tax dollars. Opportunities arise and needs change requiring adjustments to the schedule. In summary, the implementation schedule is focused as follows:

Short Term 2006-2007

- Adopt **Plymouth…*Naturally!***
- Acquire land for resource protection.
- Complete the master site plan for Harriet Wetherill Park.
- Monitor the work of neighboring riverfront communities to create riverfront access to determine if there is a role for Plymouth Township in projects under consideration along the riverfront.
- Monitor opportunties for trail connections. Investigate connecting East Plymouth Valley Park with GPCC via a pathway.
- Work with other township departments in the land development process to create linkages and gain riverfront access.
- Consider the addition of nature based recreation programs.
- Formalize the park maintenance plan. Transform park maintenance into park management that incorporates science and technology into the care of public properties with an emphasis on natural resource and facility management.
- Develop, enhance and sustain partnerships for facility and program projects. This should include neighboring communities, the Colonial School District, and youth sports leagues.

Medium Term 2008-2011

- Phase in the Wetherill Park Master Plan.
- Investigate land to develop athletic facilities.
- Consider undertaking projects with neighboring riverfront communities to create riverfront access if appropriate for Plymouth Township and if resources are available.
- Pursue the opportunity to create trail connections to get Plymouth residents to the Cross County and Schuylkill River Trails as well as to Fort Washington State Park. Investigate connecting East Plymouth Valley Park with GPCC via a pathway.
- Carry out the formalized park maintenance management system.
- Update the program management and marketing plans. Focus on fitness and wellness programming, nature, and environmental education in partnership with the Colonial School District.

Long Term 2012-2020

- If there is an opportunity, develop riverfront recreation programs, services or information about riverfront recreation for the residents.

- Continue to undertake community park redevelopment and building improvements at the GPCC in accordance with the Capital Improvement Plan.

- Continue to monitor and establish trail connections as opportunties arise.

- Update the program management and marketing plans and continue to adjust services to meet the changing demographics and public needs. Continue to promote parks and recreation opportunities to both resident and regionally.

- Update this park, recreation and open space plan.

Chapter 1
Plan Overview





Chapter

1

Plan Overview

Plymouth...*Naturally!* updates the 1994 park and recreation plan and the 1995 open space plan. Since the first plan, **Pathways to the Future**, Plymouth Township has invested over $25 million in improvements including the creation of the Greater Plymouth Community Center, the revitalization of the community parks, and the acquisition of the Wetherill farm, the community center property and seven properties near the community center. The Montgomery County Open Space Program **Green Fields/Green Towns** has provided the impetus for the Township to evaluate future directions for open space conservation, trails and natural resources protection.

These accomplishments established the foundation for the high level of public service available in Plymouth Township today. People who live, work or visit Plymouth Township have top notch recreation services available to them seven days a week for about 16 hours a day year round. Plymouth Township has earned 19 awards in recognition of the high quality services provided to the community by professional organizations statewide since 1996.

Plymouth...*Naturally!* moves Plymouth Township into its next frontier: the conservation of natural resources and environmental education. It also reaffirms the township's commitment to serving as a national, state and regional model for the highest quality of parks and recreation public service. These two goals come into play at a time when the Township is facing a difficult financial challenge: the loss of half of the Earned Income Tax, estimated at about $1,500,000 annually, to the Colonial School District. This plan sets forth 10 years of strategies for the Township. As in the previous plans, the strategies are intended to be achievable and action-oriented. This plan will position Plymouth Township to secure about $1.2 million in funding from the Montgomery County Open Space Program, **Green Fields/Green Towns** as well as establish the potential for other state and federal grants.

Just as Plymouth Township Council made bold and far-reaching decisions in investing in parks and recreation since 1994, this plan calls once again for the same foresight and action. There is only a small window of opportunity left for the conservation of Plymouth's treasured scenic beauty and remaining farmland.

Plymouth...*Naturally!* is timely for another important reason: to insure that the high quality of year-round recreation and facilities continues as the Township enters its crucial maintenance phase following ten years of development. While construction and development are exciting, the subsequent years of maintaining the high level of commitment and enthusiasm are ever challenging and critical.

Reader's Guide to the Plan

Chapter 1 – OVERVIEW discusses the plan purpose and goals, planning process, and relationship with other planning efforts.

Chapter 2 – COMMUNITY PROFILE provides information about the Plymouth Township population, trends, public opinion, and an overview of parks and recreation.

Chapter 3 – PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES presents the inventory of township parkland and recreation facilities, an assessment and analysis of these areas, and recommendations for improvements.

Chapter 4 – OPEN SPACE, GREENWAYS AND TRAILS assesses the potential for open space conservation, greenways and trails development in Plymouth Township as well as connections regionally via the Montgomery County trail system.

Chapter 5 – PROGRAMS AND SERVICES discusses the existing departmental functions and presents recommendations for directions in service delivery.

Chapter 6 – ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCING describes the current operational framework and lays out guidelines for the future enhancements. It outlines current budget and revenue sources, discusses implications for the Township based upon the planning recommendations and offers direction for future parks and recreation development and operations.

Chapter 7 – CONCLUSIONS, VISION, AND MISSION synthesizes the findings of the public participation process, inventory and assessment as the foundation for the vision and mission.

Chapter 8 – GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS outlines the proposed actions for plan implementation based upon the goals developed.

Chapter 9 – PLAN IMPLEMENTATION presents the ten-year action plan.

Planning Process

This plan was rooted in public participation and consisted of an assessment of Plymouth's parks and recreation system; development of conclusions and options; establishment of goals and implementation strategies; and creation of an action plan with a time frame for implementation. The planning process addressed five areas.

1. Community Recreation Needs
2. Parks and Recreation Facilities
3. Open Space, Greenways and Trails
4. Programs and Services
5. Administration and Financing

Public Participation

The public participation process included five components: a study committee, key person interviews, focus groups, a community public opinion survey and public meetings. This process provided valuable information from those in the community who are involved in parks and recreation related efforts, as well as the general public. Needs of both citizens and community organizations that provide recreation services were assessed including:

- Lifetime opportunities for citizens of all ages, interests, and abilities.
- Services and facilities for both the general citizenry and organized groups.
- Programs with a range of interests such as social activities, volunteerism, fitness and wellness, intellectual stimulation, individual and team sports, and cultural and special events.
- Attitudes and opinions about open space protection.
- Both active and nature based parks and recreation facilities.
- Safe and convenient access to parks and recreation throughout the Township and to the region beyond through the regional Montgomery County trail system.
- Year round recreation through the Greater Plymouth Community Center.

Throughout the public participation process, the citizens expressed the vision of a green and connected community, river access, protection of natural resources and remaining open space, safe places to walk and bike to complement the recreation opportunities now available for people of all ages and interests.

I have been here all my married life. A new bride on May 18, 1952. I love it here!
Survey respondent

Planning Goals

The Plymouth Township Parks & Recreation Department and the Study Committee wanted to build upon success. They established the following goals for the plan:

1. Address the requirements of Montgomery County's **Green Fields/Green Towns** program regarding open space, greenways, trails, riverfront, and natural resource conservation. Subsequently, the consulting team added a focus on the preservation of farmland and the establishment of an Agricultural Security Area.

2. Develop the plan in conformance with the Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan requirements of the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources in order to be eligible and competitive for future state funding and grant opportunities from other sources.

3. Use public input to help establish the future direction for open space and parkland, facility development and recreation opportunities.

4. Assess ways to connect parks and recreation facilities, expand or connect to existing trails, including the Montgomery County Bike Path System, and connect to neighboring municipalities especially along the Schuylkill River front.

5. Develop a master site plan for the Harriet Wetherill property.



Harriet Wetherill Park

6. Work with the maintenance management and staff to evaluate options for future maintenance management of parks, recreation facilities and the Greater Plymouth Community Center.

7. Develop a capital improvement program with a corresponding budget to maintain and protect the township's investment in the parks, for present and future generations.

8. Define opportunities for intergovernmental cooperation and other partnerships. Investigate partnerships with the Colonial School District, Montgomery County Open Space Program, the Schuylkill River Greenway Association, and neighboring communities.

9. Explore how to sustain and enhance the image and recognition of the Plymouth Township Parks & Recreation Department in the community.

10. Identify priorities and establish methods for decision-making. One of the most important goals of this plan update is to set priorities in a logical, practical and achievable method. Not everything can be accomplished at once especially with the township's funding constraints. Setting priorities for projects, programs and services is crucial as is providing methods for decision-making about moving ahead with ideas and concepts.

11. Identify resources and alternative funding strategies for plan implementation.

Related Plans

Plymouth...*Naturally!* builds upon previous and ongoing planning efforts related to parks, recreation regional and municipal plans. These include the following:

Back to Prosperity: A Competitive Agenda for Renewing Pennsylvania (2004) was developed by the Brookings Institution. It serves as an action plan for the Commonwealth through strategic investment in the state's older communities such as the cities, boroughs and older suburbs. **Plymouth…*Naturally!*** echoes the Brookings report to position Plymouth as a model of planning a competitive, high quality future through parks, conservation and recreation.

Pennsylvania's Recreation Plan (2004-2008) establishes statewide goals for parks and recreation based upon extensive citizen participation and study of recreation needs throughout the Commonwealth. They include conservation of open space, creating healthy communities, connecting parks through trail systems, maintenance of existing facilities, funding and partnerships.

Horizons, The Year 2025 Regional Land Use Plan for the Delaware Valley (2003) is the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission's plan for preserving farmland, natural resources and open space. It calls for the protection of natural resources; creating trail connections, adding parkland and conserving open space.

Schuylkill River Heritage Corridor Management Action Plan (1995) presents the action plan for creating a greenway along the Schuylkill River. Related studies such as the Schuylkill River Water Trail relate directly to Plymouth Township and how to access to the river.

Montgomery County Open Space, Natural Features, and Cultural Resources Plan, Shaping Our Future, A Comprehensive Plan for Montgomery County (2004) is intended to guide open space decisions to the year 2025. If fully implemented it will help to permanently preserve more farmland, open space, natural areas, scenic views, and historic properties throughout the County.

Montgomery County's Shaping Our System Plan (2005) sets forth an action plan to operate and manage the county open space system. Partnerships and outreach are an important part of this plan which could possibly align with Plymouth Township's future work in the realm of environmental education at Harriet Wetherill Park.

Montgomery County Bicycle Mobility Plan, (1995) in summary, calls a countywide system of bike paths that serve both recreational and transportation needs as well as outreach efforts to inform the public about safe biking. **Plymouth…*Naturally!*** explores connections to the Cross County Trail and the Schuylkill River Trail as well as to Fort Washington State Park.

Pathways to the Future (1994**)** was the **Plymouth Township Parks and Recreation Plan** that set forth strategies to undertake a feasibility study of the Greater Plymouth Community Center, revitalize Township parks, expand programming in accordance with staffing and invest capital funds in quality of life improvements.

Plymouth Township Community Center Master Plan Study (1994 with a 1996 update) developed a course of action to guide the Township in the programming, rehabilitation, construction and operation of the proposed community recreation center on the site of the former High Field Elementary School. It is now the Greater Plymouth Community Center.

Pathways to the Future Addendum, Plymouth Township's Plan for Open Space and Natural Resource Protection (1995) was undertaken in conformance with Montgomery County's first Open Space Program. The plan made recommendations for open space conservation including the preservation of the Wetherill property, the acquisition of property near the proposed community center, connections for trails and pathways to the community center and assessed riverfront connections.

Plymouth Township Comprehensive Plan Update (1990) updated the township's land use data base, identified the basic direction and structure recommended for future development in the Township and specified the goals, policies and individual elements that would form the basis for development in the Township. The plan contained a Conservation and Recreation Plan element that recommended open space protection; integration of the open space network with community facilities; regulations to create the open space network and potential recreation areas and facilities and the formulation of measures to protect areas undergoing change.

How will the plan be used?

This plan serves as a reference document and a framework for overall township planning and management. Staff should review the plan annually. Through this review, accomplishments, needs, and emerging opportunities should be determined. Budgets should then be based on the action plan for the upcoming fiscal year. Target resources to community needs based upon the staff review, budget meetings, and ongoing public participation. The Capital Improvement Plan identifies specific projects that will be undertaken in the next fiscal year as well as longer term projects for which the Township will actively seek outside funding. By delineating projects, fundraisers and grant writers can seek out customary and related programs to generate financing for public ventures.

Economic development initiatives and private development can be linked for funding related park and recreation projects.

Township financial circumstances have become more challenging. Undertaking the actions recommended in this plan will require even more innovative leadership, enhanced partnerships and grants within this climate of fiscal austerity.

Why is it important to have a quality park and recreation system?

Parks and recreation attracts and retains businesses. It increases property values. Recreation is the chief factor in establishing healthy family bonds, the foundation of our society. Recreation deters substance abuse and crime. Recreation adds years to our lives and life to our years. Parks protect our natural resources and provide clean air and water.



Greater Plymouth Community Center and Park

Evaluation: Plymouth's Plan for Open Space & Natural Resource Protection 1995

In accordance with **Green Fields/Green Towns**, Plymouth Township evaluated the 1995 open space and natural resources plan to assess the success of past municipal preservation efforts. These are shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1
Plymouth Township Open Space Preservation Goals and Accomplishments 1995-2006

1995 Open Space Plan Recommendation	Action	Status
1. A. Acquire key parcels to meet current and future open space needs	Pursue negotiation to purchase properties adjacent to Larkin Tract	Purchased 40 acres of the Wetherill Tract in 1996. Currently negotiating acquisition of additional 15 acres
B. To expand, gain access and provide visibility to Walton Road and Germantown Pike, acquire adjacent properties to the Greater Plymouth Community Center	Pursue negotiations to purchase properties adjacent to the community center	Acquired seven parcels near the GPCC totaling 14.5 acres
C. Acquire a 4.6 acre site adjacent to the Schuylkill River for river access	Pursue acquisition/easements for river access	Opportunties did not present themselves
	Contact SEPTA about crossing active line	SEPTA does not approve crossings for active lines
	Coordinate efforts with Montgomery County along Plymouth Creek Corridor	Efforts are focused on connections to Cross County Trail
	Preservation of stream corridors through easements	Current plan is recommending land development review process that includes the Parks & Recreation Dept. and updating of Twp. Comprehensive Plan
D. Encourage landscape plantings in Township to enhance visual character	Enforce Ordinance 1158 regarding plantings	Enforcement underway
	Encourage clubs to advance cause of landscape plantings; provide recognition	Comcast adopted Plymouth as Comcast Cares Day for park landscaping
	Develop signage program	Accomplished

Table 1 (continued) Plymouth Township Open Space Preservation Goals and Accomplishments 1994-2006		
1995 Open Space Plan Recommendation	Action	Status
3. Create A Walkable Community		
A. Improve neighborhood design	Add sidewalks, implement traffic calming, provide shortcuts	Township requires sidewalks in all developments. Township added trail connections to Community Center.
B. Create connections to retail and business areas	Provide linkages via sidewalks Germantown Pike and Mall	Township promoted sidewalk connections to GPCC
	Add sidewalks and lighting along Hickory Road to Mall	
	Improve pedestrian crossing on Germantown Pike	Montgomery County received TEA funds for a pedestrian bridge
		Township and County planned trail connections along Metroplex and Market Place
C. Provide connections to Township transit facilities	Sidewalks to transit stops & improve shelters and transit stops	Not yet addressed
	Provide SEPTA information at Mall	Accomplished
D. Make pedestrian and traffic improvements for improved safe access to Community Center	Pedestrian signage, signal and traffic light at Germantown and Jolly Roads	Accomplished
	Pedestrian linkage at Walton Road	Accomplished
	Improve sidewalks along Jolly Road	Accomplished, including for new development
	Cross walk on Walton Road	Underway
4. Develop open space linkages for cyclists and pedestrians	Conduct study of potential stream corridors to complete the bicycle network recommended	Not completed. Switched focus to riverfront, connections to Cross County trail, and connections to neighboring municipalities
5. Start a Stream Bank Stabilization Program	Identify recommendations for stream bank stabilization projects such as Diamond Run, Saw Mill Run	Stabilization undertaken in Bicentennial Park and East Plymouth Valley Park. Additional projects to be undertaken in the future
6. Implement Identity and Signage System	Developed and installed township signage system in parks and community center	Near completion

The Community Center, recreation and parks are why I moved to Plymouth Township.
Comment made in a Public Forum for this Plan

Plymouth...*Naturally!*: Building upon Success

This plan recognizes that Plymouth Township has worked creatively and successfully over the past decade to establish a vibrant parks, recreation and open space system that is a national and statewide model. This plan calls on the community through its elected officials to continue to make the kind of bold decisions and investment in parks and recreation made since 1994. By implementing the open space, parks and recreation strategies suggested in this plan, the Township is continuing to create the kind of community that will attract and retain businesses and citizens for decades to come. Throughout the public participation process, the citizens expressed the vision of a green and connected community, river access, protection of natural resources and remaining open space, safe places to walk and bike to complement the recreation opportunities now available for people of all ages and interests.

A key factor in making Pennsylvania attractive as a place for businesses and workers to come and stay is quality of life. The industries Pennsylvania needs to retain and attract have a choice of where to locate. Increasingly, they judge a location not by traditional measures – tax rates, access to markets, the quality of the workforce – but as a place where the workers they need will want to call home. This means a clean, safe environment, vibrant towns and neighborhoods, opportunities for outdoor recreation and entertainment and abundant open space.

Governor Edward Rendell, February 2004

Chapter 2
Community Profile







Chapter

2

Plymouth Township Profile

Community Background

Plymouth Township is located in south central Montgomery County about five miles northwest of the City of Philadelphia. The 8.3 square mile township is conveniently located with direct access to the Pennsylvania Turnpike and the Blue Route (I-476), connecting to the Schuylkill Expressway and Interstate 95. The availability of land zoned for non-residential use combined with re-developable land in the core area and the township's superior access to Pennsylvania's highway system led to a resurgence of commercial and office development over the last twenty years. The Township has direct connection to the Montgomery County Bike Path system which offers non-motorized transportation opportunities.



Figure 1. Plymouth Township Location

History

Plymouth Township was one of the original townships of Montgomery County with its first survey completed in 1684 under the direction of William Penn. Quakers arriving from England were the first to establish a settlement in Plymouth Meeting. The main thoroughfares of Germantown Pike, Ridge Pike, Chemical Road and Butler Pike were established in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries providing access to the Schuylkill River and Philadelphia. In the late 1800's a number of villages were established in response to early industrial development. These included Plymouth Meeting, Cold Point, Hickorytown, Harmanville, Black Horse, and Mogeetown. The early industries included lime manufacturing, iron ore smelting, and brick firing for glass manufacturing. Railroads were important in the development of the township. Built in 1891, the Reading Railroad tracks connected Philadelphia with Reading and Lancaster along the Schuylkill River. The Plymouth Railroad followed Plymouth Creek and the Trenton Branch of the Pennsylvania Railroad. The Norristown exit of the Pennsylvania Turnpike opened in 1950, ending the rural character of Plymouth Township. The rapid suburbanization of the community began after World War II and continued after the development of the Northeast Extension of the Pennsylvania Turnpike in 1957. The establishment of Plymouth Meeting Mall in 1966 made the community a regional attraction and brought additional growth. In 1991 the completion of the I-476 continuation of the Northeast Extension (known as the Blue Route) attracted significant office and retail development.

Today

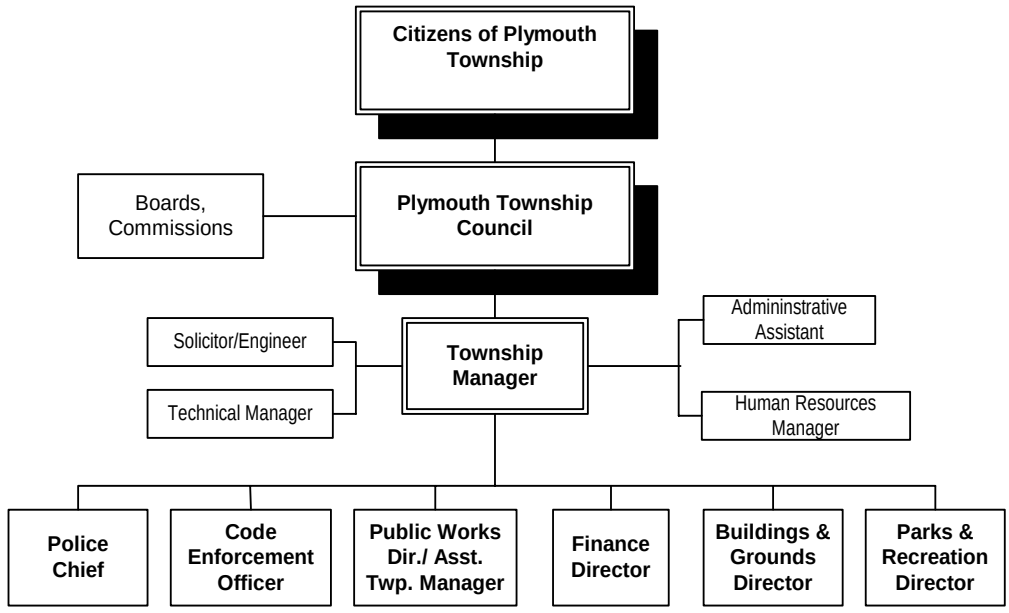
Plymouth Township has been experiencing the development pressure of this region of the state. Plymouth Township is a vibrant suburban community in which to live, work and play. A resounding theme of the public participation process was the great pride that the residents have in their community. With a premier parks and recreation system, excellent public services, high quality school district, convenient access to world class health care in the region, a low crime rate, scenic beauty and a strong cultural heritage, Plymouth Township is a highly regarded community statewide.

Plymouth Township has also been successful in terms of economic development. This success has contributed to the high standard of living in the community through the desirable tax base that has been established. Plymouth Township has forged ahead with the recycling of lands long ago damaged by industry into productive commercially viable properties. The $85 million Metroplex Shopping Center was recently built on an 80-acre former brownfield site. It is one of the region's largest "power" shopping centers in the tri-state region housing more than a dozen anchor stores and retail locations providing over 1500 jobs and producing millions of dollars in annual taxes. The development paid about $6 million for off-site highway improvements and a one million dollar recreation impact fee that was used to help develop the Greater Plymouth Community Center. New housing construction is underway. Industrial areas along the river offer further potential for community revitalization in the future. A few large tracts of open space remain that are under development pressure.

Plymouth Township Government

Plymouth Township is a Home Rule Charter community with a Council Manager form of government. Five members make up the Plymouth Township Council. Four represent specific districts while one is elected at-large. Council is responsible for legislative functions. The Township Manager oversees administrative functions. **Figure 2** depicts Plymouth Township's organizational structure.

Figure 2
Plymouth Township Organizational Chart



Land Use

Development patterns in Plymouth Township have been determined by the presence of the Schuylkill River, Plymouth Creek, Germantown, Ridge and Butler Pikes, the Pennsylvania Turnpike and I-476.

Development Patterns

Business, industry and small settlements sprang up along the Schuylkill River and Plymouth Creek early in Plymouth's development. Germantown and Ridge Pikes are strong corridors of commercial business. Older industry along the Schuylkill and Plymouth Creek is now less vigorous than in its early years. The riverfront is marked

by its potential for redevelopment in much the same way riverfront development in the neighboring community of Conshohocken is taking hold.

The Pennsylvania Turnpike and its northeast extension effectively carved the Township into districts. North and west of the turnpike and the northeast extension is mainly single family detached housing. The township's larger lot housing is east of the Northeast Extension. The industrial areas are concentrated along the river south of the Pennsylvania Turnpike, west of the Blue Route.

Residential

About 60 percent of the housing structures in Plymouth Township are single family detached dwellings. The historic neighborhoods of Mogeetown, Connaughtown, and Black Horse and the area near Colwell Lane have the most single family attached housing in the form of twins, townhouses and row houses. Five major apartment complexes with about 1,680 units were built in Plymouth Township mainly in the 1960's and 1970's and comprise about 25 percent of the housing structure types in the Township. These are located along Butler Pike and north of the Turnpike on Plymouth Road, Germantown Pike and near Norristown on Fairfield Road. Two high rise residential developments are on Germantown Pike near Walton Road, close to the Greater Plymouth Community Center.

Commercial and Office

Retail commercial uses are focused on Germantown, Ridge and Butler Pikes, Alan Wood Road, and Chemical Road. The major office complexes are primarily in the area of the Turnpike and Mall, along Germantown Pike. Other locations include: Walton Road, Township Line Road, Ridge Pike and Plymouth Road. Corporate office structures are located on School Lane near Belvoir Road, Ridge Pike near Chemical Road and in the Mogeetown area. Smaller offices converted from residential are found along Gallagher Road, Germantown Pike and Butler Pike.

Industrial

Heavy Industry is located along the Schuylkill River, Conshohocken Road and Alan Wood Road, primarily in the industrial triangle formed by the river, the Blue Route and the Turnpike. Light industry is located within this triangle as well as in the Black Horse neighborhood, on the Conshohocken line at Brook Road, and on Colwell Road and Gravers Road.

Institutional

The greatest concentration of institutional land use is along the East Norriton border of the township where the Township Building, Colonial Middle School and Central Montgomery County Vocational Technical School are located. Immediately to the south is the Plymouth Country Club. Other institutional uses include the two public elementary schools, a parochial elementary school, the Silver Spring School, Plymouth Meeting Friends School, several churches, a nursing home, a private swim club, and two cemeteries.

Recreational

The Township's major recreational facilities and parks are located north of the Turnpike. Four neighborhood parks are south of the Turnpike. Plymouth Township has 134 acres of public park land. Five commercial recreation operations are in the Township including a swim club, two indoor sports facilities, a driving range/miniature golf course, and the Plymouth Country Club with its 115 acres.

Undeveloped Land

Plymouth Township's build-out analysis projects about 592 acres of land that is undeveloped, vacant, or re-developable for residential and non-residential uses.

Agricultural

Plymouth Township has about 87 acres of agricultural land.

Utilities

PECO has an electrical substation and transmission lines running from the substation south to Whitemarsh Township, north across Plymouth to Whitpain Township and west across the Schuylkill River. The Township leases space under PECO lines for parking in East Plymouth Valley Park. The sewage treatment plant is just north of the Turnpike along the Schuylkill River. Utility lines have potential for trails.

Current Land Use Plan

The current land use plan reflects moderate growth rates, a balanced land-use mix and conservation of natural resources. It provides for:

- Infill residential development within existing neighborhoods
- Industrial development and redevelopment in the traditional industrial quadrant
- Core area of concentrated development at the Blue Route, Turnpike Interchange and Mall. The core area provides a mechanism for accommodating commercial and certain types of residential development while controlling the impacts of growth on established residential neighborhoods in the Township.

Beyond the core area, land use emphasis is on conservation and selected infill of residential neighborhoods, stabilizing commercial areas and creating opportunties for light industrial and low intensity office growth.

The focus on open space planning is an interconnected open space system, incorporating existing parkland, school grounds, utility corridors, resource protection areas, landscaped buffers and the County Bikeway. For new housing developments, there is an emphasis on open space conservation.

Land Use Changes since 1990 Comprehensive Plan

Since the 1990 Comprehensive Plan, major changes in land use in Plymouth were:

1. Acquisition of the Wetherill Tract
2. Commercial Development: Marketplace and Metroplex Shopping Centers with the inclusion of linkages to the Schuylkill River Trail; four hotels (622 rooms), 11 car dealers, and two movie theater complexes
3. Office Development: 11 complexes with over three million square feet
4. Residential: 407 townhouses and 229 single family detached houses
5. Recreation Development: GPCC, Community Center Park, and three private recreation businesses
6. Development of the Cross County Trail with Plymouth Township linkages
7. Relocation of IKEA
8. I-476 Interchange

Demographics

According to the U.S. Census of 2000, the population of Plymouth Township is 16,045 as shown in **Table 2**. Despite previous projections estimating population decline, Plymouth Township experienced 0.5percent growth from 1990 to 2000.

Table 2
State, County, and Township Population 1990-2000

	1990	2000	% Change 1990-2000
Pennsylvania	11,881,643	12,281,054	3.5%
Montgomery County	678,305	750,097	10.6%
Plymouth Township	15,958	16,045	0.5%

Source: Penn State Data Center and U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000 Census

The population projections show continued growth but to a lesser extent than the past several decades. The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission projects growth in Plymouth Township through 2030 as shown in **Table 3**.

Table 3 Plymouth Township Population Growth Projections 2005-2030		
Year	Population	% Change
2000	16,045	-
2005	16,220	1.0%
2010	16,640	2.5%
2015	16,820	1.0%
2020	16,980	0.9%
2025	17,040	0.3%
2030	17,000	-0.2%

Source: Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission and Montgomery County Planning Commission.

Age

As interests change throughout one's lifetime, it is important to look at age groupings in order to target services. **Table 4** represents population by major age groups and their changes between 1990 and 2000 as well as comparisons with Montgomery County and Pennsylvania. Plymouth Township has one of the highest concentrations of people ages 65-74 in Montgomery County. Because the Township had significant housing development in the 1950's and 1960's, these people may just be aging in place. The U.S. Census Bureau considers a change of 2.5 percent or more to be a significant change. In Plymouth Township, the age cohort of 20 to 44 nearly reached that level of significance with a decrease of 2.3 percent while the group aged 65 years and older increased by 2.6 percent.

Table 4 Plymouth Township Percent of Population by Age Group 1990-2000				
Age Group	Plymouth 1990 Population %	Plymouth 2000 Population %	Montgomery County 2000 %	PA 2000 %
Under 5	5.1	4.9	6.3	5.9
5-19	16.6	17.0	13.6	20.6
20-44	37.3	35.0	35.4	18.8
45-64	24.3	23.9	23.3	29.7
65+	16.7	19.3	14.9	15.6
Median Age	38.5	40.7	38.2	38.0

Source: Penn State Data Center and U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000 Census

Powerful Demographic Changes Ahead

Plymouth Township's median age of 40.7 is higher than the median age of both Pennsylvania 38 and Montgomery County at 38.2. The median age in the community increased by over two years in the 1990's. Two milestones will occur in 2006: the first baby boomers will turn 60 and more than half of all boomers will be age 50 or older by May. People ages 45 to 54 have the highest average household income and the highest

household spending of any age group. Old age is still a long way off as 50 year olds can expect to live another 30 years (women, 82.5 and men, 78.5).[1] About 43 percent of Plymouth Township's population is 45 years of age and older.

- U.S. Census Bureau predicts a 72 percent increase in adults 50+ between 2000 and 2020 and a slight decrease in adults under 50.
- Adults 50+ control 77 percent of this country's assets.
- Women are responsible for 80 percent of household spending.
- Per capita spending is 2.5 times the national average in 50+ households.
- Women ages 50-70 represent a major opportunity for marketing as they have the time, money and motivation to take control of their future and that of their household[2].



Plymouth Township offers activities for lifetime fitness and wellness.

[1] Ad Age.Com. **Implications of Latest Baby Boomer Milestone**. http://www.adage.com. 7/5/05.
[2] Ad Age.Com. Targeting a Powerhouse Female Demographic: Older Women. http://www.adage.com. 10/10/05

Different Generations - Different Views of the World

Longer lives have produced several generations with different views of the world: Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Gen X and Gen Y. Their formative experiences have molded specific preferences and beliefs. Each age group has its own attitudes, sensibilities, hot buttons and cultural expectations. Clarifying the needs and desires of all generations is essential in public service. Finding out how to reach and involve different generations of people in everything from programs and services to funding for parks and recreation in a positive manner is complex. For example, one generation alone, Gen Y, has three segments: adults, teens and children.

For program planning and public outreach, understanding potential client groups is essential. **Figure 3** represents information about various generations along with implications for program and service planning and for devising outreach strategies to implement this plan.

Figure 3
Generations[3] and Implications[4]

Traditionalists – *Born before 1946*. Affected by the Great Depression. Hard work. Self-sacrifice. Respect for authority and institutions. Earned their material comforts the good old-fashioned way. ***Reaching this group:*** Stress frugality & their right to enjoy the fruits of their labor. Use endorsements of well-known people with wisdom of experience.

Baby Boomers – *Born 1946 – 1960*. Born into prosperity and affluence. "Permissive" upbringing. Feel special and privileged. Challenge authority. Champion the unconventional. Focused on self-fulfillment. Strong sense of entitlement and self-worth. ***Reaching this group***: Stress family and family activity. Supply products and services that make boomers feel like young active winners.

Gen X – *Born 1960-1980*. Lived with social and economic obstacles that are harder than those faced by Traditionalists and did not exist for Boomers. Technology and media opened them to wider choices in lifestyle than previous generations. Sophisticated and savvy about the world. Skeptical. ***Reaching this group:*** Use candor, humor, and pragmatic approaches.

Gen Y (Echo Boomers) – *Born 1980-2000*. Group so large and complex that it is viewed as three distinct groups: adults, teens and children. Multi-cultural diversity. Broader definition of family. Affected by violence and scandal: 9/11, Columbine, Iraq, terrorism, and political scandals. More watchful and careful about their personal safety. Mistrustful of the media. Information Age influence: shorter attention spans, boredom and over-stimulation. ***Reaching this group:*** Use technology: videos, computers, WEB. Capitalize on hope and optimism. Inclusive multi-cultural programs and services. Participative planning enabling people to be heard through pulling together.

[3] Paul, Pamela. September 2001. *Getting Inside Gen Y*, **American Demographics**, Volume 23(9) pp 42-49.
[4] Smith, J. Walker and Clurman, Ann. 1997. **Rocking the Ages: the Yankelovich Report on Generational Marketing**. (New York, NY: Harper Business).

Population Target Groups

The Plymouth Township Parks & Recreation Department can use population figures to target age group planning. **Table 5** presents the raw number of citizens by age group. For example, one of the Department's prime target groups is the age group 5 to 14. This group has 1,981 people. The family life stage age group of 35 to 54 has about 4,700 people verifying that family oriented programming is important. Over 3,300 people are 65 and older.

Table 5
Plymouth Township 2000 Population
Age Group Raw Numbers

Age Group	Number
Under 5 Years	789
5-14 Years	1,981
15-19 Years	839
20-34 Years	3,112
35-54 Years	4,675
55-64 Years	1,661
65- 84 Years	2,863
85 Years+	225

Source: Penn State Data Center and U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000 Census



Plymouth Township's recreation programs inspire good citizenry.

Family Structure

One of the most marked changes in Pennsylvania's population in recent years has been the alteration of the family structure. Households have experienced a decline in married couples and households with children. Households with single people, single heads of households and single parents have increased. Between 1990 and 2000, the following occurred:

- The percentage of family households decreased by 4.3 percent, a significant trend.
- Householders living alone increased from 24 percent to 27 percent.
- Single head of households increased from 1.9% to 8.6%.
- Percentage of non-family households increased from 29 percent to 33 percent.
- U.S. Census Bureau began to track the number of grandparents as caregivers. In Plymouth, 61 households indicated that the grandparents were responsible for grandchildren.
- Proportion of households with all working parents is significant. About 63 percent of households with children under the age of six have all parents working.
- Most women work: while 66 percent of the employable population is in the labor force, 59 percent of females over 16 years are in the work force.

Plymouth Township is a good place to raise my family. You are always improving the way of life. It's safe, clean and a good community.

Survey Respondent

Income

Plymouth Township's trends in income between 1989 and 1999 show that the median household income has not kept pace with that of Montgomery County or Pennsylvania. For example, the median1989 household income of $44,013 indexed for inflation would be worth $59, 130 in 1999 dollars. However, the actual median household income in Plymouth in 1999 was $54,069. In comparison, the 1999 median household income of both the state and the county exceeded the real value of the median income of 1989.

In 1989, Plymouth Township's median household income was .6 percent higher than that of the county. In 1999, it was 12.5 percent lower. The percentage of families in poverty in Plymouth Township increased from 1.8 percent to 2.4 percent from 1989 to 1999. **Table 6** presents information on the median income, the value of 1989 dollars indexed for inflation, and poverty level.

Table 6 Median Per Capita Income 1999					
Area	1989 Median Household Income	1999 Median Household Income	1999 Dollar Value of 1989 Income	1999 Per Capita Income	% Families in Poverty
Pennsylvania	29,069	$40,106	$39,060	20,880	7.8
Montgomery County	43,720	60,829	58,713	30,898	2.8
Plymouth	44,013	54,069	59,130	28,862	2.4

Source: Penn State Data Center and U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000 Census

Education

Educational attainment is the strongest indicator of an individual's income potential, attitudes and spending habits. The national trend is toward higher levels of education. Montgomery County ranks second highest among counties in Pennsylvania in the proportion of residents over 25 with bachelor's degrees at 23 percent. The County also ranked third with the proportion of residents with a high school diploma. Plymouth Township outpaces Montgomery County in terms of residents with high school diplomas and some college. The Township exceeds the proportion of residents statewide (but not Montgomery County) with bachelor's, advanced or professional degrees. **Table 7** represents the educational attainment levels for the township, county and the state.

Table 7 Educational Attainment of People 25 Years and Older 2000			
	High School Graduate + %	Bachelor's Degree %	Advanced or Professional Degree %
Pennsylvania	38.1	14.0	8.4
Montgomery County	49.8	23.1	15.7
Plymouth Township	53.8	20.9	11.6

Source: Penn State Data Center and U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000 Census

Race

The face of Plymouth Township is changing as shown in **Table 8**. The community is becoming more diversified. People of color represent about 10.7 percent of the population. In 1990, they made up 7.6 percent of the community. While the numbers themselves are not large, the significance is in the growth rate. The Asian population is higher here than both the county and the state.

Table 8 Racial* Composition by Percentage of Population						
	Plymouth Township		Montgomery County		Pennsylvania	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
White	92.4	89.3	90.6	86.5	88.5	85.4
Asian	3.3	5.2	2.3	4.1	1.1	1.8
African American	3.4	4.2	5.6	7.5	9.1	10.0
Latino – of any race*	0.8	1.3	1.2	2.0	1.8	3.2
American Indian	0.1	0.1	.009	0.1	0.1	0.1

*Numbers do not total 100% because the Latino group includes multiple races.
Source: Penn State Data Center and U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000 Census

Housing

Table 9 shows information about housing in Plymouth Township. Housing is an indicator of affluence. Generally those who can afford to own their homes are more affluent than those who rent. About 71 percent of the housing units in Plymouth Township are owner occupied a good rate. This is down from 86 percent in 1990. Housing values and rents are higher than the state but lower than Montgomery County. About 29 percent of the renters in Plymouth Township pay 35 percent or more of their gross household income for rent.

Table 9 Housing Information 2000			
	Plymouth Township	Montgomery County	Pennsylvania
Owner Occupied %	71.0	79.2	71.3
Renter Occupied %	29.0	20.8	28.7
Detached single family homes %	60.1	56.1	55.9
Median House Value	$159,100	$160,700	$97,000
Median Gross Rent	$823	$757	$531

Source: Penn State Data Center and U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000 Census

In 1989 the median value of a house was $82,300. That value in 1999 dollars would be about $102,000 thus showing a positive trend in the Township to the current median house value of $159,100. Montgomery County's median value in 2000 was $160,700 both higher than Pennsylvania's at $97,000.

Employment

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, in Plymouth Township, about 72% of those employed were in white collar jobs including management, professional, sales and clerical/office. About 16% of the employed population were in blue collar jobs of construction, production or transportation. Another 12% were in services.

Plymouth Township has about 27,000 who are employed in the Township, 68% higher than the residential population. Due to changes in taxation in Plymouth Township, the number of employees for each employer is not available at this time. Plymouth Township's major employers along with their number of employees of include:

- PECO (986)
- IMS Health (701)
- Wilmington Financial (680)
- Target (433)
- IKEA Pennsylvania (416)
- Sharp Corporation (398)
- Comcast (360)
- Liberty Mutual Insurance (313)
- Ken Crest Centers (272)
- Lowe's Home Centers (271)
- Stroehmann Bakery (264)
- Ceridian Corporation (242)
- Colonial School District (232)
- Giant Food Store (225)
- Home Depot (224)
- IKEA N.A. Services (221)
- SEPTA (202)
- Wachovia Bank (191)
- Cognizant Tech Solutions US Corporation ((187)
- Hecht's (176)

Public Opinion

The planning project included a five part public participation process: a Study Committee, a community wide direct mail survey, key person interviews, focus groups and public meetings.

Study Committee

Citizens representing a broad base of community interests participated on the Study Committee. They included the Plymouth Township Council, Parks and Recreation Board, Plymouth Township Planning Commission, Montgomery County Planning Commission, Colonial School District Board, Parks and Recreation Department Staff, and general community interests. The Study Committee met monthly throughout the planning process.

The Study Committee hosted a meeting attended by representatives of Conshohocken Borough, Whitemarsh Township, the Montgomery County Planning Commission, and the Montgomery County Agricultural Preservation Program to discuss joint projects. Representatives of the Plymouth Study Committee participated in meetings and planning sessions with adjoining municipalities, including Conshohocken, Whitemarsh and the County. Projects addressed included: riverfront connections, regional trail connections and the establishment of a multi-municipal agricultural preservation area.

Key Person Interviews

The Parks and Recreation Department and the Plan Study Committee identified interviewees:

- School District
- Sports Associations
- Arts groups
- Landowners
- Plymouth Township Council
- Plymouth Township Planning Commission
- Township Manager
- Greater Plymouth Community Center pass holders
- Staff
- Realtors
- Shopping Mall Managers
- Comcast
- PECO
- Commerce Bank
- Focus Groups and Work Sessions
- Philanthropic Organizations
- Schuylkill River Greenway
- Montgomery County Open Space Program Managers
- Montgomery County Trail Planners
- Montgomery County Parks & Heritage Services Director
- Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission
- SEPTA
- Nature Centers in the Region
- Natural Lands Trust
- Montgomery County Lands Trust
- Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce
- Montgomery County Convention and Visitors Bureau

The planning team conducted work sessions with the Plymouth Township management team including the Director of Parks and Recreation, Assistant Director, Aquatics Manager, Fitness & Sports Manager, Marketing Coordinator, Program Manager, Buildings and Grounds Director, Township Manager (current and former), Police Chief, Public Works Director/Assistant Township Manager, Finance Director, and the Zoning Officer.

Focus Groups

Focus groups of 10 to 13 people were organized to tap into important topics in the community. These included the following groups:

- Middle School Students
- High School Students
- Sports Groups
- Senior Citizens
- Parents Groups
- Greater Plymouth Community Center pass holders

Community Direct Mail Survey

A direct mail survey of 1,000 households yielded a statistically reliable and valid response of about 35 percent. A complete report with detailed responses is in Appendix A. The findings of the community survey enable decision makers to balance information about the needs of people who are the "silent majority" with the needs of organized groups who provide important community recreational services.

To complement the 349 surveys that were returned, the planning team made random telephone calls to selected non-respondents to determine why they did not complete and return their questionnaire. Through the completed calls, the planning team determined that the common response was that the non-respondents mainly were satisfied with the parks and recreation service provided by the Township. Those contacted expressed positive opinions about the progress the Township has made over the last ten years in developing the community center and upgrading the parks as well as with great programming such as concerts, Plymouth Township Day and summer camps.

Public Meeting

Two public meetings were held to provide citizens with the opportunity to hear about the plan and to contribute their ideas and suggestions. The first meeting was held at project initiation to discuss the opportunties and concerns regarding parks and recreation in Plymouth Township. The second public meeting was held at the recommendations phase for citizens to provide feedback to the recommendations and actions suggested in the plan. A third meeting will be held prior to adoption of the plan. The public will have the opportunity to comment on the final draft plan.

Key Findings of the Public Participation Process

Overall the public participation process revealed a great deal of pride and enthusiasm for Plymouth Township Parks & Recreation. The following points summarize the findings:

1. **Appreciation for Plymouth Township's Accomplishments in Parks and Recreation.** Citizens expressed favorable comments about the development of the Greater Plymouth Community Center, the outstanding recreation program offerings, the revitalization of the township parks, the acquisition of the Wetherill tract and access to Montgomery County's Bike Path System. Programs garnered rave reviews about the number, range and quality year round. Staff earned high marks in terms of professionalism, competence, dedication, friendliness and energy.

2. **Plymouth Township sets the bar for parks and recreation facilities, operations, management, and support.** Interviews with national parks and recreation professionals, visitors from other states and elsewhere in Pennsylvania found that Plymouth Township gets high marks on its parks and recreation system. Citizens commented that they have belonged to private fitness centers and gyms elsewhere but none can compare with the friendliness and expertise of GPCC staff. Stories abound about how parks and recreation managers listen and respond to citizen requests ranging from creating improved pool access to making registration more convenient as well as providing pre-school and after-school programming.

3. **Conservation ranked high among the citizens and organizations.** The preservation of remaining open space, Schuylkill River front, and the county trail system are all important here. The preservation of the township's remaining farmland is important, especially places that are evocative of Plymouth's heritage such as where community members go for their 4th of July corn or Halloween pumpkins.

4. **Partnerships are vital.** While the Township's accomplishments are noteworthy, future financial challenges suggest the need and potential for future partnerships. These included the Colonial School District; utilities, financial institutions and other local businesses; health and sports organizations; adjoining municipalities in riverfront access, farmland preservation and bicycle path connections; Montgomery County Parks & Heritage Services; and area nature centers.

5. **People are excited about the Wetherill Farm becoming a township natural resource based park.** The survey findings showed that citizens prefer it to remain as a natural area with limited facilities. Over 25 people expressed their interest in working on the park master plan.

6. **More athletic fields and gyms are needed.** There are not enough sports fields to meet increasing participation. Even though the Township constructed GPCC, the need for gym time still exists in the community. Youth groups and the Township could work collaboratively to review plans that community sports organizations have for the future.

7. **Satisfaction and direction for GPCC.** Overall people love the GPCC, whether they use it or not! Interviews found that citizens show off GPCC to their out-of-town visitors. Fees and charges should be monitored to insure that they are affordable for both citizens and their guests. People are pleased with the cleanliness and maintenance of the center. Promote and disseminate information about new pass types and the basis for GPCC costs as a public information tool. Future improvements could include expansion of the fitness center; addition of programs during traditional non-work hours for younger children with parents who work; and other summer camps.

8. **Walkable Bikable Plymouth.** Interviews, focus groups, meetings and the survey found that citizens want to be able to walk and bike safely in Plymouth Township. The Township has started to install sidewalks and to look at connections to the regional bike path system.

9. **Plymouth: A Safe Community.** Interviews found that Plymouth Township parks are perceived as safe. Crime has been limited to vandalism, mostly in East Plymouth Valley Park.

10. **Special events are a major program area for reaching the broadest base of citizens.** Analysis of the survey findings show that Plymouth Township Day, Fall Fest and the summer concert series reach a broad range of citizens.

11. **People view GPCC and the GPCC Park as the hub of the community.** GPCC has become Plymouth Township's Main Street. In assessing where people like to participate in programs, the community center and its grounds are the most popular.

12. **Financial Concerns.** Elected and appointed officials have concerns about future financial difficulties resulting from the loss of about $1.5 million annually from the Earned Income Tax (EIT) which will now be going to the Colonial School District. Citizens and non-residents are concerned that prices at GPCC remain affordable.

13. **Partnerships are important.** Citizens recognize that the Township cannot accomplish everything in parks and recreation on its own. Partnerships with a host of community organizations are crucial.

Analysis

Plymouth Township is a vibrant, successful older suburban community in south central Montgomery County. Through the successful accomplishment of major community projects, both public and commercial, the Township is once again growing in every way that counts. The population increased slightly between 1990 and 2000. Significant office and commercial development as well as some residential development have occurred. GPCC was developed. The Wetherill Farm has been acquired, further expanding the Township's efforts at natural resource conservation. New partnerships have been formed with Montgomery County and surrounding municipalities for riverfront conservation, farmland preservation and bike path connections.

Township demographics are changing. Older population groups are increasing while younger age groups are decreasing. Plymouth Township has one of the most concentrated populations of people aged 65 to 74 in Montgomery County. The Township's population reflects nationwide trends of smaller household size, more single heads of households, and increasing cultural diversification.

A challenging area for Plymouth is in its economics. While property values have increased, the increases were outpaced by Montgomery County overall. Although the poverty rate remains low, it increased from 1.8 percent to 2.4 percent in the 1990's. The median household income in Plymouth Township actually fell between 1989 and 1999

when adjusted for inflation. The Township also lost half of the EIT to the Colonial School District.

The Township is at a crucial point in its history. Development pressure is escalating with offers from developers the constant reality for the owners of the large remaining undeveloped properties. Land values are increasing dramatically. At a time when the conservation of natural resources including open space preservation ranks high with the public, the Township has fewer financial resources than in the past decade but no debt. The Township's **1990 Comprehensive Plan** is outdated, specifically in terms of land use planning.

Overall township economic improvements and parks and recreation go hand in hand. To attract and retain businesses, the Township has to continue to offer outstanding quality of life. This requires continued investment in parks, recreation and conservation. While the public has a favorable public perception of the township's system, they want to see the best use made of all land and facilities, including the protection of the natural and scenic features of the community.

Conclusions and Recommendations

1. **Continue to focus on planning for an active aging population.** Since growth has slowed in Plymouth, the Township needs to focus planning efforts on the changing composition of the population: primarily towards an active aging population and families. Intergenerational programming should continue.

2. **Determine how to conserve natural resources and protect the remaining open space before it is lost to development.** Work with Montgomery County Planning Commission, Montgomery County Lands Trust, Plymouth Township landowners and others to plan for growth while preserving land and natural resources.

3. **Consider programs and service planning to target areas identified in the public participation process: nature and fitness & wellness.**

4. **Create a long range plan for the Plymouth Community Center to configure the center to meet changing needs and interest of the population.** This includes an enlarged fitness center, more space for income producing programs, and the reallocating the purpose of the space that is least used. Parking must be considered as part of the planning for any additional facilities. Without adequate parking, GPCC would not be able to accommodate the additional cars generated by the users of expanded GPCC facilities.

5. **Create pedestrian and bicycle pathways to connect to neighborhoods and other parks in the community with GPCC.**

6. **Add sports fields when possible.** If funds are available, consider seeking land for athletic field development. This should include flat fields for sports such as soccer, football and lacrosse. Plan for fields for emerging sports. No athletic fields should be developed on the Wetherill property in keeping with its mission to be a natural

resource based park. Plan a sports turf management program for athletic fields as part of the overall development of parks and recreation maintenance management system.

Consider a regional approach to the development of sports fields, especially within the Colonial School District. Since sports organizations and citizens are not bound by jurisdictional borders, they go wherever they want to play or use facilities. Since some programs operate regionally such as Plymouth Soccer and Whitpain Recreation Association Field Hockey, discussions with neighboring municipalities could yield additional fields without duplicating what already exists.

7. **Establish methods for public outreach and program evaluation to "take the pulse" of the community on a regular basis.** The Department should consider establishing a program of strategic outreach and regular evaluation on topics such as the summer program, senior adults, and park visitors in identified parks. Include a link on the WEB site that can be used to obtain public comment on an on-going basis.

8. **Balance facility development for lifetime and self-directed recreation.** The Parks and Recreation Department has been striving to achieve balance in its facilities and services. Continue to provide the excellent services to people of all ages. Continue to provide facilities for sports while improving the parks to be more useable and attractive for drop-in recreation for individuals, families, and friends. Balance facility development for organized sports with facilities for lifetime self-directed recreation including walking, biking, and lifetime wellness. Focus on creating pathway connections to the Schuylkill River, the Cross County Trail and the Schuylkill River Trail.

9. **Assess and plan strategies to meet the needs of a diversifying population.** The Township's Asian and African American citizenry should be included in future focus groups or interviews to determine how best to meet their needs. Target groups could be children in the schools or families, particularly those who may participate in township recreation programs.

10. **Update the Plymouth Township Comprehensive Plan.** Include updating of township ordinances for open space conservation and natural resource protection.

Chapter 3
Park & Recreation Facilities











Chapter

3

Parks & Recreation Facilities

Plymouth Township has made tremendous investment in its community park and recreation facilities: from the state-of-the-art community center to neighborhood park renovations. This plan will explore the next challenges as Plymouth Township continues to enhance the community and the quality of life enjoyed by residents through recreation opportunities. Although Plymouth Township is not projected to grow significantly over the next two decades as open land is limited, new recreation trends and leisure patterns will continue to place demands on the Township's park and recreation facilities. This chapter will assess Plymouth Township's parks and recreation facilities.

Parks Contribute to Quality of Life

In the 21st century, people no longer need to locate near highways and waterways; our culture is now more "plug-in", thanks to new technology and the World Wide Web and less dependent on traditional commerce centers. Because people and businesses can locate anywhere they want, quality of life is the essential factor in attracting and retaining citizens and businesses. Parks, greenways, trails, and recreation opportunities help to define a community's quality of life.

Plymouth Township Park and Recreation Facility Assessment

The purpose of the assessment of parks and recreation facilities is to evaluate the recreation opportunities in terms of meeting community needs. The goal of the assessment is to determine if current recreation needs are being met and to project how the system should change to meet the future recreation needs. Plymouth Township's existing public facilities have been assessed to determine how they could be improved or expanded, and what changes must be made to comply with safety and accessibility standards. Areas of the municipality that need facilities will be identified, as well as strategies for linking facilities to a Township-wide greenway network and connecting to the Schuylkill River.

The analysis of parks and recreation facilities, as presented in this plan, was developed by:

- Conducting on-site investigation.
- Evaluating park and facility conditions.
- Exploring trends and community needs for recreation facilities through public participation.
- Assessing the distribution of parkland throughout the Township.

Seven factors guided the park and recreation facility assessment in Plymouth Township. They included:

1. Configuration of parks
2. Amount of parkland
3. Location of parks
4. Connection between parks
5. Recreation facilities
6. Conditions of parks
7. Park and recreation facility trends

Table 10 presents the inventory of public recreation lands in Plymouth Township. The Existing Facilities Map on page 33 illustrates the locations of parks, schools, and open space parcels in the municipality.

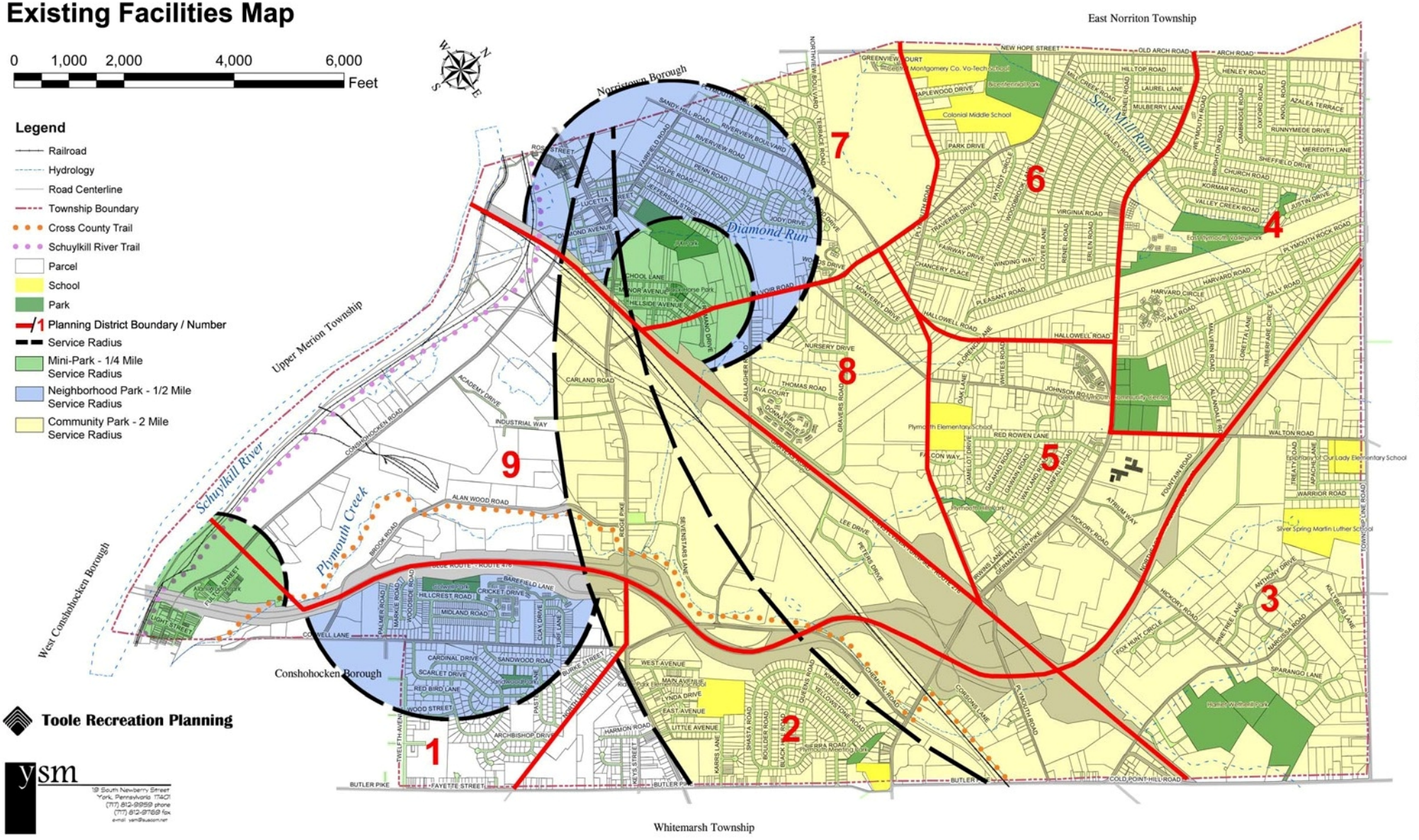
Park Factor 1: Configuration of Parkland

Different types of parks provide differing opportunities for the residents of the Township. **Table 11** presents the Plymouth Township Classification System. It shows the range of park types, their benefits, appropriate facilities, and the maintenance levels appropriate for the type of park and resources available. The classification for Plymouth Township was developed with the Study Committee after consideration of the 1995 National Recreation and Park Association classification categories. The following conclusions can be drawn from the analysis of the Plymouth Township Classification System:

- Of the active park sites only the Greater Plymouth Community Center Park contains the recommended acreage for community parks.
- East Plymouth Valley Park functions as a community park but contains less acreage than recommended by NRPA for a community park.
- Harriet Wetherill Park is the municipality's largest park site with 52 acres. This park is currently undeveloped. The Township has reached agreement on the acquisition of 14.76 additional acres on the Wetherill tract. Recreation opportunities and improvement scenarios will be explored through a master planning process in 2006.
- Both John F. Kennedy Park and Colwell Park contain the recommended acreage and the diverse facilities of a neighborhood park.
- Black Horse Park and Alan Wood Park function as neighborhood parks, but contain less acreage than is typically recommended for a neighborhood park and are categorized as mini parks.
- Bicentennial Park is a community trail. The park site provides a walking path for passive enjoyment of parklands associated with the Township administration building.
- Plymouth Hills Park, Plymouth Meeting Park, and Sandwood Park are currently small undeveloped open space parcels. They have not been included in the Plymouth Township Park Classification System.
- There are no athletic complexes or school/community parks in the community.
- Plymouth Township has frontage on the Schuylkill River and riverfront land is part of the Schuylkill River Greenway corridor.

Plymouth Township Recreation Plan

Existing Facilities Map



Toole Recreation Planning

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Table 10
Plymouth Township Public Park/Recreation Land Inventory

Municipal Parks	Acreage	Park Type	Characteristics/Facilities	Planning District
Greater Plymouth Community Center Park	30	Community	Park and Recreation Department offices, community center with pools, gymnasiums, and fitness center. Soccer field (L), playground, pavilion, bocce courts (2) NCAA baseball field (L), softball field, walking path. amphitheater, parking, restrooms	#4
East Plymouth Valley Park	22.2	Community	Youth baseball fields (3, 1-L), adult baseball field, football field (L), tennis courts (4,L), basketball courts (2, 1-L), picnic area, concessions stand/storage/ restroom building, playground, parking	#4
John F. Kennedy Park	11.2	Neighborhood	Softball/baseball/soccer field (1), tennis courts (2), in-line hockey rink, playground, picnic pavilion, bocce courts (2), horseshoe pits, walking path, parking	#7
Colwell Park	5	Mini	Open field, basketball courts (2) with in-line hockey rink, playground, picnic pavilion, sand volleyball court, walking trail, parking, restrooms	#1
Black Horse Park	2	Mini	Youth baseball/softball field, playground, basketball court, picnic area, open field, parking	#7
Bicentennial Park	2	Trail	Natural area with walking trail, sculptures, benches. Parking at adjacent Township Bldg.	#6
Alan Wood Park	0.8	Mini	Playground, basketball court, picnic area, volleyball court, parking	#1
Harriet Wetherill Park	52	Natural Area/Preserve	Undeveloped natural area	#3
Plymouth Hills Park	2.7	Open Space	Undeveloped open space	#5
Plymouth Meeting Park	2.9	Open Space	Undeveloped open space	#2
Sandwood Park	3.4	Open Space	Undeveloped open space	#1
Total acreage	**134.2**			
Total excluding undeveloped open space acreage	**125.2**			

Table 10 – (Continued) Plymouth Township Public Park/Recreation Land Inventory				
Schools	**Acreage**	**School Type**	**Characteristics/Facilities**	**Planning District**
Plymouth Elementary School	13.9	Elementary School	Ballfield, playground, paved play area	#5
Ridge Park Elementary School	13.1	Elementary School	Ballfield, playground	#2
Montgomery County Vo-Tech School	18.3	High School		#6
Colonial Middle School	24.9	Middle School	Baseball fields (2), multipurpose fields (2), running track	#6
Plymouth Meeting Friends School	NA	Elementary School		#2
Epiphany of Our Lady Elementary School	9.1	Elementary School	Ballfield, playground	#3
Silver Spring Martin Luther School	29	Elementary and Middle School	Open lawn area	#3
Trails	**Length**	**Regional/Local**	**Characteristics/Facilities**	
Schuylkill River Trail	2.3 +/- miles	Regional	Existing bike trail parallel to the Schuylkill River on abandoned rail corridor. Extends east and west.	#1, #9, and #7
Cross County Trail	3.4 +/- miles	Regional	Existing and proposed bike trail. Connects to Schuylkill River Trail in Conshohocken Borough and extends north along the eastern portion of Plymouth Township into Whitemarsh Township	#1, #9, and #8

Table 11
Plymouth Township Park Classification System

Type/Size/Service Radius	Definition	Benefits	Appropriate Amenities	Plymouth Township Parks	Maintenance Level
Mini Park *0-5 acres* *¼-mile service radius*	Smallest park type, addresses limited recreation need	▪ Provides close to home recreation	▪ Playground ▪ Benches, seating area	▪ Black Horse Park ▪ Alan Wood Park	High level of maintenance associated with well developed park and playground and reasonably high visitation
Neighborhood Park *5-15 acres minimum* *½-mile service radius*	Focus of neighborhood; in walking/biking distance of visitors	▪ Provides access to basic recreation opportunities ▪ Contributes to neighborhood identity ▪ Establishes sense of community	▪ Play areas ▪ Ballfields ▪ Game Courts ▪ Picnic/Seating ▪ Pathways ▪ Community gardens	▪ John F. Kennedy Park ▪ Colwell Park	High level of maintenance associated with well-developed park and reasonably high visitation.
Community Park *30-50 acres, preferably 50-80 acres* *2-mile service radius*	Large park for active & passive recreation; serves residents city-wide. Accommodates large groups.	▪ Variety of recreation opportunities for all ages and interests ▪ Space for organized, large scale, high participation events ▪ Family destination ▪ Fitness and wellness opportunities	▪ Play areas ▪ Organized sports facilities ▪ Pavilions ▪ Permanent restrooms ▪ Lighting ▪ Amphitheaters ▪ Pools, Rinks ▪ Parking	▪ Community Center Building and Park ▪ East Plymouth Valley Park	Moderate level of maintenance associated with moderate level of development, budget restrictions, inability to perform higher levels of maintenance. Try to get park friends or establish adopt-a-park.
School/Community Park *Varies*	Parkland adjoining a school used for both recreation and education.	▪ Combines two public entities for expanded year round recreation. ▪ Maximizes public resources ▪ Expands recreation opportunities	▪ Youth-oriented game courts and ball fields ▪ Play areas ▪ Seating ▪ Pathways ▪ Lighting ▪ Parking		Moderate level of maintenance associated with moderate level of development, budget restrictions, Try to get cooperative agreement with school.
Sports Complex *30+acres; preferably 50-80 acres*	Consolidates sports fields and related facilities in a centralized location.	▪ Economy of scale ▪ Improved management ▪ City showcase ▪ Attracts visitors who stimulate local economy	▪ Ball fields ▪ Lighting ▪ Spectator Areas ▪ Restrooms, Concessions ▪ Landscaping ▪ Parking		State of the art maintenance applied to high quality facilities. Associated with high visitation; revenue generating facilities, tourism.
Special Use Facility *Varies*	Facility for a single purpose use.	▪ Provides special focus recreation opportunities ▪ Contributes to community identity	▪ Depends on purpose		High level of maintenance associated with well-developed park and reasonably high visitation.
Greenways and Trails *Varies*	Tie park areas together to form a contiguous park environment.	▪ Connects community ▪ Reduces auto dependency ▪ Improves air quality ▪ Contributes most desired recreation facility for people throughout their lifetime ▪ Attracts visitors	▪ Pathways – multipurpose ▪ Trailheads ▪ Support facilities ▪ Signage	▪ Bicentennial Park	Lowest level of maintenance. Focus on trailheads and trail safety.
Natural Resource Areas/ Preserve	Natural areas for the protect and management of natural environment	▪ Protect resources ▪ Provide wildlife habitat ▪ Offer opportunities for environmental education	▪ Trails ▪ Signage ▪ Support facilities	▪ Harriet Wetherill Park	Lower level of maintenance.

Park Factor 2: Amount of Parkland

Plymouth Township has 134 acres of public parkland within 11 park sites. It should be noted that three of the park sites (9 acres) exist as open space with limited access by the general public and do not contribute to the overall parkland function in the community.

> ***Over the past 30 years, it has been the accepted practice within the recreation and park profession to adopt a uniform national land standard such as 10 acres per thousand.***
> **NRPA Park, Recreation, and Open Space Guidelines 1995**

A population-based analysis is typically used to evaluate active public parkland only. Passive parks, greenways and trails, and nature preserves are not evaluated using an acreage standard because they are typically sized based on the resources, and the area necessary to protect the resource and make it available for public enjoyment.

The prevailing standard for active parkland acreage is 10 acres per thousand-population minimum. For assessment purposes the 10 acres is divided between community parks (8 acres) and neighborhood parks (2 acres). Using the 10 acre standard, Plymouth Township, based on year 2000 population of 16,045, should have approximately 160 acres of active public parkland. The current acreage is approximately 71 acres as shown on **Table 12**.

Table 12 compares the parkland acreage for the two major park types, based on 2000 census population figures and forecast populations, to the actual parkland acreage of Plymouth Township. For purposes of this analysis community parkland acreage includes Greater Plymouth Community Center and Park (30 acres) and East Plymouth Valley Park (22.2 acres) totaling 52.2 acres. Neighborhood parkland acreage includes John F. Kennedy Park (11.2 acres), Colwell Park (5 acres), Black Horse Park (2 acres), and Alan Wood Park (0.8 acres) totaling 19.0 acres.

Table 12
Parkland Acreage/NRPA Standards Analysis

Park Type	Existing Active Parkland Acreage	Recommended Acres/2000 Population (16,045)	2000 Deficit (-) Excess (+)	Recommended Acres/2010 Forecast Population (16,640)*	2010 Deficit (-) Excess (+)	Recommended Acres/2020 Forecast Population (16,980)*	2020 Deficit (-) Excess (+)
Community Parks @ 8 Acres/1,000 Population – Total acreage	52.2	128.4	-76.2	133.1	-80.9	135.8	-83.6
Neighborhood Parks @ 2 Acres/1,000 Population	19.0	32.1	-13.1	33.3	-14.3	34	-15
Totals (Total community park + neighborhood park)	71.2	160.5	-89.3	166.4	-95.2	169.8	-98.6

* Montgomery County Planning Commission population projections.

When the parkland acreages are compared to the 10-acres/1,000 population standard the following conclusions can be drawn:

- Plymouth Township has approximately 71 acres of active recreation land within six parks.
- When the parkland analysis is completed for active parkland there is a deficit of approximately 76 acres of community parkland in 2000 and the deficit grows to over 80 acres in 2010 and almost 84 acres by 2020. This deficit equates to the need for at least one additional community park.
- There is a deficit of neighborhood parkland based on the 2000 population of over 13 acres this deficit is expected to increase to 15 acres by 2020.
- The combined acreage of the community parks and neighborhood parks shows that the Township has an overall deficit of parkland for active recreation to meet current and projected needs.
- This need for active parkland could be somewhat offset by continued partnership with the school district and use of their facilities by the general public.
- There are nearby active recreation facilities in the region that somewhat offset the need for additional recreation areas in the community.

Park Factor 3: Location of Parks

Plymouth Township is a highly developed municipality with numerous established neighborhoods. The parkland distribution analysis evaluates potential barriers to convenient access to park sites. Planning Districts are designated for the municipality based on the districts established in the 1994 ***Pathways To The Future – A Plan for Parks and Recreation in Plymouth Township*.** The amount and type of parkland acreage is evaluated within each Planning District.

The Existing Facilities Map on page 33 illustrates the locations of the parks throughout the Township. Transportation routes traverse Plymouth Township dividing it into several distinct areas. Several roads create barriers that limit easy access to community facilities. It is important to consider the location of parkland in relation to these barriers and how they serve neighborhood areas. The Existing Facilities Map illustrates the planning districts (neighborhoods).

Service radiuses have been applied to the map based on the Plymouth Township classification system and further illustrate the gaps in recreation service. As the Existing Facilities Map illustrates, parkland is not evenly distributed between the planning districts. The service radius for community parks is not affected by barriers to access but neighborhood and mini parks are limited by these barriers. The following conclusions address park locations.

Planning District #1

Planning District #1 is located north and northwest of Conshohocken Borough and southeast of the Blue Route with frontage on the Schuylkill River. Existing zoning is primarily Residential, Commercial, and Limited Industrial.

- Planning District #1 is well served by parks containing a mini park (Allan Wood Park), a neighborhood park (Colwell Park), and an open space parcel (Sandwood Park).
- There are no community park sites within this Planning District.
- Portions of the Schuylkill River Trail and Cross County Trail are located here.

Planning District #2

Planning District #2 is bounded by North Lane, the Blue Route, the Pennsylvania Turnpike, and Whitemarsh Township. The four zoning classifications that dominate this Planning District are Residential, Limited Industrial, Interchange Development, and Commercial.

- There are no parks within Planning District #2.
- Ridge Park Elementary School and Plymouth Meeting Friends School are located here.
- Plymouth Township owns a 2.9-acre open space parcel (Plymouth Meeting Park) in this district located east of Germantown Pike.
- The Cross County Trail traverses a portion of this Planning District, parallel to Chemical Road and extends to Whitemarsh Township at Butler Pike.

Planning District #3

Planning District #3 is located north of the PA Turnpike and east of the Northeast Extension. The Whitpain Township boundary line forms the eastern limit of this Planning District. The zoning classifications of this Planning District include Residential and Campus Industrial.

- Harriet Wetherill Park is in this location and will be developed as a passive park.
- There are no neighborhood parks or community parks located in Planning District #3.
- There are two private schools in this Planning District.

Planning District #4

Planning District #4 is bounded by Walton Road, Germantown Pike, the Northeast Extension, and the East Norriton Township and Whitpain Township boundaries. The district includes Residential and Limited Commercial zoning classifications. It is well served by parks.

- East Plymouth Valley Park, a community park, is in the central portion of the district.
- GPCC and GPCC Park are located in the southern corner of this Planning District.
- The PECO right-of-way splits this district into two areas.
- Saw Mill Run flows through this district.

Planning District #5

Planning District #5 is centrally located in Plymouth. Plymouth Road, Hallowell Road, Germantown Pike, Walton Road, and the Northeast Extension create the district

boundaries. Residential, Interchange Development, Limited Commercial Shopping Center, Planned Office Park, and High Rise Apartments are the zoning classifications in this district.

- Plymouth Hills Park, an open space parcel, is located in this Planning District.
- Plymouth Elementary School is located in this district.
- There are no neighborhood or community parks in Planning District #5.
- This district is close to East Plymouth Valley Park, GPCC and the Community Center Park.

Planning District #6

Planning District #6 is bounded by East Norriton Township, Plymouth Road, Riverview Road, Hallowell Road, and Germantown Pike. Residential and Shopping Center are the zoning classifications in this district.

- Bicentennial Park is located in this Planning District.
- The municipal offices are located adjacent to Bicentennial Park in Planning District #6.
- Colonial Middle School and the Central Montgomery County Vo-Tech School are located in this Planning District.
- Saw Mill Run flows through this district.
- There are no community or neighborhood parks in this Planning District. However, this district is near East Plymouth Valley Park and GPCC and the Community Center Park.

Planning District #7

This Planning District #7 is bounded by the PA Turnpike, Belvoir Road, Plymouth Road, Norristown Borough, and a small portion of the Schuylkill River. The zoning classifications of the district are Residential, Limited Industrial, and Commercial. This district is well served by parks.

- A portion of the Schuylkill River forms the southern boundary of this Planning District.
- John F. Kennedy Park, a community park is located in this district.
- Black Horse Park, a mini park is located in this district.

Planning District #8

Planning District #8 is bounded by Belvoir Road to the west, Plymouth Road to the north, and the PA Turnpike to the southeast. The zoning classifications of the district are Residential, Industrial Park, and Office Laboratory.

- There are no parks or schools in Planning District #8.

Planning District #9

Planning District #9 is bounded by the PA Turnpike to the north, the Blue Route to the southeast, and the Schuylkill River to the southwest. The zoning classifications of the district are Limited Industrial, Mixed Use Planned Development, Resource Recovery, Commercial, Heavy Industrial, and Business Park.

- There are no parks or schools in Planning District #9.
- The Planning District has frontage on the Schuylkill River.
- The Schuylkill River Trail runs parallel to the river in this district.
- There is no land zoned residential in this Planning District.

Park Factor 4: Connections between Parks

Trails and greenways provide passive recreation opportunities and green corridors of protected open space. Easy access to trails facilitates exercise and fitness, as well as, safe linkage to connected locales. Connecting the parks of Plymouth Township with trails and greenways will add to the livability and quality of life for citizens. Two significant regional trail corridors traverse Plymouth Township and stream and utility corridors throughout the municipality provide opportunities for a connected network of trails and greenways. Greenways and trails are further discussed in Chapter 4: Open Space, Greenways and Trails.

Park Factor 5: Recreation Facilities

Recreation facilities should be provided within a community to meet the needs of individuals, community groups, and organized adult and youth leagues. The appropriate number of park facilities in a community should be based on need as defined by current facility usage and local trends in recreation and leisure activities. **Table 13** indicates the township's recreation facilities by type and number.

An analysis of facilities must consider the context of the municipality and the trends and popularity of the sport that the facility serves. Facility trends and observations in Plymouth Township further illustrate the need for additional recreation facilities. Findings from the key person interview process, citizen survey findings, and sports forum are as follows:

1. Soccer in the Township is growing and program providers expressed a need for additional fields and lights to extend playing times. The soccer program serves the region and an assessment of field needs should expand beyond Plymouth Township.
2. Continued growth of athletic programs within the Township has placed a high demand on sports fields.
3. Support facilities such as restrooms, parking, and landscaping are important features and add to the function and quality of facilities.
4. There are multiple uses of fields by different sports.
5. Land is needed for additional fields.
6. Fields do not have time to rest.
7. There is a need for practice areas. A regional approach should be implored to assess practice and game field needs.
8. Vandalism occurring in East Plymouth Valley Park is limiting user's ability to store supplies at the park.

9. Facilities such as tennis courts, volleyball courts, and swimming pools are important in a community because they serve the broad population and provide for lifetime recreation pursuits.
10. Seniors are more active and are requesting facilities for recreation and fitness and wellness activities.
11. The swimming pool at the community center is well used, especially by seniors.
12. New leagues have formed and new sports have emerged in the municipality. Emerging sports include lacrosse and field hockey, which require multi-purpose fields for practice and games.
13. Non-traditional sports such as in-line hockey and skateboarding require specialty facilities.

Table 13
Plymouth Township
Existing Municipal Facility Inventory

Activity/ Facility	Plymouth Township	Colonial School District
Basketball (outdoor)	7	1
Gyms	2	7
Tennis	6	8
Volleyball – Sand, outdoor	3	0
Baseball - Adult (90')	3	15
- Youth (60'-75')	3	
Softball	3	
Soccer* (variable sizes)	3	6
Field Hockey	0	
Lacrosse	0	
Football	1	2
In-line Hockey	2	0
Swimming Pools	2	1
Golf Courses	0	0

* - Soccer fields include both official soccer fields and grass areas used for soccer.

The youth baseball fields listed in **Table 13 i**nclude two fields that also serve as softball fields. One soccer field overlaps with a baseball field and one overlaps with a softball field.

Facility Assessment

Following is the facility assessment for Plymouth Township by activity:

Softball – Softball fields are provided at John F. Kennedy Park and the Community Center Park. Softball fields are recommended in new community parks. The Colonial

School District has softball fields at Colonial Middle School and Plymouth and Ridge Park Elementary Schools.

Baseball – Six baseball fields exist in the Township: Three have 90' baselines: the premiere NCAA field at the Community Center Park, John F. Kennedy Park, and East Plymouth Valley Park. Three fields at East Valley Park have 60' baselines. The Colonial School District has baseball fields that little league uses at Colonial Middle School and Plymouth Elementary School. Baseball fields should be provided in community parks.

Basketball – Seven basketball courts exist in the Township: one at Black Horse Park, two at Colwell Park, and two at East Plymouth Valley Park. The Greater Plymouth Community Center has two gymnasiums with two indoor basketball courts. Colonial School District offers the use of gyms for recreational basketball in Plymouth Whitemarsh High School (two gyms); Colonial Middle School; and Colonial, Plymouth and Ridge Park Elementary Schools. Basketball is popular in the community and additional courts are recommended in new community parks. Courts should be located in banks of at least two courts near parking areas, if possible, and separated from younger children and passive activity areas. Court lighting extends play time and lights are suggested in parks where appropriate.

Soccer – Plymouth Soccer Club serves 1,100 children from Plymouth Township and neighboring communities. Soccer is a growing sport nationally and continues to grow in the Plymouth Township area. Soccer fields in the municipality are provided at Colwell Park, Greater Plymouth Community Center Park, and John F. Kennedy Park. School fields and other fields in the region are also used by the soccer program. The only lighted soccer field in the area is the field at the Greater Plymouth Community Center Park. Soccer fields on Colonial School District grounds are located at Plymouth Whitemarsh High School, Colonial Middle School (two fields), and Plymouth and Ridge Park Elementary Schools. The Plymouth Soccer Club runs soccer programs from spring through fall. Soccer field needs should be explored regionally since the Plymouth Soccer Club operates school district wide. Additional soccer fields are needed to meet the continued growth in the sport. Soccer fields should be developed in new community parks. Neighborhood parks should have open space configured for informal non-scheduled field use, to include soccer.

Football – The community's only youth football field is located in East Plymouth Valley Park. There is a need for a football practice field as practice is occurring on the outfield of youth baseball fields, but field resting and scheduling conflicts occur. Multi-purpose fields should be provided in community parks for emerging sports such as rugby, lacrosse, and field hockey. The multi-purpose fields should be sized to accommodate each of these sports as well as football.

Cheerleading – The Plymouth Whitemarsh Spartans offer cheerleading in conjunction with football. Colonial School District offers facilities for cheerleading at the Plymouth Whitemarsh High School Café 7 and Plymouth Elementary School.

Volleyball – There are three sand volleyball courts in the municipality, two are located at Greater Plymouth Community Center Park and one is located at Colwell Park. Volleyball is a popular sport with teens and families. Where park size and configuration permits, volleyball courts should be installed as new parks are developed or existing parks renovated. Families and adults generally prefer lawn volleyball while teens and young adults prefer sand volleyball courts. Volleyball

should accompany picnic pavilions where room permits and should be developed in banks of two or more in community parks for league play.

Tennis – There are six tennis courts in Plymouth Township: two at John F. Kennedy Park and four at East Plymouth Valley Park. Additional courts are available at schools. Tennis popularity has waned in recent years although it is a lifetime recreation activity. The courts at East Plymouth Valley Park are well used. Tennis courts should be developed in banks of two or more and should be located in visually accessible areas preferably near parking areas and park entrances. Court lighting is recommended where site conditions are appropriate.

Wrestling – The Greater Norristown Wrestling Club uses Colonial Middle School and Colonial Elementary School for wrestling practice and meets.

Swimming Pools – The Greater Plymouth Community Center contains a public indoor swimming pool. The pool is configured to include 25-meter lap pool with 11 lanes. There is also a leisure pool with zero-depth entry, water slide and spray fountains, warm-water therapeutic whirlpool, and dry sauna. Swimming is a lifetime recreation activity and has important health and wellness attributes.

Playgrounds – Plymouth Township has a playground in each of the six active recreation parks. The Township has committed to an ongoing program of upgrading playground equipment in its parks. Playgrounds have been developed to meet the safety and surfacing guidelines of the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and the accessibility requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Plymouth Township should continue to develop playgrounds to stimulate imaginative play as well as physical activity. Playgrounds should be bright, stimulating environments that engage children while providing convenience facilities for adults such as benches and shade.

Playground equipment upgrades are planned for Black Horse Park. Other playgrounds should be updated as equipment nears the end of its life cycle or when safety and accessibility requirements change. Playgrounds should be incorporated into new park layouts.

Pathways – 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. Additionally, viewing areas for physically impaired spectators must be provided at sports fields and courts. In community parks where space allows, development of at least an eight-foot wide trail is recommended to permit multiple users. Trails should be paved to provide multiple recreational opportunities such as bike riding, inline skating, jogging, and walking. Walking is an activity widely enjoyed by all segments of the population and where space requirements can be satisfied walking trails should be developed in each municipal park.

Park Factor 6: Conditions of Parkland

Each park site was viewed during the tour of facilities and subsequent fieldwork. Generally, the parks are in very good condition from a maintenance perspective. The findings of the facility inventory for each site have similarities that relate to minor aesthetic improvements and recommendations to enhance the users experience

through the addition of convenience facilities such as benches, signs, etc. Specific findings of site observations and recreation opportunities include the following.

Greater Plymouth Community Center and Park

Park Description: This park site contains the jewel of Plymouth Township, the Greater Plymouth Community Center. This facility is the home of Plymouth Township Parks and Recreation Department and provides indoor recreation facilities to include a pool complex, two gymnasiums, a fitness center, daycare room, and programming classrooms. GPCC also houses the headquarters for park maintenance. The community center is located within a park setting creating the recreation hub of the community.

Active Recreation Facilities: An NCAA baseball field, a softball field, one soccer field, two sand volleyball courts, two bocce courts, and a playground.

Passive Recreation Facilities: A picnic pavilion, amphitheater, and walking trail.

Support Facilities: Two parking areas and restroom building.

General Site Observations: The park site is maximized in terms of development with the exception of a recently acquired single-family home site with frontage on Germantown Pike. Facilities are well developed and well used. Parking is extremely limited. GPCC program and event scheduling depends upon parking availability. At times, programs that generate revenues must be cancelled due to the scheduling of a higher priority event. If additional parking were available, revenue generating programs would not have to be cancelled because the site would be able to accommodate more visitors.



The front lawn is an important site feature. It is a vital outdoor play space for programs such as after school and the summer camps. The activity on the front lawn is also an important form of advertising the GPCC to traffic passing by.

Opportunities: *Outdoor Opportunities:* The undeveloped residential parcel on Germantown Pike offers an opportunity to incorporate an additional facility into the park: a splash pad park. A splash pad will go together with the pool in the community center and add a dynamic outdoor water feature. The open parcel is convenient to the mechanical room of the community center which may promote efficiencies in development. The splash pad play area should be complemented with a picnic pavilion and restroom building. These support facilities will enhance the





areas use for birthday parties and other programs. A trail should connect the splash pad area to the other park facilities. Consideration should also be given to installing exercise stations for active senior adults in the Community Center Park.

Expanding the GPCC campus through the acquisition of adjoining properties as they become available is important to the future of the GPCC. In order to accommodate additional visitors and generate revenues, more on-site parking is needed. Expanding the grounds of GPCC will enable the center to host more events, eliminate the cancellation of events due to parking limitations, and ultimately enable GPCC to generate more revenues through expanded programming. Any future expansion of the GPCC in terms of facilities or program depends upon the addition of more parking.



The park setting should be enhanced with landscaping to unify the site, aesthetically enhance the setting, and provide shade. Perennials and ornamental grasses should be planted to provide large bold masses of color at entry/drop-off areas and throughout the park at key areas of public use. A pedestrian trail connection to East Plymouth Valley Park should be considered.

Indoor Opportunities: Indoor space could be reconfigured to serve additional recreation uses. The operations consultant suggests investigating the feasibility of expanding the current weight/cardio equipment area into the concessions area to gain more space.

The relocation of the maintenance garage would provide additional space within the walls of the existing center. This possibility was planned for in the original building design for GPCC.

East Plymouth Valley Park

Park Description:	A community park with both active and passive recreation facilities. This park site is maximized with facilities and well used by sports groups and the general public.
Active Recreation Facilities:	Four baseball fields, batting cage, one football field, four lighted tennis courts, two lighted basketball courts, a pavilion and playground with another pavilion.
Passive Recreation Facilities:	Fishing pond, walkway, and picnic area.

Support Facilities: Parking areas (a gravel parking area is located on the adjacent PECO right-of-way), restroom/concession/storage building.

General Site Observations: This park is maximized with recreation facilities. Saw Mill Run traverses the site and the PECO right-of-way is located along the eastern boundary of the site. Mature vegetation near the stream complements the athletic fields. The stream has been stabilized with wire gabions.

Opportunities: Opportunities to expand the site through acquisition, easement, and/or lease agreement should be explored. PECO should be contacted to discuss development of facilities on their right-of-way. Facilities that could be explored include a practice field for football and walking trails. Establishing a separate practice field for football will eliminate field use conflicts with baseball.



Existing facilities should be enhanced through the addition of amenities. Consider adding a small pavilion or shade structure at the basketball courts for a shaded socializing area. Add additional benches at the pond for casual use. Develop the area just west of the concession stand as a hub of the park with informal picnic facilities, information kiosk, game tables, and landscaping.



Upgrade the fencing on baseball field.

Evaluate the use patterns of the park and adjust walkways and planting beds to accommodate travel desire lines. Add planting beds to direct traffic. Sod areas that should be maintained as lawn but have received traffic. Highlight special areas within the park with large plantings of perennials and ornamental grasses to provide a splash of color and unify the setting. Enhance and stabilize Saw Mill Run within the park through the use of natural materials and bio-engineering techniques.

Explore a connection with a pathway to GPCC.

John F. Kennedy Park

Park Description: A neighborhood park with active recreation facilities located along Diamond Run.

Active Recreation Facilities: One baseball field, one softball field (outfield overlaps the baseball field), one multipurpose/soccer field (overlapping the baseball and softball fields), playground, two tennis courts, two bocce courts, and an in-line hockey rink with basketball court.

Passive Recreation Facilities: Picnic pavilion, walking trail, horseshoe pits, and park benches.

Support Facilities: Parking areas and portable toilets for special events.

General Site Observations: The open area of the site is fully developed. Approximately one-half of the site is undeveloped natural area with wetlands and riparian corridor associated with Diamond Run.

Opportunities: Add landscaping and streambank stabilization and riparian corridor enhancements to visually enhance the park and stream. Add landscaping for shade and bold splashes of color to create an inviting atmosphere in the park.



Explore the possibility of developing a restroom/storage building. It is anticipated that a grinder pump would be required to develop the restrooms.

The Township has prioritized the development of natural resource and environmental education opportunities at Harriet Wetherill Park. Natural area improvement at John F. Kennedy Park should be limited and the area should be managed to maintain and protect the existing natural resources. Invasive species should be removed and monitored, erosion should be mitigated, and man-made debris should be regularly removed.

Colwell Park

Park Description: A neighborhood park that was recently renovated.

Active Recreation Facilities: Soccer field/open space, two basketball courts with overlapping in-line hockey rink, sand volleyball court, playground with small pavilion.

Passive Recreation Facilities: A picnic pavilion and walking trail.

Support Facilities: Parking area and restroom building.

General Site Observations: The park has been recently renovated to meet neighborhood needs and has been maximized in terms of recreation facilities. The site borders the Blue Route and highway noise is evident within the site.

Opportunities: Incorporate additional landscaping into the site to further buffer the highway noise and enhance the visual setting.



Black Horse Park

Park Description: This small park provides close-to-home recreation for the Black Horse neighborhood.

Active Recreation Facilities: A softball field (short), two basketball courts, and playground.

Passive Recreation Facilities: None.

Support Facilities: Parking area.

General Site Observations: The softball field is not full size but should be retained for informal neighborhood use. The playground is dated and should be renovated. The park is a small open space without physical elements to define use areas or enhance the users comfort when visiting.

Opportunities: The park should have an updated site plan to define improvements that would enhance the park setting. Upgrade the playground with new equipment that meets the guidelines of the Consumer Product Safety Commission and accessibility requirements of the ADA. Consider incorporating shade into the park with shade trees and a small pavilion/shade structure near the playground. Add landscaping to define separate use spaces, separate the basketball courts from the parking area, and add visual interest to the site.



Bicentennial Park

Park Description: This passive park is located on the grounds of the municipal building site. The open space of the site is developed with a trail along Saw Mill Run.

Active Recreation Facilities: None.

Passive Recreation Facilities: Trail with benches and sculpture.

Support Facilities: Parking area available at the Township building.

General Site Observations: The site provides an attractive setting for walking adjacent to Saw Mill Run. A walkway has been established on the south side of the stream with benches and whimsical wooden sculptures of woodland critters. The streambank is eroded in several areas.

Opportunities: The walking opportunity of the park should be expanded by crossing the stream and developing a loop trail. Additional benches, a gazebo, and landscaping are suggested to enhance the setting and provide convenient opportunities to rest and relax in the park.

Alan Wood Park

Park Description:	This small park serves the neighborhood west of Conshohocken Borough. The site is maximized with recreation facilities.
Active Recreation Facilities:	Playground, one basketball court which is fenced for in-line hockey, and a volleyball court.
Passive Recreation Facilities:	Picnic area.
Support Facilities:	Parking area
General Site Observations:	The site is small and due to the change in grade from the street level does not meet the requirements of the ADA for accessibility from the parking area. Additionally, accessible walkways do not connect to the recreation facilities. The playground equipment has been recently upgraded.
Opportunities:	A trail should be developed from the parking area/park entry that meets the requirements of the ADA and connects to each facility. A new entry sign and landscaping are recommended to visually enhance the park entrance.



Sandwood Park

Park Description:	This undeveloped open space is surrounded by home sites.
Active Recreation Facilities:	None.
Passive Recreation Facilities:	None.
Support Facilities:	None.
General Site Observations:	The site is small and access is limited to a narrow connection onto a residential street. Residential home site back up onto the tract. The site has mature trees in an open setting.
Opportunities:	Neighbors provided input to existing design many years ago. Should circumstances change, the Township could revisit the present design and evaluate it in conjunction with a public participation process.

Plymouth Meeting Park

Park Description:	This undeveloped open space is partially surrounded by home sites and adjacent to the Plymouth Meeting Friends School.
Active Recreation Facilities:	None.
Passive Recreation Facilities:	None.
Support Facilities:	None.
General Site Observations:	The site is small and access is limited to a narrow connection onto a residential street. Residential home site back up onto the tract. No off-street parking is available.
Opportunities:	Open space.

Plymouth Hills Park

Park Description:	This undeveloped open space is surrounded by home sites to the north and west and office/commercial uses to the south and east.
Active Recreation Facilities:	None.
Passive Recreation Facilities:	None.
Support Facilities:	None.
General Site Observations:	The site is small and access is from Plymouth Road. Residential home site back up onto the tract. No off-street parking is available. Vegetation exists along a drainage way.
Opportunities:	Open space.

Harriet Wetherill Park

Park Description:



This natural park site is undeveloped with park facilities but open to the public for informal walking and enjoying the sites natural beauty. The current park site is 52 acres. An agreement is under discussion with the previous owner of the park site to sell the remaining portion of the parent contiguous property to Plymouth Township via a life-estate. The additional land will bring the total park site to 67 acres in size, creating the Townships largest park. The park contains meadows, woodlands, a small stream, and agricultural fields. The parent tract contains a stone farmhouse and various outbuildings. Plymouth Township will begin the process of master planning the entire property in the fall of 2005.

Active Recreation Facilities:	None.
Passive Recreation Facilities:	None.
Support Facilities:	Park sign
General Site Observations:	The site offers diverse ecosystems and natural settings for the exploration of natural resources, environmental education, and the enjoyment of the outdoors.
Opportunities:	The master planning process will define the proposed facilities and activity areas for the park site.

General Park Improvements

Signs:	Park signs should be developed to announce the name of each park at every park entrance. The signs should be consistent in design and materials at each park site. The signs' image and design should use a "family" of graphics with similar fonts, colors, and materials. Incorporate the Plymouth Township Parks and Recreation Department logo into all park signs. Other types of signs such as directional signs, kiosks, information signs, and mile markers should also be developed with a standard design image and used consistently throughout the park system.
Riparian Buffers:	Several of Plymouth Township's parks are fortunate to have streams traversing the site. In many areas these stream corridors are degraded due to erosion. Streambank stabilization and enhancement of riparian corridors is suggested in park sites. Where appropriate, interpretative signage should be incorporated to educate homeowners on what they can do to enhance stream properties and riparian corridors.
Landscaping:	Plant material native to Montgomery County is recommended and should be promoted throughout the park system. Native material is adapted to the geographic location and, as a result, will require less maintenance, will withstand the extremes in climate change, will be less susceptible to disease and pests, and will propagate naturally. Native plant material will provide needed habitat and food for small mammals and birds. The introduction of native plants and enhancements of existing native plant areas will help to reduce the ability of exotic species getting a further foothold within the park sites. Adding landscaping to a park will have initial costs associated with the purchase of the plant material.

Native plant material is readily available from low cost sources such as the Pennsylvania Game Commission and County Conservation District.

There will also be maintenance costs associated with the initial establishment of landscaped area. As landscaped areas mature there are typically savings in maintenance costs due to the need for less mowing and weeding. In open, informal park areas the use of native wild flowers and warm season grasses will provide visual interest, cover and food for wildlife, and lower the ongoing maintenance costs of mowing.

Where utilized, a four to eight-foot wide strip of maintained lawn area should be provided adjacent to the meadow areas to create a visually pleasing transition to the meadow. Because wildflowers and native grasses have a different appearance in the landscape, it is a good idea to inform park visitors about their use and the landscape and environmental goals for the site. Signs should be placed in the meadows and native grass areas to describe the planting, growing process, and environmental benefits.

Lighting:

Lighting sports fields and game courts expands the usage of these facilities. Many facilities are used primarily in the evenings and on weekends. Lighted facilities better accommodate adult users and children of working parents.

The costs associated with providing lighted facilities should be factored into the capital investment decisions on lights. Lighting a facility will result in more use which in turn will require more maintenance. There will be added operating costs associated with using the lights. With sports fields, the additional use of the fields will increase the time needed to rest the fields. Future consideration of incorporating lights into the parks must be added to the Capital Improvement Program.

Lights for courts and fields should be specifically designed for recreation purposes by a manufacturer that specializes in sports lighting. Consideration should be given to the compatibility of lighting with adjacent land uses. Lights may not be appropriate at a park site located in a residential setting but may be compatible in non-residential or low density residential areas, adjacent to open space or near highways.

Park Factor 7: Park and Recreation Facility Trends

The way we spend our leisure time and the activities we enjoy change over time. Trends emerge and factors change that impact the parks and recreation facilities that we need in our communities. The following trends emerged as part of the analysis of Plymouth Township's parks and recreation facilities.

- Newly popular sports are emerging that have an impact on facilities. These include lacrosse, skateboarding, in-line skating, rugby, and field hockey.
- Expanding sports seasons and high use demands do not easily accommodate overlapping use of facilities. Dedicated fields are desired for specific sports as well as sufficient fields for practice.
- Adult recreation opportunities are limited in the community due to lack of available facilities and demands of youth sports programs.
- Activity options should be available for non-sport oriented teens.
- Special use facilities such as dog parks are an emerging trend and have been suggested by several residents for development in the Township.
- Trails are very popular among all age groups and desired by Township residents.
- Senior adults are more active than ever. Facilities and activity areas are needed that provide opportunities for fitness and wellness activities. Lifetime recreation activities such as golf, tennis, walking, and bicycling will have sustained popularity.

Analysis of Park and Recreation Facilities

Plymouth Township has a well developed park system with a premiere community center, community and neighborhood parks, and connections to a regional trail network. The planning process revealed a high level of interest in developing natural resource parks for passive recreation activities and enjoying the outdoor environments. The need for targeted improvements to expand the park and recreation offerings was identified as well as an overall approach of enhancing existing facilities through landscaping and convenience facilities. The major barriers to easy convenient access to recreation sites are the PA Turnpike, the Blue Route, and the Northeast Extension of the Turnpike.

The sports organizations operate regionally without respect to municipal boundaries. The organizations serve players from throughout the area. Plymouth based leagues serve non-residents while Plymouth residents play in sports organizations based in other communities. For this reason, sports fields in terms of needs and numbers may be better addressed regionally rather than by individual jurisdictions. Discussions among Plymouth, Conshohocken, Whitemarsh and the Colonial School District could address field and gym needs within the Colonial School District Service area. Other discussions could be held between Plymouth and Whitpain as there is some overlap in sports organizations between Whitpain and Plymouth. The purpose of the discussions would be to engage in the creative exploration of providing fields that would serve players in identified leagues in the region, avoid duplication of facilities and share the cost and benefits of collaborating in facility development and operation.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Following are recommendations for the Plymouth Township parks and recreation facilities:

1. **Target acquisition and development of parkland to meet current and future needs for expanded facilities.**

   The need for additional parkland in Plymouth Township is due to a wide variety of factors. Past population growth was not accommodated in additional parkland acreage at the time the growth occurred. Sports league programs have expanded beyond their traditional seasons and many are now played throughout the entire year. New sports such as lacrosse and field hockey have emerged, putting further demand on existing facilities. New leagues have emerged. School athletic facilities are under the same pressures as municipal facilities and cannot be assumed to be available for use.

   There is limited undeveloped open space suitable for recreation facility development left in the municipality. Creative approaches are required to address the need for additional parkland.

   Plymouth Township should prioritize acquisition of parkland to meeting existing and future needs. The Township, through this plan, has set a standard for parkland of providing 10 acres per 1,000 citizens of active parkland. To achieve this standard and meet the needs of the community based on existing and forecast population, Plymouth Township should acquire an additional 99 acres of land by 2020. This acreage equates to at least one additional community park. Parkland can be acquired through fee-simple purchase, donation, dedication, long-term lease or license, or grants to meet the current and future recreation needs of the municipality. Recommended strategies for parkland acquisition include the following:

   - Maximize the recreation potential of existing parks through the expansion of existing park sites with contiguous acreage. Actively pursue additional parkland acreage by opening dialog with adjacent property owners. This strategy is recommended as follows:
     - Greater Plymouth Community Center – Acquisition of residential parcels contiguous to the park site would provide additional land for introduction of new facilities, expansion of existing facilities, and area for needed support facilities such as parking. The Community Center is the hub of the community and a central location for many municipal activities. Expansion of recreation opportunities at this location is convenient for many residents who already visit the site regularly. Additional parking is needed to accommodate existing program and potential GPCC expansion.



- East Plymouth Valley Park – PECO is the property owner east of the park site. Currently, Plymouth Township has an agreement to permit park parking within the PECO right-of-way. A practice football field is needed in the community and discussions should be initiated with PECO to determine if an agreement could be reached to allow a football field to be developed within the right-of-way. A sketch plan illustrating the hub area west of the concession stand, a football field, a trail for access, and possibly additional parking should be prepared to facilitate the discussion.
- Harriet Wetherill Park – This passive park is targeted for expansion of open space as an outcome of this plan. The acquisition of the parent tract of the Wetherill property via a life estate is further discussed in Chapter 4. This acquisition will provide an additional 14.76 acres of land to this nature park. Other parcels contiguous to the park site should be considered for acquisition if their location and configuration provide additional natural or functional areas or buffer natural areas of the existing park.

- Explore the acquisition of "brownfield" lands for parkland development. Plymouth Township has significant vacant industrial land located in Planning District #9. Although there are limited home sites within this Planning District there are definite advantages to developing a park in this area of the municipality. There is a need for additional recreation facilities in the municipality and this area contains some of the only parcels of the size and configuration to accommodate a large community park or athletic complex. There are two regional bike trails traversing the site which promote accessibility. The adjacent uses are typically compatible with lights and athletic fields use could be maximized by lighting facilities. A new park facility in the western portion of the Township will balance the existing community facilities on the eastern side of the municipality in terms of location.
- Conshohocken Borough is exploring potential riverfront revitalization projects. Plymouth Township should collaborate with Conshohocken Borough in exploring potential projects that would expand riverfront access regionally thereby providing Plymouth residents better river access.

2. **Incorporate improvements into the parks that will enhance the convenience of using the facilities, enhance the visual image of the park site, and introduce additional recreation opportunities. Improvements suggested for Plymouth Township parks include the following initiatives:**

Convenience Facilities

- Enhance park sites by adding benches, trash receptacles, drinking fountains, grills, bike racks, restrooms, and other convenience facilities as appropriate.
  - Provide benches near playgrounds, in shaded locations, and at other activity areas for caregivers to sit and watch park activities.
  - Add bike racks near park entrances/drop-offs if safe bicycle access is provided to the site.
  - Add drinking fountains near athletic facilities, at concession stands, and at other convenient locations.
  - Develop restrooms in neighborhood and community parks that provide clean safe comfort facilities. The restrooms should be developed to be easily monitored and maintained.
- Consider the needs of the senior adult population. Make facilities pedestrian friendly, convenient to use, and provide sitting areas in the shade that are conveniently spaced along trails and near activity areas. Provide pavilions near parking areas for easy access.
- Develop a sidewalk between the existing walkway at the playground and Jolly Road on the northeastern side of Greater Plymouth Community Center and Community Center Park.

Park Site Enhancements

- Enhance park entrances, drop-off areas, and hub areas of concentrated activities with landscaping. Use large masses of colorful perennials and ornamental grasses to add interest and variety to park settings. Unify the park sites by repeating a pallet of plants within a park. Add street trees along road frontage and park drives.
- Add signs in each park to identify the park and the Plymouth Township Parks and Recreation Department. Utilize a standard vocabulary of sign materials, colors, and design to unify and promote the park opportunities within the municipality.
- Provide walking and bicycling trails within parks and to park sites. Trails are enjoyed by all segments of the population and are highly desired recreation facilities. The ADA requires access to recreation facilities and activity areas via an accessible route.
- Provide shade in parks near activity areas. Shade could be provided through deciduous tree plantings, shade structures/sails, and/or pavilions.
- Incorporate field and court lighting in park sites to maximize the use of existing facilities.

New Recreation Opportunities

- Develop a splash pad play area in Greater Plymouth Community Center Park.
- Expand the walking trail to form a loop on the north side of Saw Mill Run in Bicentennial Park. Add a gazebo and additional benches along the trail.
- In conjunction with developing a park hub west of the concessions stand, add a shade structure in East Plymouth Valley Park near the basketball courts for shade and "hanging out" while watching court activities.
- Explore the level of interest in the community for a dog park. The public participation process revealed initial interest. A public process should explore the preferred site to develop a dog park and/or opportunities to develop dog-friendly improvements within parks.
- Explore trails that link parks, school, and points of interest in the community. Refer to Chapter 4 for additional discussion of trail recommendations.

3. Complete park master plans for new parks and Site Plans to improve function or incorporate significant improvements to existing parks.

Park master planning should incorporate public participation as part of the planning process to create relevant master plan that will meet community needs. Master plans should evaluate the functional relationships within existing parks and determine if facilities should be removed, added, renovated, or moved to maximize the use of each park site. Master planning is an important means to address management issues through park design and aligning facilities with recreation trends, as well as, current and projected community needs. Master plans should include the illustrative plan for the park sites, as well as, a phased cost estimate that outlines the anticipated development costs.

- Master plan Harriet Wetherill Park. Plymouth Township has set general goals of developing a natural resource park with passive recreation and environmental education opportunities at the Harriet Wetherill Park. A master plan is being developed to create a blueprint of how this goal can be achieved at the park site.
- Develop a sketch plan for Sandwood Park to explore facilities that might be desired by neighborhood residents. Involve the public in the process.
- Site plan Greater Plymouth Community Center Park to determine how to best incorporate a splash pad and associated appurtenances into the exiting park site. The plan should explore the functional aspects of the spray pad such as public access from parking areas, trails, support facilities, and other activity areas; support and complementary facilities; infrastructure extensions and relationships to other use areas.
- Site plan East Plymouth Valley Park to create a hub area adjacent to the concession stand and incorporate shade near the basketball courts.

4. Plan for the revitalization of Greater Plymouth Community Center within the Plymouth Township Parks and Recreation system.

- Assess potential for reconfiguring existing space within GPCC for more recreational area.
- Assess the potential for the relocation of the maintenance garage elsewhere on the GPCC site.

5. **Develop and update annually a capital improvement program for ongoing capital expenditures and cyclic improvements to the community center and parks.**



East Plymouth Valley Park Pier

Chapter 4
Open Space, Greenways & Trails



Chapter

4

Open Space, Greenways & Trails

This chapter includes a review of important natural and man-made resources found in Plymouth Township and discussion on how parks and greenways can incorporate these resources to protect and preserve them for future generations.

Protected and Temporarily Protected Land

Plymouth Township has protected and temporarily protected land throughout the municipality. Protected lands are primarily parkland of the Plymouth Township Parks and Recreation Department. The park sites and other protected lands are identified on the Protected Lands Map.

Permanently Protected Lands

Parkland – Plymouth Township contains eleven parks totaling 134.2 acres. The parks of Plymouth Township are further described in Chapter 3 – Parks and Recreation Facilities. There are no county, state, or federal parks or open space in Plymouth Township with the exception of the lands associated with the Montgomery County Schuylkill River Trail and Cross County Trail.

Other Permanently Protected Land – There are no protected watershed association or land conservancy lands in Plymouth Township. Discussions with Township administration noted that there are a few home owner associations within town home developments, but that the open space associated with these properties is limited in size. A conservation easement has been placed on the 14.76 acres of land owned by Mr. Wetherill to protect the property adjacent to Harriet Wetherill Park. The Protected Lands Map is on page 63.

Temporarily Protected Lands

Schools – There are numerous schools located throughout Plymouth Township. Refer to Chapter 3 – Parks and Recreation Facilities for a full inventory. Several of these schools have significant land holdings which should be considered temporarily protected as the institution could divest of all or part of these lands at any time.

Private Recreation Lands – There are two private recreation land holdings in Plymouth Township: The Plymouth Country Club and the Plymouth Swim Club. The zoning of the Plymouth Country Club prohibits the development of home sites but does not guarantee the perpetual protection of the open space.

Agricultural Security Areas – There are no lands within an Agricultural Security Area in Plymouth Township. The concept of joining with adjacent municipalities was discussed during the planning process for this plan and those discussions are continuing.

Act 515 Lands – One parcel has an open space covenant per Act 515 in Plymouth Township: the Plymouth Country Club. The Act allows the county to enter into a covenant with the landowner to preserve the property as open space, in exchange for lower property taxes.

Act 319 Lands – Five tracts in Plymouth Township are classified as Act 319 or Clean and Green lands. Clean and Green is a state program that offers landowners a tax break for agreeing to keep their properties as farms, woodland, or pastures. The program allows a differential property assessment based on the value of productive farmland, not development potential. Landowners must have at least 10 acres of farmland to participate. Participation in the Clean and Green Program does not preserve farmland but provides landowner tax benefits through lower assessments. Refer to the Protected Lands Map for locations of Act 319 lands. Further protection of these lands should be considered (conservation easements).

Potentially Vulnerable Resources

Potentially vulnerable resources are categorized as water resources, land resources, and man-made resources. Maps depicting these resources are on pages 65, 67 and 69.

Water Resources

Rivers – The Schuylkill River forms the western boundary of Plymouth Township. The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources classifies the river as a Cold Water Fishery. The Schuylkill River is classified as a Pennsylvania Scenic River in the Plymouth Township area. The stream corridors are tributary to the Schuylkill River. Railroad corridors and industrial land lies parallel to the river and limits public access to the river.

Stream Corridors – Three named stream corridors are in the municipality: Plymouth Creek, Diamond Run, and Saw Mill Run. Each of these streams is classified as a Warm Water Fisheries that are not capable of supporting trout populations.

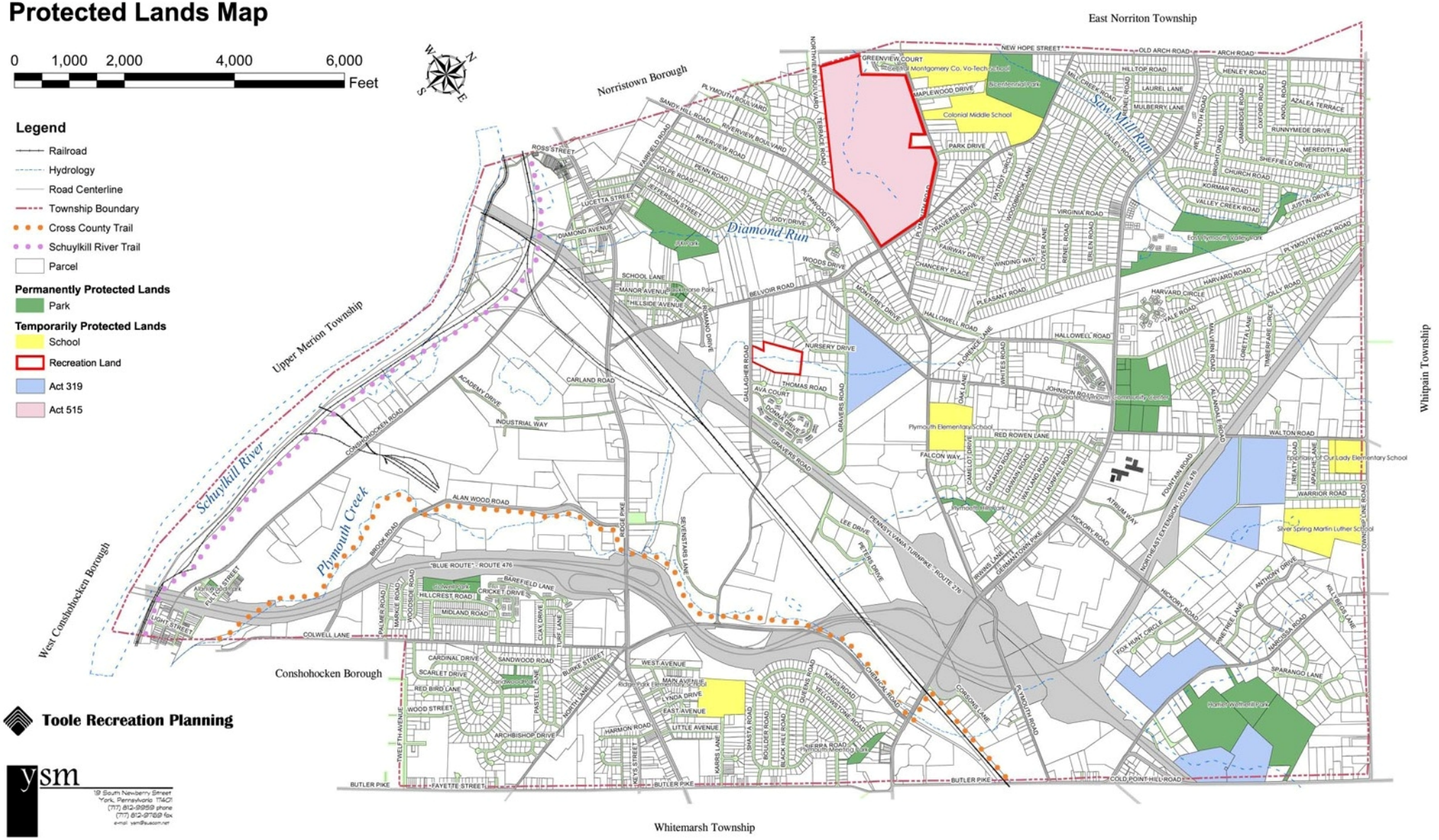
Riparian Buffers – Many of the streams and river corridors of Plymouth Township include riparian buffer areas of vegetation that enhance and protect the water resource.

Floodplains – Floodplains are lands contiguous to stream corridors that are subject to flooding and the 100-year floodplain is the area that is most frequently mapped and referenced in planning. The 100-year flood plain is the area of the floodplain that floods during a 100-year flood. A 100-year flood has a one percent chance of being equaled or exceeded in magnitude in any given year. The 100-year floodplain has been adopted by the Federal Insurance Administration as the base flood for purposes of floodplain management measures. Floodplains are associated with the Schuylkill River and stream corridors.

Wetlands – Wetlands are areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Wetlands are identified by unique soils (hydric soils), by plants adapted to life in wet environments (hydrophytic vegetation) and by the presence of water (hydrology) during the growing season. Wetlands identified through the National Wetlands inventory (NWI) are shown on the Water Resources Map. The NWI locations are initial designations and are not to be used for regulatory or jurisdictional wetland identification.

Plymouth Township Recreation Plan

Protected Lands Map



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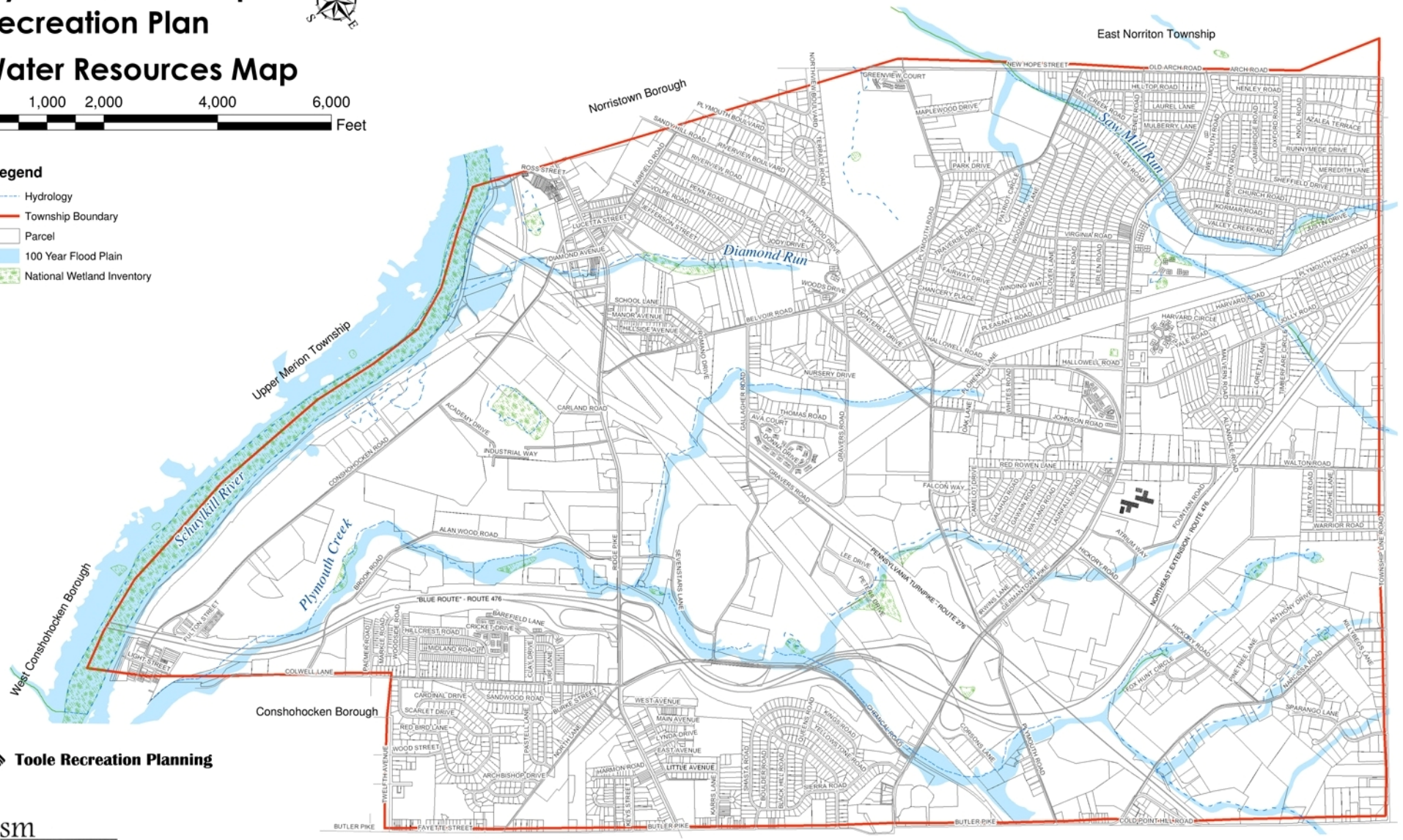
Plymouth Township Recreation Plan

Water Resources Map

0 1,000 2,000 4,000 6,000 Feet

Legend

- Hydrology
- Township Boundary
- Parcel
- 100 Year Flood Plain
- National Wetland Inventory



Toole Recreation Planning

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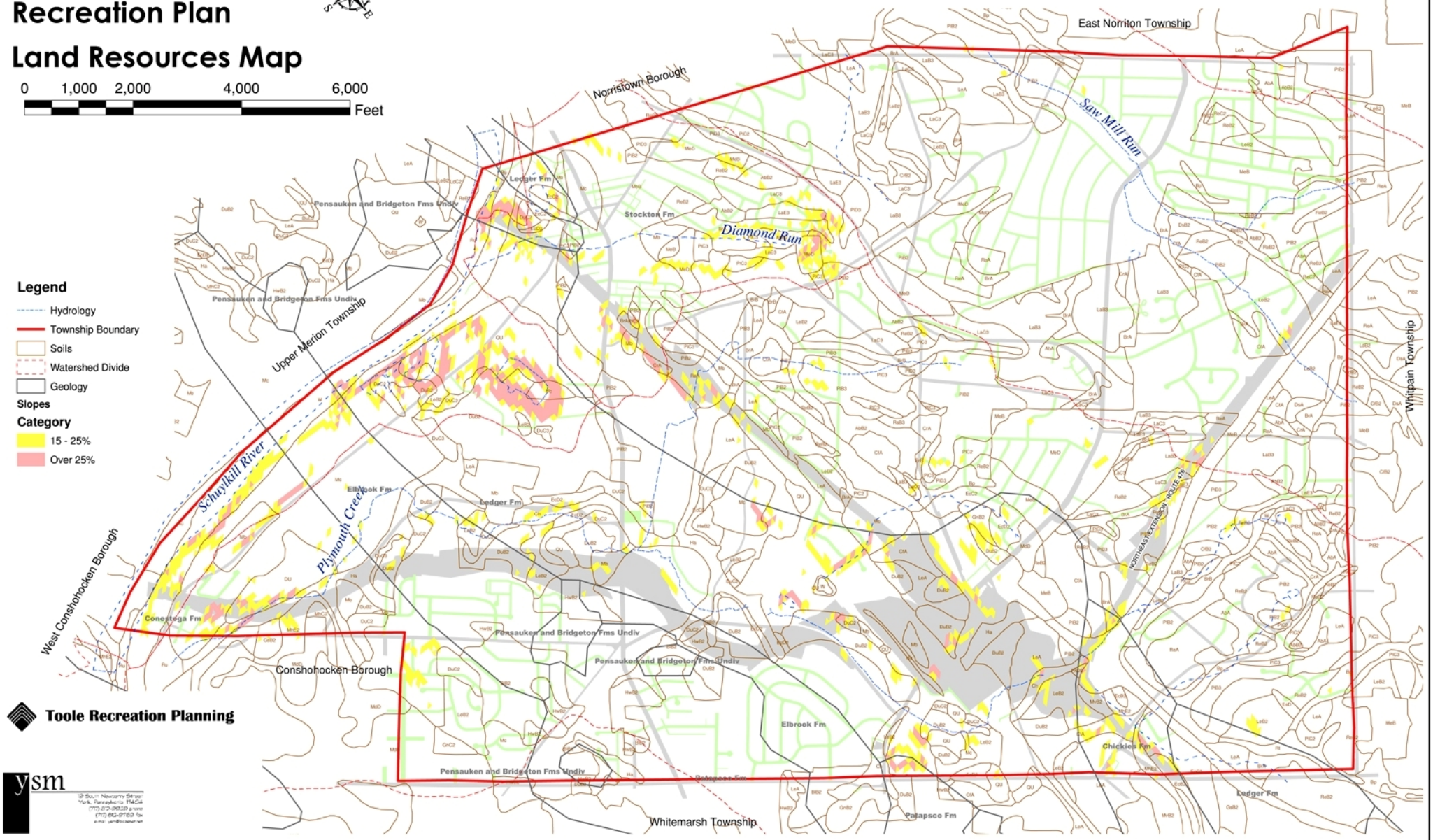
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Plymouth Township Recreation Plan

Land Resources Map

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Toole Recreation Planning

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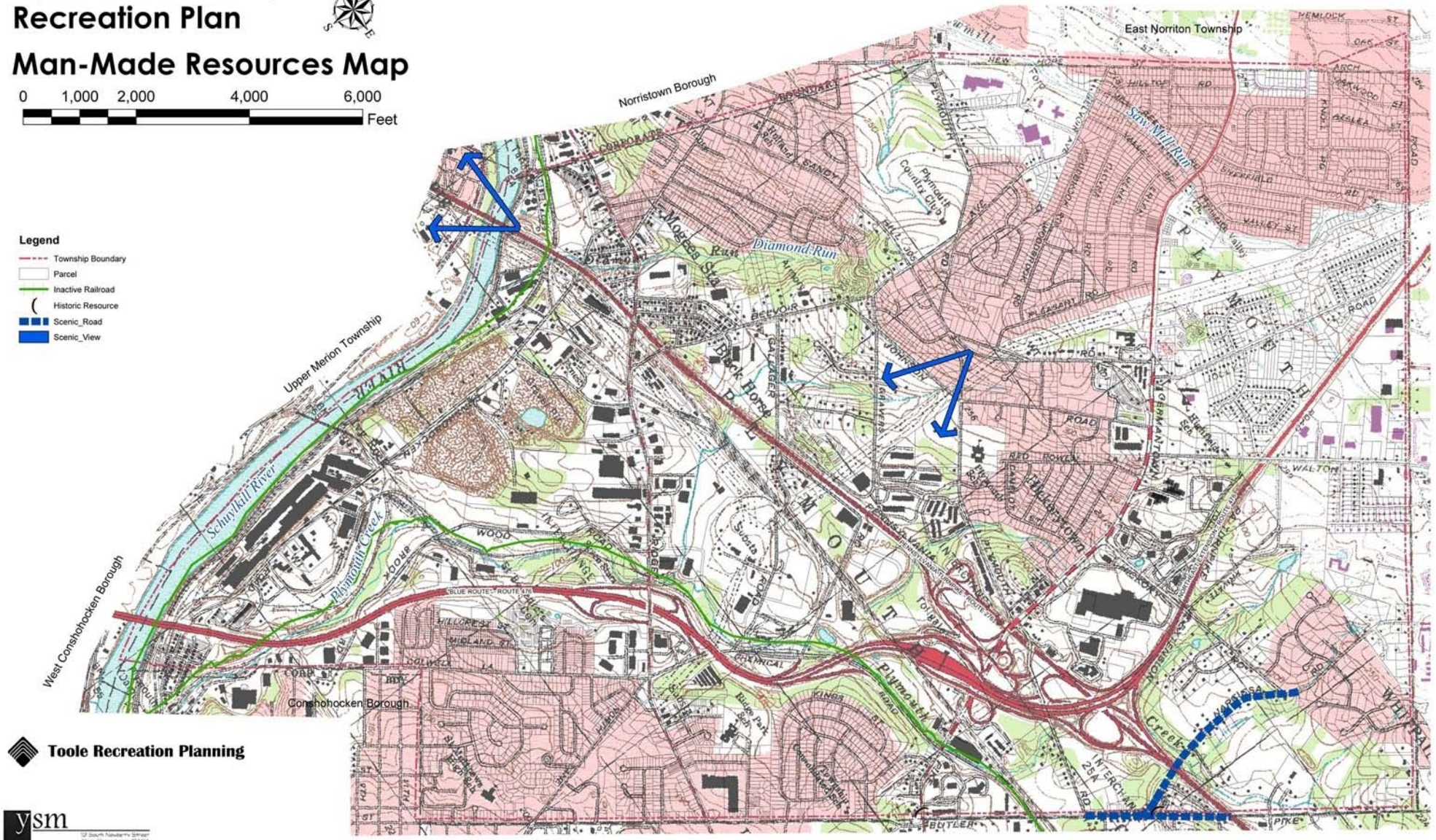
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Plymouth Township Recreation Plan

Man-Made Resources Map

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Land Resources

Steep Slopes – Plymouth Township does not contain significant areas of steep slopes. Steep slopes are found within the quarries on the southwest portion of the municipality and in the area of Riverview Road near the Borough of Norristown. Another area of steep slopes was created by the development of the PA Turnpike Northeast Extension.

Geology – The portion of the Township, south of the Turnpike, and north of the Blue Route has underlying limestone geology. Care needs to be exercised in the type of development permitted in this portion of the Township due to limestone bedrock.

General Soil Associations and Limitations – According to the soil survey of Montgomery County issued in 1967 the following soil associations are present in Plymouth Township:

- Made Land – Gleneig – Chester Association – (Ma, Gn, Gg) Deep and moderately deep, well-drained soils underlain by schist and gneiss; on undulating uplands.
- Made Land – Duffield – Lawrenceville Association – (Ma, Du, Le) Deep, Well-drained soils underlain by limestone. On undulating uplands.
- Landale – Penn – Readington Association – (La, Pe, Re) Deep and moderately deep, well drained and moderately well drained soils underlain by shale and sandstone; on rolling uplands.
- Lawrenceville – Chalfont – Doylestown Association – (Le, Cf, Ds) Deep, moderately well drained to poorly drained soils formed in windblown silt deposits; on undulating uplands.
- Rowland – Birdsboro – Raritan Association – (Rw, Bn, Ra) Deep, well-drained to somewhat poorly drained soils in old alluvial deposits; flood plains and terraces.

Woodlands – Wooded areas are not prominent within the municipality due to the developed nature of the community. Woodlands in Plymouth Township are limited to small patches, several of which are associated with stream corridors. Due to the relatively small size of woodlands within Plymouth Township data has not been found to accurately map woodlands and they are not included on the Land Resources Map. Current aerial photographs were viewed to assess the extent and location of woodlands in the municipality. Refer to the Man-Made Resources Map for generalized locations of woodland resources.

Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Inventory – No PNDI sites are in Plymouth Township.

Montgomery County Natural Areas Inventory – One site of local significance is in Plymouth Township. The NAI lists sites of local significance based upon the size and diversity of wildlife and plant life, water quality protection, and recreation potential. The Ivy Rock Cliffs site received a rank of "low" on a countywide level and should be targeted for local protection. The Ivy Rock Cliffs site is a limestone outcrop that supports locally significant flora. It is located along the Schuylkill River and provides scenic interest along the Schuylkill River Trail.

Man-Made Resources

Historic and Cultural Resources – There are two areas of cultural and historic significance in Plymouth Township. They are the intersection of Germantown and Butler Pikes, and the Cold Point area on Butler Pike. Both of these areas are protected on the National Registrar of Historic Landmarks, according to the Plymouth Township Comprehensive Plan.

Scenic Resources – Plymouth Township contains primarily developed land which limits scenic resources to a few scattered sites of visual or historic significance. Although many of the scenic areas have been bisected by man-made barriers, there still remain small farms, older stone homes, scenic stream valleys, and ridge-top views.

Sections of Butler Pike provide scenic qualities associated with the historic character of older homes near the intersection with Germantown Pike. Approximately ¾ of a mile north on Butler Pike is the Cold Point section with several historic homes. The section of Narcissa Road north of the PA Turnpike prior to the intersection with Anthony Drive provides scenic qualities largely related to the large parcels of open space on either side of the road.

The scenic quality of streams within the municipality can be found in park sites. There is one significant viewing point to the Schuylkill River that is seen from the PECO right-of-way adjacent to the PA Turnpike near the western boundary of the municipality. The site is a bluff overlooking the river but is not readily accessible to the general public. The site affords views of the river and surrounding river valley. Another area of visual significance is at the ridge top at Sandy Hill Road which affords an excellent panoramic view of the southern portion of the Township.



Utility Corridors and Land – PECO has significant landholdings in Plymouth Township. There is a 300' wide utility right-of-way that traverses the community in a north-south direction. A portion of the right-of-way is located adjacent to East Plymouth Valley Park. A second right-of-way of greater width parallels the active Conrail corridor from the Schuylkill River to a larger PECO parcel at Gallagher Road.



Railroad Corridors – There are two major active rail corridors traversing Plymouth Township: The Conrail line that somewhat parallels the PA Turnpike and the SEPTA line that somewhat parallels the Schuylkill River. The previously abandoned Pennsylvania Railroad line along the Schuylkill River has been converted to the Schuylkill River Trail.

Potential Open Space Linkages

Trails and greenways provide passive recreation opportunities and green corridors of protected open space. Easy access to trails facilitates exercise and fitness, as well as, safe linkage to connected locales. Connecting the parks, schools, and community areas of Plymouth Township with trails and greenways will add to the quality of life for citizens.

Greenways are corridors of protected public and private land established along rivers, stream valleys, ridges, abandoned rail corridors, utility rights-of-way, canals, scenic roads, or other linear features. They link recreational, cultural, and natural features; provide pathways for people and wildlife; protect forests, wetlands, and grasslands; and improve the quality of life for everyone.

Benefits of Greenways

Creating a network of green corridors throughout the municipality is one means of enhancing the livability and visual landscape of Plymouth Township. Greenways provide an array of direct and indirect benefits that add to the quality of life of both a place and region. Protection of green corridors and open spaces provides numerous economic, social, transportation, recreation, environmental education, and ecological benefits as identified in **Table 14**.

Greenway and Trail Network

Greenways are made up of corridors that link to areas of origin and destination. Potential linkage corridors of the greenway network in Plymouth Township include the river and stream corridors and associated floodplain area, utility corridors, and railroad rights-of-ways.

Major greenway corridors are described as principal corridors of regional significance. Greenways connect community places and open spaces. Areas of origin and destination, often called hubs, contribute to a greenway network. In Plymouth Township parks and other protected lands, schools, commercial areas, and residential areas create hubs throughout the community. The Schuylkill River Greenway is a major greenway corridor that links regionally along the Schuylkill River. The Greenways and Trails Map is on page 75. **Table 14** contains the benefits of greenways.

The Schuylkill River Greenway

The Schuylkill River Greenway in Plymouth Township is part of a much larger national initiative: the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area. The mission of the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area is to "Conserve, interpret and develop the historical, cultural, natural and recreational resources related to the industrial and cultural heritage of the Schuylkill River Valley of Southeastern Pennsylvania."

The Schuylkill River Greenway Association manages the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area and coordinates the many projects associated with the greenway such as the Water Trail, Land Trail, and Bird Trail. As the parks and community areas along the Schuylkill River Greenway are developed, opportunities to tie to initiatives of the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area and promote its goals should be explored and promoted.

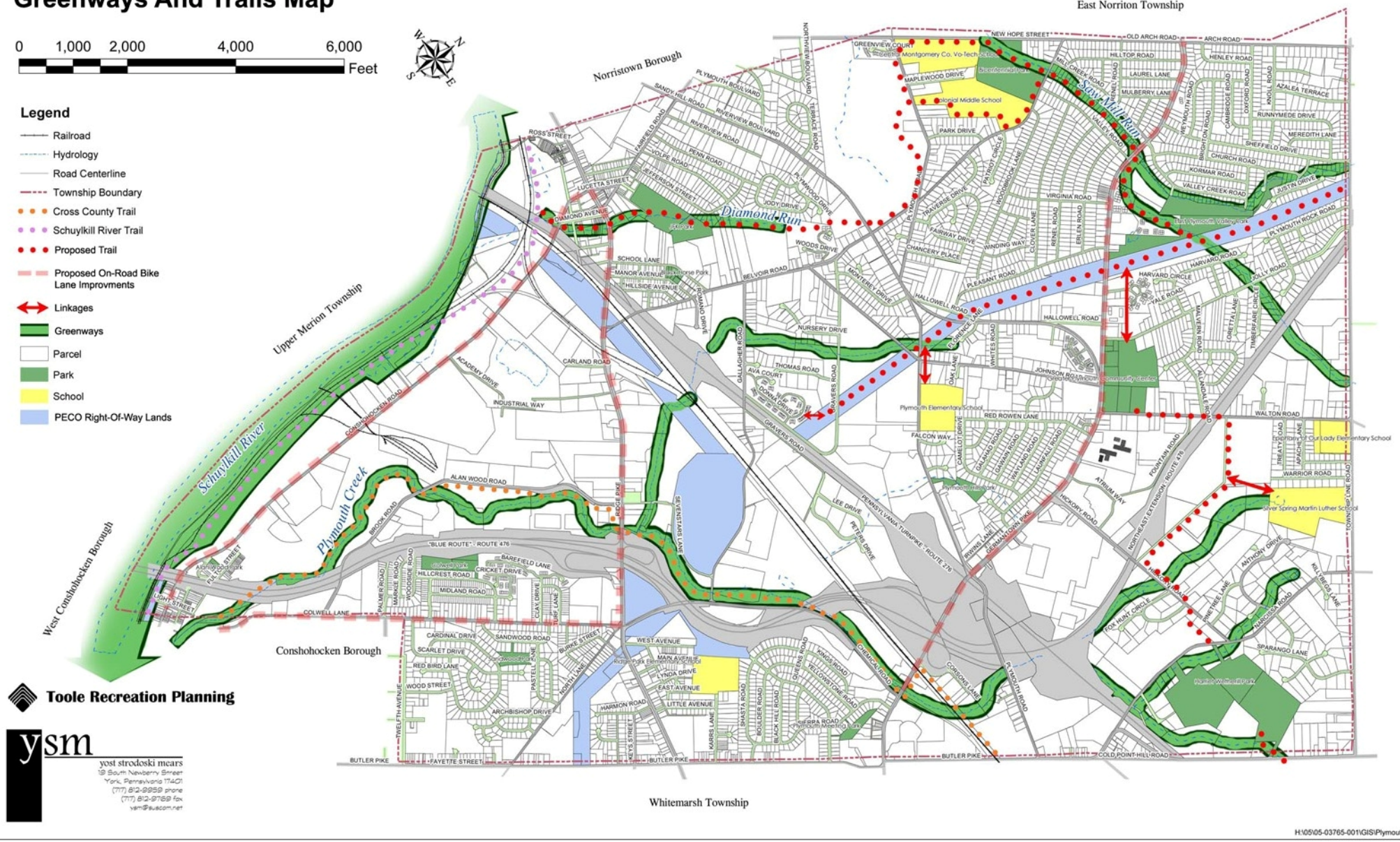


Plymouth Township is part of the Schuylkill Greenway National Heritage Corridor (*Source:* Schuylkill River Greenway Association)

Table 14 Benefits of Greenways	
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 will generate expenditures on food, services, and lodging.
	Reduce damage and financial loss from flooding by providing buffer areas along stream and river corridors.
Social Benefits	Provide access to historically and culturally significant features in our communities.
	Provide opportunities to reconnect with the natural environment and urban fabric of our communities.
	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.
	Increase quality of life.
	Improve health and wellness of greenway and recreational 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 our dependency on automobiles
	Provide emergency access via trails to undeveloped areas.
	Reduce roadway congestion through redistribution of users to alternative transportation routes
Ecological Benefits	Promote plant and animal species diversity.
	Serve as a filtering zone; wetlands absorb pollutants and nutrients.
	Provide corridors for wildlife migration and movement.
	Preserve and protect vital wildlife, plant, and aquatic habitats.
	Improve air quality and reduce noise.
	Reduce stormwater damage and promote flood mitigation.
	Protect natural areas.
	Connect fragmented landscapes.
	Clean up abandoned corridors.
Environmental Education Benefits	Provide landscapes for learning.
	Create an awareness and appreciation for the environment.
	Introduce and illustrate environmental concerns to the general public.
Recreation Benefits	Provide areas to jog, walk, bike, ride horses, and canoe.
	Provide connections between parks and other protected lands.
	Connect existing and planned trails.
	Enable pursuits such as picnicking, fishing, and enjoying nature.
	Encourage ecotourism.

Plymouth Township Recreation Plan

Greenways And Trails Map

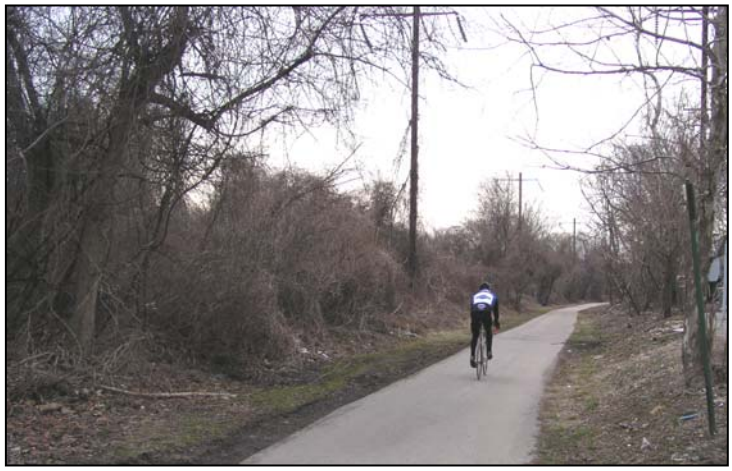


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Linear Resources

The streams, river, utility corridors, and existing trails provide the linear resources for Plymouth Township's Greenway/Trail system. These linear resources are discussed in the Potentially Vulnerable Resources section of this chapter. Existing trails within the community include:

- An approximate 3-mile segment of the regional long distance Schuylkill River Trail is located in Plymouth Township. The trail is located somewhat parallel to the Schuylkill River on the right-of-way of the former Pennsylvania Railroad corridor. The Schuylkill River Trail is a regional trail planned to extend from Schuylkill County to the City of Philadelphia.



- The Montgomery County Cross County Trail is planned to generally follow Plymouth Creek from its confluence with the Schuylkill River in Conshohocken Borough, northeast through Plymouth Township into Whitemarsh Township. Ultimately this trail will be paved and will extend to Fort Washington. A portion of this trail has been established in Plymouth Township from IKEA, northeast past the Metroplex, to area of the Cracker Barrel restaurant.
- There is one municipally owned trail in Plymouth Township in Bicentennial Park. This trail follows Saw Mill Run and traverses the park property providing a passive setting for walking and enjoying the outdoors.

Other linear resources in Plymouth Township with potential for greenway/trail development include the PECO utility rights-of-ways, Saw Mill Run, Diamond Run, and Plymouth Creek.

Hubs

The parks and schools in Plymouth Township are destinations that should be incorporated into a comprehensive greenway network. Several of Plymouth Township's existing parks and open space parcels are within stream corridors designated as greenways. These parks include John F. Kennedy Park, Bicentennial Park, and East Plymouth Valley Park. Additionally, Harriet Wetherill Park is in close proximity to the Cross County Trail.

Greenway/Trail Links

Connecting community places with greenways cannot be totally achieved with the major greenway corridors and municipal greenway corridors alone. Greenway/Trail Links further expand the greenway/trail system by connecting nearby parks and schools to greenway and trail corridors. In most instances, a natural or manmade corridor does not exist to connect these community destinations. Trails should be developed to link these community resources

to designated greenway/trail corridors. Municipalities (various departments), school districts, and private land owners must work together to develop these functional linkages which connect local parks and schools to the designated greenway/trail system.

Barriers to Greenway Development

There are barriers to greenway development in Plymouth Township. Several major transportation routes traverse the municipality and form barriers to greenway development. The Pennsylvania Turnpike, the Northeast Extension, and the Blue Route, and the active high speed rail line parallel to the Schuylkill River and PA Turnpike are the most significant of these barriers.

Alternative routes or engineering solutions such as bridges or underpasses must be incorporated to provide a connected network across these barriers. The natural functions of greenways are not as adaptable. These major transportation routes bisect and interrupt the continuity of the greenway corridor for wildlife movement while fragmenting natural communities.

To create a comprehensive greenway system that provides the maximum benefit to the community it is important to find linkages across these barriers. It is important to work with PennDOT to incorporate pedestrian and bicycle friendly linkage solutions when bridges and underpasses are upgraded.

Regional Linkages

Plymouth Township should work with adjacent municipalities, Montgomery County, and others to further regional initiatives to develop regional connections that extend beyond the borders of the Township. A discussion of potential links with regional trail initiatives is included in Comparison to County and Abutting Municipality Plans located later in this chapter.

The Pennsylvania Greenways Partnership Commission and the Greenways Partnership Advisory Committee recently developed a statewide view for Pennsylvania Greenways titled "An Action Plan for Creating Connections." The plan's four goals for Pennsylvania's greenways program include:

- Plan and Build Greenway Connections
- Create a Greenways Organizational Framework
- Provide Greenways Funding
- Provide Technical Assistance and Outreach

In keeping with this plan, opportunities for regional linkages will help advance the four goals for Pennsylvania's greenways program as well as support the development of a greenway network for Plymouth Township. Potential regional linkages and funding opportunities may be realized through partnering with other municipalities.

Potential Trails and Trail Amenities in Plymouth Township

The recreation opinion survey findings indicated strong interest in the community in developing a Township-wide system of trails. The following trails should be explored through additional detailed study:

East Plymouth Valley Park to Greater Plymouth Community Center and Park – Explore possible pathway routes to connect these two community parks. The pathway would traverse the

PECO right-of-way and then use either sidewalks or access easements that would need to be acquired to connect these parks.

Greater Plymouth Community Center Park to Harriet Wetherill Park – Explore a safe connection between these two park sites through a detailed study. Explore the potential of implementing roadway improvement to Walton Road from the Greater Plymouth Community Center and Park, north, across the PA Turnpike to permit safe pedestrian and bicycle travel. Seek an access easement from property owners of larger tracts to connect from Walton Road to Narcissa Road and to Harriet Wetherill Park. Walton Road Improvements are scheduled for the near future due to the widening of the Northeast Extension of the Pennsylvania Turnpike.

Harriet Wetherill Park to Cross County Trail – Connections should be sought to extend a trail east from Harriet Wetherill Park to the Cross County Trail. This trail would provide access for Plymouth Township resident to nearby Fort Washington State Park in Whitemarsh Township. Provisions to connect to this trail should be made in Harriet Wetherill Park and the crossing of Butler Pike should be coordinated with Whitemarsh Township as well as the extension of the Cross County Trail. The trail with the exception of the crossing will be in Whitemarsh Township.

Bridge and Cross County Trail Trailhead Parking on Colwell Lane – Adapt the old railroad piers across Plymouth Creek in the vicinity of Colwell Lane west of 5th Avenue adjacent to a commercial parking lot to develop an 8-10 foot wide bridge. Seek access easements or rights-of-way from several property owners to connect to the Conshohocken Borough road/sidewalk system.

Linkages to Cross County Trail at Brook Road – Improve Brook Road between Colwell Lane and the trail crossing of Plymouth Creek. Widen and re-stripe the shoulder for bicyclists and install share the road signs for the ¼ mile segment. Improve nearby roadways to improve pedestrian and bike access to the intersection of Brook Road and Colwell Lane.

PECO Trail – A trail is proposed within the PECO 300-foot right-of-way that traverses the community from the PA Turnpike to the Whitpain Township line. This right-of-way corridor would link to on-road bicycle and pedestrian accommodations on Germantown Pike, East Plymouth Valley Park, and Saw Mill Run Trail.

Diamond Run Trail – A trail is proposed to extend along Diamond Run linking the Schuylkill River Trail to Saw Mill Run Trail. This corridor along the stream will link John F. Kennedy Park and Bicentennial Park. Connections through the Plymouth Country Club and Colonial School District properties are suggested to create a continuous trail with multiple community destinations.

Saw Mill Run Trail – A trail is suggested along Saw Mill Run which would connect to the Diamond Run Trail, the PECO Trail and extend beyond the municipal boundary to Whitpain Township and Norristown Borough. The trail would connect Bicentennial Park with East Plymouth Valley Park in Plymouth Township and extend to three Norristown Borough parks. The trail would provide a scenic walkway along the stream. Connections to the Schuylkill River are possible through connections from the Saw Mill Run Trail to the Diamond Run Trail and the Norristown Borough extension.

Schuylkill River Trail - Connections and Palisades Trail – Plymouth Township endorses the concepts of riverfront access as well as connections to the Schuylkill River Trail (and Cross County Trail). Should Conshohocken Borough complete a river walk within the Borough and require riverfront property in Plymouth to link to these trails, the Township would investigate inter-municipal opportunities for grant funding to acquire this land. Connections to the Schuylkill River Trail in Plymouth Township are difficult due to the active high speed rail line parallel to the river. The topography of the land parallel to the river, on the western side of the municipality rises well above the river and rail line and affords views of the river. The

idea of a "palisades" trail above the river should be explored. The trail would require acquisition or access easements/right-of-way across connecting parcels to create a trail on the bluffs above the river. This trail would require the cooperation of many private landowners and should be viewed as a long-term goal.

Bicycle/Pedestrian Friendly Communities

The existing street and roadway system should be bicycle and pedestrian friendly, as much as possible, throughout the municipality to create a community oriented to a human scale rather than to just that of the automobile. Roadways provide opportunities to round out a greenway system by providing trail connections around environmentally sensitive greenway corridors and other obstacles and to create loops in a greenway network. Sidewalks link residential areas to trails within the system.

> **Vision for Bicycling in Pennsylvania**
>
> ***Pennsylvania is a place where residents and visitors of all ages can choose to bicycle and walk. People are able to bicycle and walk with confidence, safety and security in every community, both for daily transportation and to experience and enjoy the remarkable natural resources of the state.***
>
> **Statewide Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plan**

Plymouth Township should renovate and build roadways as shared use facilities, where possible and feasible from a functional, construction, and safety perspective. This will provide transportation choices to citizens and decrease dependency on automobiles. Roadway designs should consider the comfort and safety of all roadway users. There are several options to consider when enhancing bicycle transportation in a community. Bike routes, bike lanes, and multi-use trails are the facilities most often proposed in this region. The Township should work with a transportation engineer with experience and knowledge of bicycle facility development to develop a comprehensive approach to integrating bicycle facilities into the Plymouth Township transportation network.

The following roadways should be evaluated for development of safe on-road bicycle and pedestrian accommodations: Colwell Lane, Conshohocken Road, Ridge Pike, and Germantown Pike. These roadways, if improved to safely carry bicycles and pedestrians, would round-out the Township-wide trail system and create loop options within the community and maximize connections to the two County trails.

Evaluation of Open Space for Park Land

Active Recreational Parks

Park land needs of the community were evaluated and reported in **Chapter 3 – Parks & Recreation Facilities**. The population based analysis evaluated Plymouth's parkland using a standard of 10 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. The analysis revealed that there is currently a deficit of parkland which will continue to expand as the community grows. It should be noted that the evaluation of park land is for active recreation only. Open space for passive recreation pursuits and resource protection is not typically evaluated on a population based standard but rather is evaluated based on the significance of the resource and the desire of the community to protect the resource and open space. Based on the parkland analysis Plymouth Township should acquire at least 99 acres of additional parkland by 2025 to provide a total of 170 acres of active recreation parkland for residents.

Natural Resource Based Parks

Based on the input gained in the public participation process and the assessment of resources, two distinct areas have emerged as worthy of protection as passive open space. Plymouth Township has acquired the Harriet Wetherill Park tract with the stated intent of providing passive recreation opportunities in a natural park setting. The residents of the community support this initiative. Maximizing this open space tract through the acquisition of contiguous or nearby acreage will create an oasis within the developed landscape of the municipality. Concentrating protected open space within an area of the municipality will enhance the function of the resources in the landscape. As an example, a small wooded tract provides minimal habitat for wildlife due to the extent of edge condition and impacts from adjacent uses. The larger the tract, and the greater its interior space versus edge condition, the more value it has in the landscape as habitat. The second natural resource opportunity that has been identified in Plymouth Township is the protection of the river edge and stream corridors. Protection of these riparian areas affords many ecological benefits and, where appropriate, can be developed as linkages. Residents indicated their desire for a Township-wide trail system that would provide recreation opportunities and safe linkage throughout the community and access to the Schuylkill River.

Evaluating Land for Future Parks



Potential properties for preservation were evaluated based on their location, resources and vulnerability of resources, recreation potential, linkage potential, assumed market value, and other considerations. Each of the properties was visited and evaluated through an interactive process as part of this process. Properties were ranked as high, medium, and low acquisition priorities and identified for protection through either acquisition or conservation techniques. The evaluation resulted in a prioritized list of open space properties that is held by the municipality. The highest priority parcel is the Wetherill Tract.

This tract contains 14.76 acres of land and is the parent tract to the Harriet Wetherilll Park. It is contiguous to the park site and together the two tracts would preserve 67 acres of open space. The parent tract contains the stone home and out buildings as well as meadows, a small stream, and hedgerows. Acquisition of this tract is recommended as the municipality's highest priority.

Analysis of Unprotected Resources

The public opinion survey completed as part of this planning project found that citizens of Plymouth Township place high priority on the protection of open space and natural resources. Although the municipality is mostly developed there are several remaining small farm sites and pockets and corridors of open space and that could be protected. Areas of concentrated resources are found along the river and stream corridors and in the eastern corner of the municipality east of the Northeast Extension of the Pennsylvania Turnpike. Vulnerable resources include numerous unnamed stream corridors and associated floodplains, relatively

large patches of woodlands, large undeveloped parcels of land, and areas of scenic and historic character. Parcels that are still actively farmed are found in this area.

Protection of Plymouth Township natural resources has been identified as a high priority by residents who have expressed the desire to protect the remaining open space before it is lost to development. Citizens have expressed their appreciation for the Township's acquisition of the Harriet Wetherill Park site and are anxious to be able to enjoy the natural resource based park that is envisioned for the tract. The preservation of the Harriet Wetherill Park site and other open space parcels in Plymouth Township helps to preserve the cultural and landscape identity of the community as well as the important functions of each site's natural resources and the environment.

Natural Resource Environmental Protection Function

River and Stream Corridors – The Schuylkill River and streams of Plymouth Township provide aquatic habitat, carry stormwater runoff, and provide scenic and recreation values to the communities and should be protected to retain these functions.

Floodplains – Floodplain areas should be protected to retain the many ecological benefits they provide. Floodplains provide areas for groundwater infiltration and riparian buffer vegetation which stabilize stream banks, filter sediment, and control erosion. Floodplains carry flood waters and should not be developed or built upon with structures that could diminish their carrying capacity. Many municipal ordinances contain provisions that regulate use of floodplain areas and protect them as open space to retain their important function in the landscape.

Riparian Buffers – Riparian buffers along the river and streams in Plymouth Township should be preserved and protected for the many environmental benefits they provide. Recommendations for their protection include the following:

- *Stabilize Streambanks*. Deep-rooted vegetation binds the soil along streambanks, stabilizing the banks and preventing erosion during periods of high runoff.
- *Improve Water Quality*. Vegetation along streams traps sediment, nutrients, and pollutants before they enter the stream or groundwater.
- *Enhance Wildlife Habitats*. Trees, shrubs, and grasses along streams provide habitat and travel corridors for many wildlife species.
- *Reduce Flooding and Sedimentation*. Vegetation retains stormwater runoff longer, improves infiltration, and filters sediment from flowing downstream during floods.
- *Keep Streams Cooler and Healthier*. Shade from riparian buffers cools the stream waters, increasing the food and oxygen for aquatic life.
- *Enhance Scenery*. Vegetation along streams adds beauty and diversity to the landscape.

Wetlands – Wetlands provide numerous benefits including ground water recharge, wildlife habitat, flood and sediment control, and stormwater management. They are essential to maintaining a sound ecosystem and should be protected.

Steep Slopes – Protection of steep slope areas is important as they are prone to erosion, sedimentation, landslides, and surface and groundwater contamination when land development procedures are not reasonably performed. Steep sloping areas are difficult to build upon. It is important to retain wooded cover on steep slope areas to stabilize the slopes with vegetative root systems and slow runoff to maximize groundwater infiltration.

Geology – In areas of limestone geology, underground water sources create a complex web of aquifer connections. This makes limestone areas particularly vulnerable to pollution that

can spread to other areas of the region through these underground water sources. Additionally limestone is prone to sinkholes that affect drainage and site stability. Care should be taken in areas of limestone geology to carefully locate improvements and minimize disturbance and concentrations of stormwater runoff.

Woodlands – Wooded areas offer thriving ecological systems consisting of a variety of plants and wildlife and should be preserved and enhanced through sensitive planning efforts. Woodlands are significant in areas of steep slope for their ability to reduce surface erosion and slow rainwater runoff to provide retention to groundwater suppliers. Woodlands also provide physical benefits such as screening of winds, unwelcome noise, wind-transported elements such as air pollutants and snow; visual barriers to unsightly areas; and wildlife habitat. Woodlands enhance and define recreation and scenic areas and often increase property values.

Significant Natural Areas – The site identified in the Natural Areas Inventory should be protected to sustain its function in the ecosystem and maintain biodiversity. Threats such as habitat loss and fragmentation, proliferation of invasive species, degradation of ecosystems, pollution, and changing land use patterns continue to impact these priority natural sites. This priority site has already been identified as vulnerable in Plymouth Township and its protection should be furthered through open space preservation strategies.

Evaluation of Growth Area for New Development through 2025

The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission projects that Plymouth Township will continue to grow, but at a very moderate rate. The 2000 population of 16,045 is expected to expand to 16,640 by 2010, 16,980 by 2020 and 17,040 by 2025. This growth equates to just over six-percent between year 2000 and 2025. How will this growth be accommodated in a community that appears to be nearly fully developed? The total build out projections for the municipality was evaluated based on current zoning designations and is reflected in **Table 15**. These projections were developed for planning purposes only and do not represent any concrete proposals or plans.

The build-out projects indicate the possibility of an additional 284 residences (240 single family dwellings and 44 townhouses) that could be built in Plymouth Township and up to 4,241,066 square feet of new non-residential uses. The character and quality of life of the community will be affected by the locations of this development. Ordinance provisions and protection strategies should be employed to direct this potential growth to areas of the municipality that are most compatible with growth. Areas of vulnerable natural resources should not be targeted for growth.

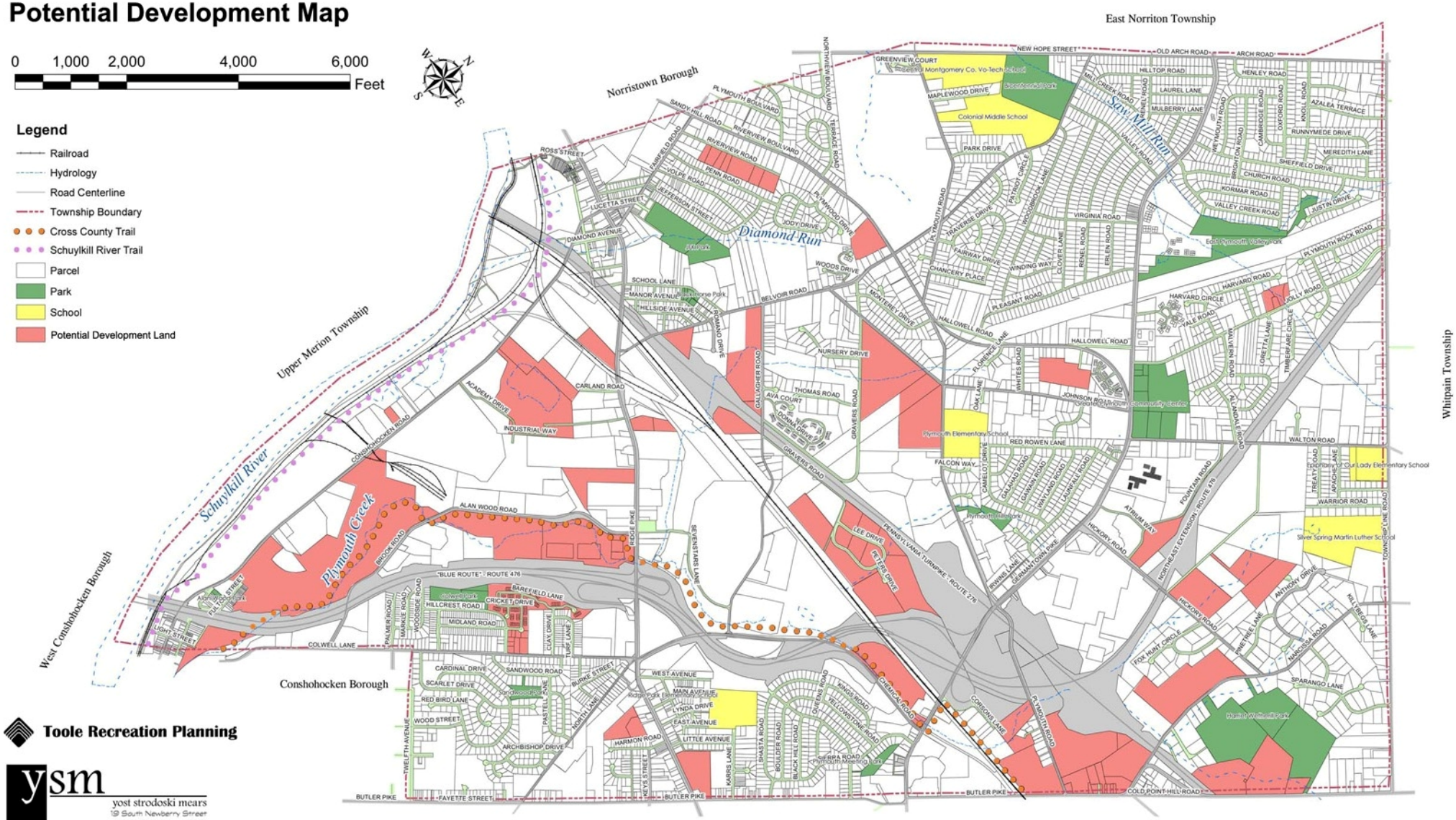
Growth should be encouraged in areas with necessary infrastructure and compatible surrounding land uses. Infill opportunities should be maximized and areas that had previously been developed should be targeted. Plymouth Township has extensive land in its southwest quadrant that had previously been used for industrial purposes. The previous uses in this area have disturbed the natural character of the parcels and reuse and redevelopment in this area of the municipality should be encouraged. The Potential Development Map on page 87 presents potential areas in the Township that could be developed in the future. This information was derived from Plymouth Township's Land Use Assumptions Report of 2004.

Table 15
Plymouth Township Build-out Analysis

Residential Land					
Map #	Owner(s) Development Name	Area.	Existing Zoning	Build-out Analysis	
B	DiSanto/Cusumano	10.22 ac.	A Residential	17 Single Family Dwellings	
C	Tornetta	6.7 ac.	A Residential	11 Single Family Dwellings	
D	Cooper/Borkowski	9.69 ac.	A Residential	7 Single Family Dwellings	
F	Jordan Family LP	13.14 ac.	AA Residential	10 Single Family Dwellings	
G	McNeil	10.14 ac.	AA Residential	8 Single Family Dwellings	
I	McKeown/McKeown Family Trust	28.88 ac.	AA Residential	23 Single Family Dwellings	
J	Powell	12.21 ac.	AA Residential	10 Single Family Dwellings	
	Silver Springs	29.05 ac.	AA Residential	23 Single Family Dwellings	
L	McCracken/Plymouth Partners, LLC	17.95 ac.	A Residential	30 Single Family Dwellings	
M	CK Partners	14 ac.	A&B Residential	26 Single Family Dwellings	
N	Plymouth Road Partners I	26.77 ac.	A Residential	45 Single Family Dwellings	
O	Sherwood Reserve	5.59 ac.	D Residential	44 Townhomes	
	Belvoir Estates	9.35 ac.	C Residential	13 Single Family Dwellings	
	P.M.C. Properties, Inc.	0.15 ac.	C Residential	2 Single Family Dwellings	
	P.M.C. Properties, Inc.	2.5 ac.	A&B Residential	2 Single Family Dwellings	
	Reza Gholami	2.25 ac.	AA Residential	1 Single Family Dwelling	
	DiRenzo	0.38 ac.	C Residential	2 Single Family Dwellings	
	2442 Butler Pike	2.5 ac.	A&B Residential	2 Single Family Dwellings	
	TOTAL RESIDENTIAL	211.13 ac.		240 Single Family /44 Townhouses	
			Non-Residential Land		
	Owner(s)/Development Name	Area	Existing Zoning	Projected Use	Build-out Analysis
1	Mid-County Office Center	7.47 ac.	Limited Industrial	Office	225,000 sf.
2	Blue Route Industrial Center	114.37ac.	Limited Industrial	Office Industrial	1,260,000 sf. 506,000 sf.
3	Jones Brothers	2.9 ac.	Heavy Industrial	Office Warehouse	9,240 sf. 27,720 sf.
4	Carpenter Realty Company	12.53 ac.	Commercial	Commercial	62,650 sf.
5	Emanuel Tire	30.63 ac.	Heavy Industrial	Industrial	1,200 sf.
6	Cotteta	4.80 ac.	Heavy Industrial	Warehouse	64,800 sf.
8	Romano	2.97 ac.	Industrial Park & C Residential	Office	21,000 sf.
9	Romano	15.65 ac.	Industrial Park	Industrial	140,850 sf.
10	Romano	6.00 ac.	Limited Industrial	Industrial	54,000 sf.
11	Dehon	40.63 ac.	Office Laboratory & A Residential	Office	609,450 sf.
12	Kilduff	15 ac.	Limited Industrial	Office Warehouse	61,500 sf. 20,500 sf.
13	Plymouth Meeting Park	44.37 ac.	Limited Industrial	Industrial	399,330 sf.
14	Metroplex Corporate Center	18.25 ac.	Mixed-Use	Office	461,000 sf.
15	Thayer Lodging (Doubletree)	7.9 ac.	Planned Office Park	Conference Room	13,386 sf.
16	Brandywine Realty Trust	20.55 ac.	Interchange Development	Office Restaurant Hotel	160,000 sf. 5,570 sf. 155 room
	Ikea Regional Offices	23.73 ac.	Business Park	Office	100,000 sf.
	Chemalloy Company, Inc.	11.99 ac.	Heavy Industrial	Industrial	31,483 sf.
	Fuschetto	0.83 ac.	Limited Industrial	Auto Repair	2,400 sf.
	Equiprof, Inc.	0.43 ac.	Commercial	Commercial Warehouse	2,833 sf. 1,154 sf.
	TOTAL NON-RESIDENTIAL	**381.0 ac.**			**4,241,066 sf.**

Plymouth Township Recreation Plan

Potential Development Map



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Comparison to Plans of County and Abutting Municipality

Plymouth Township adjoins Whitpain Township, East Norriton Township, Whitemarsh Township, Conshohocken Borough and Norristown Borough. All of these communities are in various stages of developing their open space plans in conformance with Montgomery County's open space program. The townships of Plymouth, Whitemarsh, Upper Merion and Lower Merion and the boroughs of Norristown, Conshohocken, West Conshohocken, and Bridgeport have joined together to coordinate regarding this area of the County and creating improved regional access to the Schuylkill River. Plymouth Township will continue to participate with these neighboring communities on regional open space planning.

Plymouth Township has also attended meetings with Whitpain Township, Whitemarsh Township, and Springfield Township to explore the potential of establishing an agricultural security area. The planning team had discussions with the planners for Montgomery County, East Norriton, Whitpain, Conshohocken, Norristown and Whitemarsh as well. Based upon these meetings and discussions the following connections and programs related to Plymouth Township emerged.

Montgomery County

Montgomery County: Shaping our Future

The Montgomery County **Open Space Plan** has guided the development of **Plymouth…*Naturally*!**. High priorities of the Plymouth plan are open space conservation, trail connections and access to the Schuylkill River.

Agricultural Security

Montgomery County Regional **Agricultural Security Area** is being considered as a partnership with Whitpain, Springfield, Whitpain and Plymouth Townships. Plymouth Township Council approved the exploration and discussion of participating in a regional agricultural security area.

Montgomery County Trail Network

Two trails in the Montgomery County Trail Network, the **Cross County Trail** and the **Schuylkill River Trail**, have direct connection and location in Plymouth Township. Providing access to the Liberty Bell Trail in East Norriton and Whitpain could get Plymouth residents ultimately to the Wissahickon Trail. All of these trails offer Plymouth residents potential long distance regional connections north and south as well as east and west.

Montgomery County Shaping Our System

Montgomery County's strategic plan for managing the county open space system provides opportunities for collaboration between Plymouth Township and Montgomery County Parks & Heritage Services. With the Harriet Wetherill Park master plan underway and natural resources/environmental education as a main priority of the Township, the Township and the County could explore potential partnerships in the area of environmental education.

Conshohocken Borough

Work sessions with Conshohocken Borough planners and open space committee focused on connections along the Schuylkill River. Access to the Schuylkill by Plymouth residents could be achieved through Conshohocken. Should Conshohocken decide to move ahead with specific riverfront projects, Plymouth Township would participate in future discussions regarding riverfront projects.

Norristown

Plymouth Township and Norristown Borough are exploring the potential of increasing public access to the Schuylkill River. Norristown is considering a gateway at the Plymouth Township border on East Main Street that would be an attractive landscaped area. Connections between the two communities include one in the Black Horse area of Plymouth that would connect with Norristown via Ridge Pike while the other trail connection would be along Fairfield Road to Sandy Hill Road to the Norristown border. Plymouth Township and Norristown Borough will continue to coordinate as well as work together in the regional open space planning group of "Montgomery Crossing".

East Norriton and Whitpain

Connection to the Liberty Bell Trail would enable people to get from Plymouth to Norristown Farm Park in East Norriton Township. East Norriton's trail focus is on access to the Liberty Bell Trail. Arch and Township Line Roads are at the confluence of Plymouth, East Norriton and Whitpain. East Norriton has identified some sidewalk trails at Township Line Road but this is a low priority given the other trail work needed. Plymouth Township is committed to establishing sidewalks throughout the community so sidewalks in this area would enable multi-municipal pedestrian path connections.

Whitpain and Plymouth Townships can connect via the PECO rights-of-way. East of Arch Road near Sheffield Drive in Plymouth, there is trail potential along the PECO line, under or loop around the Northeast Extension and back under the PECO line. Local trail connections from the Wissahickon Trail to Ambler Borough through Wings Field onto the Century Parkway Office at Walton Road and onto Greater Plymouth Community Center are possible. About two-thirds of the Wissahickon Trail is already protected.

A connection between Plymouth and East Norriton is possible west of Johnson Highway along the tributary behind the St. Paul's Church. It would link Pine Run in East Norriton into Norristown and then into Plymouth near the Township Building. This is only under discussion in East Norriton.

Whitemarsh

The area of the Harriet Wetherill Park and Plymouth Township's remaining open space parcels could connect into Whitemarsh, to the Cross County Trail and ultimately to Fort Washington State Park. The crossing of Butler Pike and extension of a link to the Cross County Trail will need to be coordinated with Whitemarsh Township. Whitemarsh Township wrote a letter supporting Plymouth Township's grant application to PADCNR for a grant to master site Harriet Wetherill Park. Plymouth Township is providing the matching share for this grant.

Future enhancement of Harriet Wetherill Park would be facilitated by a sanitary sewer connection to the Whitemarsh Township sewer line on Butler Pike. Further intermunicipal cooperation will be needed to make the facility a regional resource for a wider public including the Colonial School District.

Regional Open Space Land

Beyond trails, potential joint land preservation considerations are along the river in Conshohocken and Plymouth. Remaining undeveloped land as well as industrial lands that could be re-developed could be considered in the future for multi-municipal planning and projects. The significance of such work related to open space planning is that potential redevelopment along the river would provide public access to the Schuylkill River.

Open Space Protection Strategies

Acquiring land for parks, trails, and greenways is an effective method of protecting open spaces and enhancing the environment; but the reality is that no community has the fiscal resources to buy all the land necessary to protect open space and locally significant resources. Non-acquisition techniques are critical to the successful protection of resources and open space, especially in a highly developed community such as Plymouth Township. Strategies for open space protection are outlined in **Table 16**. They include acquisition and donation, easements, land use regulations, and other methods.

Land Acquisition and Conservation Priorities

Plymouth Township's highest priorities for land acquisition and conservation are:

- Properties adjacent to or providing linkages with municipal parks or county trails with emphasis on the perimeter parcels of Harriet Wetherill and Community Center Parks.
- Undeveloped properties of reasonable size with natural features and scenic beauty.
- Properties adjacent to the river or offering river views.
- Existing public and private institutional properties with historical or open space value.

Conservation Design & Development

The Plymouth Township municipal codes should be reviewed through a process called Growing Greener Ordinance Assessment. The assessment will make recommendations for modifications to the Comprehensive Plan, Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance, and other ordinances. Additionally, the "Growing Greener" approach should be incorporated into the land development process as a method of protecting open space. The Growing Greener program is a collaborative effort of the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), the Natural Lands Trust, the Pennsylvania State University Cooperative Extension, and an advisory board of state agencies, local government, nonprofit, and private sector officials.

This program is an important means for identifying local "green infrastructure" at the municipal level. Primary and secondary resources identified at this level become the green infrastructure that subdivision proposals are designed around. One of the basic options of this program allows full density development while ensuring fifty percent of the tract is maintained as open space. The Township should complete a Growing Greener Ordinance Assessment and work to implement the specific recommendations of the assessment into the Comprehensive Plan, Subdivision & Land Development Ordinance, and Zoning Ordinance.

Mandatory Dedication of Park Land

Utilize the park or recreation facilities, land and/or fees provisions of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code and the Plymouth Township Subdivision and land Development Ordinance of 1980, as amended. Mandatory dedication or Act No. 170 of 1988 of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) provides municipalities with the authority to require the dedication of public land for recreation purposes or fee in lieu of land dedication. Plymouth Township has a very effective mandatory dedication ordinance. This ordinance should be reviewed periodically to assure that dedication provisions result in maximum value to Plymouth Township.

Table 16 Open Space and Greenway Protection Strategies		
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 price and fair market value is considered a charitable gift for tax purposes.
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 roles.
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.
Easements		
Conservation Easements	A legally enforceable agreement between a landowner and an agency or non-profit organization that 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 general public the right of 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.

Table 16 (Continued) Open Space and Greenway Protection Strategies		
Protection Strategy	Strategy Explanation	Advantage/Disadvantage
Land Use Regulations		
Protection Strategy	Strategy Explanation	Advantage/Disadvantage
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.
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.	Retains 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.

Plymouth Township has limited remaining open space. While the municipality has undergone significant development there are pockets of land and water resources and open areas that retain the natural character valued by citizens. Plymouth Township can expect to be increasingly affected by development. Directing growth and development away from resource areas is imperative to maintaining the municipality's character and quality of life. The following recommendations promote smart growth, protection and enhancement of natural resources, preservation of scenic qualities, and expanded recreation opportunities:

1. **Conserve natural resource lands through various protection and acquisition techniques.**

   a. Designate the following priorities for land acquisition and conservation as:

   - Properties adjacent to or providing linkages with other municipal parks or county trails with particular emphasis on the perimeter parcels of Harriet Wetherill and the Community Center Parks.

   - Undeveloped properties of reasonable size with natural features and scenic beauty.

   - Properties adjacent to the river or offering river views.

   - Existing public and private institutional properties with historical or open space value.

   b. Acquire open space land ranked as the highest priority in the evaluation of Plymouth Township open space parcels. Target the following priority parcels.

   - The Wetherill Tract – This tract contains 14.76 acres of land and is the parent tract to the Harriet Wetherill Park. It is contiguous to the park site and together the two tracts would preserve 67 acres of open space. Consider the future acquisition of properties contiguous to the Harriet Wetherill Park.

   - 98 acres of park land. Secure a right of first refusal on school lands and other parcels of interest.

   - Establish a policy of working with property owners around the GPCC when the express interest in selling their property. This should be a generational approach to deal with properties as they become available. This would aid in resolving the parking issues and the potential expansion of the GPCC Park.

   - Work with Conshohocken Borough to explore riverfront parkland opportunties.

   - Acquire land or secure access easements to create local trails, links to existing trails, and/or provide access points or amenities for trails.

   c. Undertake a *Growing Greener* assessment as a first step to incorporating conservation design that builds the green infrastructure/greenway system through the development process. Elected officials and board members should attend training on Growing Greener planning techniques.

   d. Incorporate conservation in local codes by adopting provisions of the Growing Greener model ordinance. Provisions that allow landowners to maintain equity by allowing full density development while also preserving a significant portion of the tract (e.g. 50%) as desirable open space.

e. Pursue conservation easements. Develop an approach to meet with property owners that would include expertise in land use and financial planning. Contact large parcel owners to let them know about conservation options and the municipality's interest in open space protection.

f. Seek donations of properties for open space preservation.

g. Encourage stream bank protection and restoration in riparian corridors.

h. Consider a fee increase for the Mandatory Dedication of Land Ordinance in accordance with using the park, recreation facilities and/or fees provisions of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code and the Plymouth Township Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance of 1980 as amended. .

i. Consult with a land planning firm to evaluate the remaining large parcels to demonstrate conventional development versus the Growing Greener model of development.

j. Coordinate with conservancies and land trusts to protect high priority sites.

k. Pursue funding for conservation easements.

l. Promote public education of Plymouth Township landowners regarding their role and opportunities in the protection of significant environmental resources on their home sites.

m. Develop a mechanism to move quickly on land acquisition opportunities for parcels identified in the open space priority list.

n. Continue to explore the possibility of developing an Agricultural Security Area in Plymouth Township through a partnership with adjacent municipalities.

o. Explore public access opportunities to the Schuylkill River and opportunities to acquire land that provides scenic views of the Schuylkill River. There are parcels that are located superior to the river with visual access to the river. Explore the potential acquisition of linked parcels (or rights-of-way) to ultimately provide a 'palisades" trail along the bluffs above the river. The parcels associated with this area of the Township are currently developed and a long-term view of this initiative should be undertaken to seize opportunities when possible.

p. Monitor existing open space and parkland parcels for the existence of invasive species. Invasive species, if they gain a foothold on a parcel, can choke out native vegetation and spread rapidly.

2. Develop a comprehensive trail and greenway network that connects park sites, open space, residential.

Trails and greenways should be developed to provide safe convenient travel between points of interest while promoting protection of green resources.

a. Create a Township-wide greenway network composed of hubs (important destinations and originations for people and wildlife), and linkage corridors, which maintain the "green infrastructure" of the municipality and provide trail opportunities for recreation, transportation, environmental education, and the movement of wildlife.

b. Explore creation of greenways and trails through land acquisition, easements, and use of existing rail, road and utility rights-of-way. Coordinate with adjacent municipalities to extend trails regionally. Work with Conshohocken Borough to safely link bicycle and pedestrian users to the Cross County Trail.

c. Grow the conceptual greenways corridors particularly the preservation of green infrastructure through the development process by encouraging incorporation of conservation into plans and ordinances via the Growing Greener program.

d. Evaluate local roads in terms of bicycle and pedestrian compatibility. Target the roads identified on the Greenways and Trails Map.

e. Evaluate trail opportunities on existing road rights-of-way in the Township. Work with PennDOT, the Township Public Works Department, and the Township Police Department to provide bicycle and pedestrian friendly facilities when upgrades are undertaken for public roads.

f. Evaluate trail opportunities on existing utility rights-of-way. Meet with PECO to discuss the right-of-way traversing the northern portion of the municipality. Also discuss the potential of public access at PECO lands that overlook the river.

g. Communicate with adjacent municipalities and the County regarding regional trail and greenway opportunities and initiatives.

Chapter 5

Program & Recreation Opportunities









Chapter

5

Recreation Opportunities

Plymouth Township Parks & Recreation Department provides over 700 programs annually.

The Department has over 1,300 rentals, group swims and parties every year.

The Greater Plymouth Community Center is open for recreation 353 days a year for about 16 hours a day.

Parks and trails offer recreation in the great outdoors for everything from peaceful walks to experience nature to a rousing sports event.

Plymouth Township is a regional hub of top-notch recreational opportunities.

Recreation Success

Until 1988, part time staff or volunteers including sports and youth groups, provided recreation activities and services in Plymouth Township. These included things like summer recreation and sporadic activities that could be undertaken by volunteers. When Plymouth Township hired a full time Park and Recreation Director in 1988, the mission was "to provide a wide variety of programs to meet the needs and interests of citizens". In 1992, the Township hired a Recreation Coordinator. Over the next four years, significant programs were developed totaling over 50 annually along with new major services and events such as a summer playground program, Plymouth Township Day, holiday camps, trips and self-improvement opportunities. The Director worked carefully towards a balanced recreation program for citizens of all ages and interests using any facility available including the Township Building, Colonial School District schools, parks and private facilities. The lack of facilities and staff resulted in limitations on services.

That all changed when Plymouth Township acquired the former Highfield Elementary School for the purpose of establishing the Greater Plymouth Community Center. Today, Plymouth Township residents and others in the greater Plymouth community have recreation services and opportunities unlike anywhere else in Pennsylvania. Plymouth Township citizens have attested to their high level of satisfaction and appreciation for the premiere parks and recreation system of Plymouth Township throughout the public participation process for this plan.



Residents enjoying a summer concert.

Recreation Trends

A contributing factor to Plymouth Township's success in programs and services has been the department's ability to understand, define and anticipate community needs for people of all ages and interests. "Listenomics" underscores Plymouth Township's approach to public parks and recreation services. *Listenomics* involves listening to the customer – and the non-customer in a deliberate manner, addressing the findings and then putting into place actions that meet the needs or wishes of the customers or those who might become customers. Plymouth Township management and staff take what people have to say very seriously.

Using feedback from citizens as well as Parks & Recreation Department staff, Plymouth Township has set the hours for GPCC, developed programs, defined age groups for programs, created rental services, enhanced special events, centralized program locations, responded to the needs of working parents through program offerings for children, and acquired land for moving ahead into environmental recreation and education.

Nationwide trends that will affect and influence recreation opportunties and direction in Plymouth Township include the following:

- Increased interest in outdoor, nature based recreation. Nearly half of all American families say they spend time together outdoors at least once a month. Outdoor recreation is important to families with young children. Today, two thirds of all Americans recreate outdoors monthly while in 1994 only half did.

- People want information and education about recreation opportunities including activities they might not have done before such as kayaking, canoeing, bicycle trips and so on.

- Sports are played for multiple seasons rather than only a single season such as fall baseball and year round soccer.

Despite increasing participation in recreation, new sports and activities, and a broadening of the participation base from younger males to both males and females of all ages, obesity and the lack of physical activity in the United States is at an all-time high[5]. The United States Surgeon General issued a report in 1996 that physical inactivity among Americans is the number one public health issue.[6] Obesity costs the United States $238 billion annually in expenses associated with diseases such as diabetes stroke and heart disease not including the cost of treating the obesity itself.[7]

The Center for Disease Control has stated that public park and recreation departments have a primary role in addressing this issue. They can provide attractive and safe places for people to walk, hike, bike, and enjoy other active pursuits. Plymouth Township has certainly been working in that direction by developing the GPCC, creating life-time facilities for active recreation, and pursuing the establishment of the Wetherill Farm as a nature based park.



Getting fit - and enjoying it - at GPCC!

Another challenge facing both private enterprise and all arenas of public recreation is that increasing demand for facilities is outpacing availability and the resources to develop and manage new ones. Combined with rapid development in the metropolitan areas of Pennsylvania, the available open space is dwindling and land costs are escalating. There is an ever-present concern that future recreation opportunities for the public will be limited

[5] U.S. Center for Disease Control. (1999). CDC's Guidelines for School and Community Programs Promoting Lifelong Physical Activity. <Http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/phactag.htm>.
[6] Surgeon General. (1996). Physical Activity and Health. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Public Health Service, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. <Http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/sgr/npai.htm>.
[7] Fox, Maggie. (1999). Obesity costs U.S. $238 Billion A Year – Survey. Reuters: Science Headlines. <Http://daily news.yahoo.com/h/nm/19990916/sc/hralth_obesity_2.html>.

because of high demand and/or budget constraints. This is evident in the comments about the GPCC fitness center being wonderful but undersized for the demand.

It will become increasingly important to find creative ways to bring recreation opportunities to facilitate healthy active lifestyles of the citizens in the future.

Plymouth Township Recreation Trends and Issues

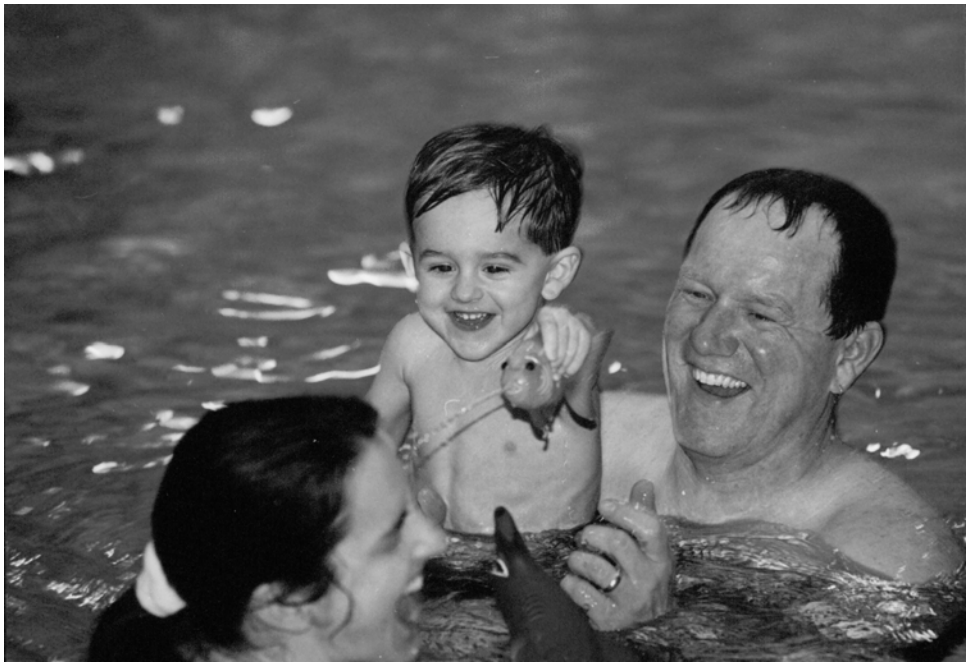
Based upon key person interviews, work sessions with township officials, the community survey, and visits to the parks, the following trends are apparent in Plymouth Township:

- GPCC has become the hub of community recreation. Those interviewed prefer to participate in programs and events at GPCC instead of at scattered locations elsewhere.

- Interest in self-directed types of activities such as bird watching, photography, water-based recreation, nature study, relaxation and refreshment is on the rise thus requiring natural and scenic areas in addition to traditional sports-oriented facilities.

- Sports are expanding to year round play indoors and outdoors. New sports are on the horizon such as lacrosse.

- Football and soccer report the need for more fields to accommodate their participation rates and expanded seasons.



GPCC provides opportunities to build strong families, the foundation of our society.

Community Survey Findings

The community public opinion survey reached a random sample of households. They represent the "silent majority" who are not in any organized or special interest group. The findings of the community recreation and park survey related to recreation opportunities include the following:

Survey Findings Related to Programs and Services

- **Special events –** Plymouth Township Days and the Summer Concert series reach the broadest segment of the community for the very young through the upper age groups.
- **Preferred departmental focus –** Nearly half of the respondents want the Township to focus on providing nature and the environment in the future.
- **Activities with the highest response on participation**
  - Special events
  - Adult and children's recreation programs
  - Exercise and fitness
- **Activities with the highest response from those who would like to participate**
  - Self improvement and education
  - Exercise and fitness, trips
  - Nature
- **Impression of township recreation programs**
  - Good to outstanding.
- **Level of service to client groups**

  While most respondents were not sure enough to rate the level of service to client groups, most felt that the overall level of programs and services is about right.
- **Quality of Services and Programs**
  - Overall, respondents rated the Plymouth Township recreation programs and services as good to excellent which equates to about an 80 percent approval. A rating of 80 percent is a very desirable rating and should serve as the long term goal as a measure of customer satisfaction.
  - The one area of concern is the pricing of programs and GPCC pass charges. Points of contention include the following:
    - Some residents think that they should not have to pay anything at all for programs and services including GPCC.

- Some residents think that non-residents should have to pay an even higher fee differential than residents.

- Fees for guests of members are viewed as too high thus prohibiting citizens from "treating" family or friends visiting from out of town.

Community Recreation Services in Plymouth

Plymouth Township Parks and Recreation Department offers about 2,000 programs, events and activities annually. This is more than ten times typically seen in communities of similar size and demographics. Numbers alone do not tell the full story. More important than numbers alone is the quality of the service. Every aspect of the public participation process and management evaluation for this study found rating in the good to excellent range for programs and services across the board. Programs include about:

- 700 programs
- 300 group swims and summer camp rentals
- 800 rentals
- 200 birthday parties
- Major special events such as Plymouth Township Day and Fall Fest
- Discount Ticket Sales
- Assistance to other community recreation providers such as organized sports
- Partnerships with hospitals for events such as the Health Fair and the Women's Conference

These programs range from one-time major community events such as Plymouth Township Day, with thousands of participants to programs held on a daily basis seasonally such as the Summer Camp to single session workshops. The Department also facilitates activities that people can undertake at their own pace such as Discount Ticket Sales to places including amusement parks, cultural and historical destinations.
Most programs have multiple visits such as everyday for the summer camps or the many games and practices each participant has for a league sport. Actual user visits are much higher than registration numbers convey. Events such as Pool-O-Ween or Mystery Madness might have a designated number of participants registered but many times over that number is spectators who come along to watch, making it a true multi-generational family event.

In addition to providing programs directly to the public, the Plymouth Township Parks & Recreation Department also facilitates the provision of recreation programs by other groups such as community sport groups; corporations wanting to provide public volunteer services; summer camps; private pre-schools, and individuals holding their own events. By supporting other groups such as the organized sports associations, the Township greatly expands its capacity to offer public recreation that it could not provide independently.

Future Directions and Limitations in Programs and Services

With over 2,000 events and activities, the Department provides the maximum level of scheduled services possible. More programs would require additional staff, additional indoor and outdoor space in the GPCC, and more parking to accommodate more traffic into the Center and park.

The addition of more programs without fees to offset operating costs will result in a lower cost recovery rate and an overload on existing staff levels. The programs without fees tend to be large scale community events that command a significant workload such as Plymouth Township Day. Events that are perceived as community/business sponsored actually require a substantial number of Plymouth Township Parks & Recreation staff including work on holiday time. Community sponsored events always require professional staff and time to make them successful. The large scale community events are based on sponsorships. Most sponsors have already been identified and appear to be giving the most that they are willing to contribute. Not only do they provide support for parks and recreation programs, they are also drawn upon by other community and municipal organizations such as police, scouts, emergency services, schools and so on. **Adding or increasing large scale events and/or programs that are free to the public will require additional municipal financial support.** The consideration of the addition or expansion of community events should be based on the analysis of the event through the Impact Statement for Programs.

In the first five years of GPCC operations, memberships and programs were in a growth mode with continuously increasing revenues. GPCC experience shows when memberships and passes plateaued, programs were still in growth mode and their revenues offset the leveling off of fees in memberships and passes. In years 2002 through years 2005, program revenues were significantly increasing, such as an increase of 45 percent in birthday party fees. However, the years 2006 and 2007 are projected to be when the programs will also level off due to maximum service along with the space and staff available. Programs along with revenues will move from growth mode to being stabilized. This is the normal and customary path in community center development and operation. That is, the first five years yield significant revenue growth, then when programs are maximized, the revenues level out. The challenge is for the Department to continue to provide outstanding friendly service, super clean facilities, and high quality experiences for program participants and facility users. Keeping programs and facilities fresh and changing will help to keep the public coming back. Introducing new elements into GPCC and the parks is important for both use and revenue generation. No amount of creativity will generate more revenues when the facility is limited by its size, parking capacity and employee numbers.

Parks and Recreation Department Program Inventory

Plymouth Township offers 19 program areas as shown in **Table 17**. In addition to the 19 activity types, Plymouth Township also offers volunteer opportunties. These range from Eagle Scout projects to large scale volunteer efforts such as Comcast's Day of Caring which involved hundreds of people and thousands of dollars in a one day beautification event in Plymouth Township.

Table 17 Plymouth Township Activity Classification		
Activity Type	Description	Explanation
AQEXE	Aquatic Exercise Classes	Aquatic group exercise class
AQSPR	Aquatic Specialty Programs	Special aquatic program
AQSWM	Aquatic Swim Lessons	Group swim lessons
ARTS	Fine Arts and Crafts	Art or creative outlets
CAMP	Camp Programs	Camp programs
COMPU	Computer Programs	Computer Programs
EXER	Exercise Programs	Group exercise programs
FITNS	Fitness Classes/Seminars	Fitness conditioning programs
LEAGE	Outdoor Leagues	Outdoor league
LEAGU	Indoor Leagues	Indoor league
PERAR	Performing Arts Programs	Drama, music or dance program
PRESH	Preschool Programs	Program for children 5 years or under
SEMIN	Programming Seminars	One-time class
SPECV	Special Event	One-time special event, land, aquatic or fitness
SPORT	Sport Programs	Sport program
TRIPS	Trips	Trips for adults, teens and families
WELL	Wellness Programs	Program that focuses on self improvement
YOUTH	After School Programs	Program held after school or in place of a school day, excluding camp
YTHSR	Youth Series	Programs which are continuous youth programs

Table 18 presents the summary of Plymouth Township's programs and rentals for 2004. It is important to note that programs vary by season. For example, camp programs are generally held in the summer when students are not in school.

It is also important to note that Plymouth Township offers four programming seasons. Most parks and recreation departments offer just three seasons by combining the winter and spring seasons. The breadth, diversities, facilities and staffing enable the Township to add the fourth season thus vastly increasing recreation opportunties for the citizens of Plymouth Township.

Table 18 Plymouth Township Program Inventory and Rentals 2004					
	Number of Programs by Season				
Programs	Fall	Winter	Spring	Summer	Total
Aquatic Exercise Classes	14	27	17	18	76
Aquatic Specialty Programs	7	5	9	12	33
Aquatic Swim Lessons	119	64	42	84	309
Fine Arts and Crafts	0	1	0	0	1
Camp Programs	1	1	23	1	26
Computer Programs	1	3	0	0	4
Exercise Programs	39	22	12	24	97
Fitness Classes/Seminars	3	1	0	0	4
Outdoor Leagues	5	9	5	4	23
Performing Arts Programs	0	1	0	0	1
Preschool Programs	17	16	2	13	48
Programming Seminars	1	3	1	1	6
Special Event	7	4	1	11	23
Sport Programs	4	9	3	5	21
Trips	2	0	0	4	6
Wellness Programs	3	0	0	3	6
After School Programs	13	4	0	4	21
Youth Series	4	3	0	2	9
TOTAL Programs	240	173	115	186	714
Rentals	Fall	Winter	Spring	Summer	Total
Room (includes gym & pool lanes/diving)	239	239	197	113	788
Birthday Party Packages	49	69	56	37	211
Group Swim	40	56	53	23	172
Summer Camp Pool Rentals	0	0	0	160	160
TOTAL Rentals	328	364	306	333	1,331

Source Plymouth Township Parks & Recreation Department

Facility Rentals

Plymouth Township has over 1,300 facility rentals, group swims and birthday parties annually. Most of the rentals are at GPCC. Other rentals include pavilions and parks. The Township also permits the use of sports fields.

Plymouth Township Program Analysis

Recreation programs and services are important in Plymouth Township. The program classification is wide ranging encompassing 11 different areas with sub-groups totaling up to 18 different activity classification types. These include aquatics; the arts; camps;

computers; exercise; fitness & wellness; leagues; performing arts; seminars; special events; sports; trips; after school, pre-school and youth programs.

Favorable Program Impressions

About 60 percent of the community survey respondents rated the Department's programs as good to excellent. 69 percent rated the location of the programs as good to excellent.

GPCC is the hub of recreation opportunties in Plymouth Township. League sports and special events are held in the parks. The public participation process found that GPCC is the preferred location for recreation programs in the Township.

Plymouth Township offers programs in a variety of formats. Program formats are tools for offering a variety of experiences within activities. Formats include: self-improvement, competition, social, participant-spectator, and self-directed. For example, "soccer" could include league play, a trip to a soccer game, or volunteerism through coaching. One of the most valuable services that the Township offers is the "drop-in" recreational opportunties at GPCC that people can engage in at their own discretion year round, seven days a week, morning, noon and night. This is a service that is rare among other public park and recreation departments. With people being very busy and pressed for time, the freedom to set their own recreation schedule at GPCC is a very valuable service. Furthermore, the varied services and child care support enable families to use GPCC at one time for different purposes. The Township has also been revitalizing public parks by adding lifetime recreation facilities such as trails, game courts and so on that enable families to enjoy many activities simultaneously. So instead of parks being only for organized sports, they now have a variety of facilities to serve diverse park visitors.



Plymouth Township Youth Programs – create interests that deter juvenile delinquency and substance abuse.

Township program focus is diverse and well, balanced. The Department has an all-encompassing approach to recreation programming. This includes providing the support mechanisms that people need in order to participate in programs such as babysitting and child care, after-school transportation (in partnership with the Colonial School District),

extended camp hours for working parents, advertising, credit card and Internet registration and so on.

Plymouth Township has been working diligently to create barrier free design in the parks and at the GPCC. The department's philosophy is to mainstream people with special needs with all visitors and participants. In current after-school and summer programs, the department is constantly looking for ways of meeting community needs through partnerships. An example is the partnership with REDI (Ramsey Educational Development Institute) to provide community recreation opportunties for children with autism.

Program Structure and Schedule

The program schedule was a traditional 10 week program session when the GPCC opened in 2000. While this was much easier from an administration standpoint, program staff quickly found that traditional 10 week sessions operating under a single program schedule was not the best way to promote more participation, maintain customer satisfaction and increase revenue. The Department progressed to offering six or eight week classes depending on the type of programs. In 2002, program planners began the development of the current system which features four program seasons that greatly expand the program opportunties available. Due to the depth, breadth and number of programs and facilities available in Plymouth, the four season approach works well and should continue. Within the four season structure, the Plymouth Township Parks & Recreation organizes programs using five calendars to effectively schedule and meet the needs of the participants. The calendars include fitness, sports leagues, aquatics, programming, and after-school and summer camps. This facilitates registration and makes effective use of staff time.

Fitness

Fitness classes are offered in six-week sessions with one week in between for make-ups due to inclement weather or building closings. These classes are held on all holidays that the building is open i.e. MLK Day and Presidents Day. The sessions are continuous with seven sessions per year.

This schedule works for the participants who take Group Exercise Classes. Walk-in registration is also available for those who are not interested in committing to an entire session or want to try several different classes in the same session.

Sports Leagues

The majority of the leagues run three seasons per year:

- Winter: January to April
- Spring/Summer: May to August
- Fall: September to December

Aquatics

Swim Classes. Two six week sessions are held for swim classes in each of the winter, spring and fall program seasons. There is a week between sessions to allow for class make-ups. In the summer, three two-week sessions are held to accommodate vacationing families. The aquatics area has a total of nine sessions.

Exercise Classes. Aquatic exercise classes are held in six-week sessions with one week in between for make-ups. The sessions are continuous with seven sessions held during the year as well as some holiday sessions. Walk-in registration is also available for those who are not interested in committing to an entire session or want to try several different classes in the same session.

Specialty Classes. Due to their unique nature, specialty classes are planned and offered based on the requirements of the program.



GPCC Aquatics Center serves swimmers of all ages from tots to seniors, including swimmers over the age of 55 training for the Senior Olympics.

General Programming

General programs such as arts and crafts, preschool, youth programs, dance, and so on are offered in eight-week sessions by season. The after-school and summer programs as well as special events are tailored to the requirements of the programs. Mini sessions are also held depending on when the holidays fall.

After School and Camp

After school program is scheduled in three sessions that conform to the school calendar. This schedule accommodates working parents and works well as an alternative care option. The sessions include the following:

- Fall -1st Day of School to Winter Break
- Winter - Winter Break to Spring Break
- Spring -Spring Break to Last day of school.

Summer Camp. The Summer Camp program includes four types of programs: Camp GPCC, Playground and Mini People and one week Specialty Camps.

- Camp GPCC is held for eight weeks starting one week after school is out
- Playground and Mini People is offered for six weeks starting one week after school is out
- One week specialty camps start the Monday after the last day of school and run until the Friday before shutdown week.
- Specialty camps have diverse themes such as science, cheerleading, nature and sports.

Fee and Revenue Philosophy

Plymouth Township aims for cost recovery from the direct user of the service, program, or special facility. The parks are generally available at no cost to park visitors. Charges for the reservation of special use facilities in the parks are the exception to free park use.

The goal is to recover 80 percent of the operating cost of GPCC. The Department also strives to recover about 45 percent of costs for programs and activities that occur in Plymouth Township facilities. However, as free community programs and special events are added, the recovery rate decreases. If programs are added for which there are no fees or sponsors, then the Township will need to provide additional funds for staff, equipment, supplies and contractors to cover the expenses of the program or event.

Fees and charges were the one area that received the most pointed public comment. For example, non-residents thought that the GPCC fees were too high for non-residents while residents feel that the non-resident fees are too low. Some residents also feel that all Plymouth programs and facilities should be free to residents. They believe that their taxes ought to be enough to cover all of parks and recreation operating costs. There is some general concern that GPCC admission, membership and programs are somewhat high. It is important to note that fees and charges of area YM/YWCA's and fitness and health clubs are higher than at the GPCC.

Further discussions during the public participation process about the pricing levels found that the more people knew about how the fees are set, the need to recover costs, and the township's desire not to raise taxes to cover costs, the more understanding people were. The point seems to be that education about fees and charges is important. Future work with the community center consultant is crucial in this area in order to achieve the balance of cost recovery and affordable public service for the community.

Good Service/Good Will

The public participation process found that the goodwill towards the Parks and Recreation Department creates an overall favorable impression of Plymouth Township. The survey yielded over 50 handwritten comments of appreciation for the job well done by Plymouth Township Parks and Recreation management and staff. Typically such comments number only a handful in public opinion surveys for parks and recreation.

Survey Respondents Expressed Appreciation

- You are doing a good job. Keep up the good work.
- We love the gym…just wish it was bigger – people that work there are ***"great"!***
- Thanks for the opportunity to participate. Thank You.
- Plymouth Township is a good place to raise my family. You are always improving the way of life. It's safe, clean and a good community.
- You do a great job!
- I love the Township. I would like to see some place to chip and putt. Maybe an underutilized field.
- I'm very proud of our township and would love to see our parks and community center get more visibility with signage and maps.
- We think the Parks & Recreation Dept. is doing an outstanding job. Keep up the good work.
- Plymouth Twp. has an excellent Parks & Recreation Dept.
- You are a good township & any questions I have are always answered with polite & kind people. Thanks again for our new cement sidewalks!!!
- I'm getting older and don't find the time to do all that's offered. The park is beautiful and a great place for younger folks to spend their time. Thanks anyway for selecting me and I hope you receive lots of good mail. Keep up the good work.
- Thanks for conducting the survey!
- You have done a wonderful job.
- Ply. Twp. is a great place to live/work. Keep improving our parks and safe places to walk/ride bikes.
- Overall I am pleased with the parks. Open space is nice and should be valued. GPCC is an added benefit. Keep up the good work.
- I really like the park behind the community center – have walked there. Have seen baseball games & concert in the band shell. It is the nicest such park I have come across. Thank you for its existence, cleanliness and maintenance.
- I think Plymouth Township does a good job with all services it provides for citizens.
- I'm very impressed with the level of activities and open space here. I am proud to be a resident.
- I think you are doing a fantastic job serving the community and offering the wide range of programs. Thank you. I do think the Ply Twp resident should have memberships offered at a much lower cost.
- We enjoy your facilities – keep up the good work and always strive for better!
- In the 20 years I have lived in Plymouth, the parks have improved incredibly. You have really done a nice job! The key is now to continue to be a leader in parks and recreation and not to be satisfied with the current condition. Send people to conferences; see what's going on in other counties or states etc. The linking of parks and open spaces would be beneficial.

Program Planning and Management

The Department has solid expertise in recreation programs and services. This is typically the weak point for most community parks and recreation departments. Great recreation programming does not just happen. It requires expertise, training, creativity, and a willingness to take risks. Recreation programs must meet client needs for socialization, enrichment, creativity, adventure, and physical and emotional well-being.

Changes in programs, locations, times, staff, and other factors need to be carefully considered. The goal should be to balance the introduction of activity or event changes with quality existing services in order to insure a vibrant, thriving full-service recreation program. Any changes in program planning must be rooted in an analysis regarding the impact upon existing programs, services and staffing. Adding and changing recreational programs needs to be a decisive process. Because the department provides recreational services so successfully, it is easy to underestimate all that it takes to make these successful. Program changes impact management, staff, funding, promotion, scheduling, financing, other programs and support staff. While the Department is innovative, creative and flexible, it would be easy for these positive traits to take over to the detriment of quality services. Staff judgment should play an important role in management decisions regarding individual programs and services.

The staff continually monitors cancellation rates and assesses reasons for cancellations. This practice should continue as it means that the staff is designing programs that are new and creative. The goal for new programs introduced annually should be about 20 percent. About 30 to 50 percent of all new courses are likely to be cancelled while only about 15 percent of existing classes should be cancelled.[8] The addition of a new program should be based upon the development of an Impact Statement for Programs (ISP) which is discussed in Chapter 6 of this plan. The ISP would assess the cost of proposed programs in terms of staff and funding as well as revenue sources to support the program cost as a method for determining if sufficient resources are available to move ahead with the program.

Functions Impacted by Program Changes

Publicity. Program registration. Budget. Front desk scheduling. Registration staff scheduling. Program staff work schedules. Building set up. Equipment transportation assembly and take-down. Exposure to liability increased due to staff mistakes resulting from higher workload. And, most importantly, likelihood of success.

The Department is attempting to phase in methods to systematize the guidelines for cost recovery in an organized and equitable fashion for each and every program. The following components, along with their ideal percentage, should be considered as factors in a pricing formula for programs[9]:

- Income projected – Fees paid by participants – 100%
- Direct Cost – Instructors, materials, supplies - Not more than 60 %

[8] Learning Resources Network. **Developing Successful New Programs**. PRPS Conference. 2003.
[9] *Ibid*. Learning Resources Network.

- Operating Margin (Income minus Direct Costs) – About 40 %

- Administration – Administrative salaries, space – About 35 %

- Promotion – Advertising, brochures, postage – About 10-15 %

The administrative cost of programs could include a dollar amount based upon the operating costs of GPCC for programs held there, park operating costs for programs held in the parks, or rental fees for leased space such as school facilities. Fees should increase commensurately with administrative and direct cost increase.

Program Registration

Rec Trac software was purchased and the staff has been trained in its use. Program registration is available through drop-in, mail, phone, fax and on-line via the Internet. The Township has made registration even more convenient by accepting credit cards. Credit card payments are resulting in more sales than ever before when only checks or cash were accepted.

Program Promotion

Plymouth Township is progressive in having a full-time Marketing Specialist. One of the most helpful community services is providing information about parks and recreation. **Leisure Visions** is the departmental brochure that is mailed to every household quarterly. The brochure contains all of the information about the department's programs, services and facilities as well as information about other organizations such as adult and youth sports organizations.

In addition to **Leisure Visions**, the Department sends e-mail newsletters, advertises on the township's cable television channel, develops fliers for individual programs, advertises on the WEB site and places program information in the township newsletter.

One of the most important promotional tools that Plymouth has is the GPCC itself! The GPCC has become the launch site for participation in public recreation by many people. They visit the GPCC for an event, see the beautiful facility, experience its top notch service and then join in on future programs or membership in the center. Another important promotional tool in the same vein is word-of-mouth. Many people talked about how they heard about the great programs and facilities in the Township.

Self-Directed Programs

People want to be able to use facilities such as trails, bike paths, fitness facilities, scenic areas, and have access to natural areas for their own self-directed recreation. The survey shows that these are among the most preferred activities. GPCC has contributed great value to the citizens in this area as people can come to the center for recreation whenever they want.

Other Recreation Service Providers

Plymouth residents are fortunate to have a number of recreation service providers in addition to the Township's services. The role of the Township is to work in cooperation with the other providers and to facilitate their programming wherever possible. Plymouth Township has a host of groups that all contribute to public recreation in the community.

The Department's philosophy is that collaboration is mutually beneficial and results in effective public service for less cost. The Department and the community sports organizations have worked hard at building a strong working relationship. The Department rigorously avoids duplication of effort to focus on programs that are not offered elsewhere. For example, movie nights, folk concerts, and field hockey are offered elsewhere in the region so that Plymouth Township does not duplicate these activities here.

Montgomery County Parks & Historic Services

Montgomery County adopted a strategic plan, **Shaping Our System**, in 2005 in which Parks & Historic Services is looking at partnerships with municipalities and other park, recreation and heritage service providers. There is an opportunity for Plymouth Township to collaborate with the County in the area of nature and environmental education. Plymouth Township is already working with Montgomery County in creating connections to the Cross County and Schuylkill River Trails. As Montgomery County develops its Visitors Services Division, Plymouth Township could pursue discussions with the County regarding future partnerships.

Colonial School District and Related Programs

The Plymouth Whitemarsh Adult Evening School is a nonprofit organization sponsored by the Colonial Board of School Directors. Courses fall under the categories of Arts and Crafts, Business and Finance, Languages, Special Interests, and Sports Health and Recreation, and are designed mainly for the self-improvement and enjoyment of the students. Classes are held Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday nights. No high school or college credit is given.

Organized Youth Sports

Plymouth Township has several organizations that provide organized sports on a volunteer basis. The Parks and Recreation Department provides facilities for the leagues as well as annual contributions of about $31,000. This contribution is important from two somewhat contradictory perspectives. The trend elsewhere is for municipalities to institute field maintenance charges to sports organizations. The township contribution helps to support sports leagues that Plymouth Township could not afford to run on its own.

Over the past ten years, participation has increased, year-round play emerged, more females are playing, and players are involved at older and younger ages. This has resulted in the need for more facilities and additional maintenance requirements. **Table 19** presents the Plymouth Township organized sports inventory.

Issues and Opportunities Regarding Youth Sports

Matters that affect sports play in Plymouth Township include:

Field Use Conflicts

- Overlapping field design results in organizations vying for the same space, irregular patterns of use that affect sports play differently for the various sports using the same space; user conflicts and over use of the field.
- Year round play precludes the use of overlapping facilities. A fall baseball program started at East Plymouth Valley Park in the past few years.
- EPVP and JFK are especially difficult with multiple sports and limited fields.

Changes & Growth in Sports

- Soccer is going to smaller numbers of players on the field at one time e.g. going from 11 players on a side to eight players on a side. This means that the same number of children is playing on smaller teams thus requiring more fields to accommodate the smaller number of participants playing in a game.
- Additional organized sports leagues for youth are emerging such as lacrosse. Facilities for emerging sports and adult use are needed. Focus is on youth sports with current sports. Emerging sports for adults include lacrosse, soccer and rugby leagues.
- Some sports leagues are operated regionally such as field hockey in Whitpain Township. Some programs such as Little League have designated territories that do not follow municipal boundaries.
- Legion plays at JFK and the NCAA field for games. The Legion team is just starting up and is grateful to have field use in Plymouth.
- Both women's and men's leagues are emerging in these sports for over 30, over, 40 and over 50! Field hockey and soccer leagues for older players are springing up in municipalities across the state.

Maintenance

- School District has experienced over use and abuse of school district fields.
- Overlapping field use and overlapping sports' seasons place more wear and tear on the fields requiring a higher level of maintenance

Table 19 Plymouth Township Organized Sports Inventory						
Organization	Sport	Participants	Number	Season	Fee	Township Donation in 2004
Plymouth Ice Hockey	Ice Hockey	Middle School & High School	62	Winter/Spring	$800 varsity $675 Mid School	$3,000
Plymouth Soccer	Soccer	Boys & Girls 5-18	1,200	Year round	$115/person/travel team $65/person/intermural	$4,000
Plymouth Little League	Baseball	Boys 5-13	339	Spring Summer	$75/person $20/each additional person	$4,900
Conshocken Little League	Baseball	Boys 5-13	344	Spring Summer	$65/person $5/each additional person	$1,200
Whitemarsh Girls Softball	Softball	Girls	298	Spring Summer	$60/person $5/each additional person	0
Spartans	Football Cheerleading	Boys 5-15 Girls 6-15	287	Summer Fall	$105/person $155/two $200/three $60/flag	$3,000
Mt. Carmel Baseball	Baseball	Boys 16-18	18	Spring Summer		0
Greater Norristown Wrestling Club	Wrestling	Boys 5-15	56	Winter	$60/person $80/family	$1,000 $162 tournament/ custodial fees
Plymouth Junior ABA	Basketball	Boys & Girls 6-15	441	Fall Winter	$55/family $0/under-priviledged	$3,500 $4,000 custodial fees; gym time GPCC $7,000 fees waived
Plymouth Whitemarsh Aquatics Club	Competitive swimming and diving	Boys & Girls 6-18	200	Fall Winter		0
Plymouth Slo-Pitch	Softball	Men		Spring Summer		0

Security

- Rogue teams are a serious problem. They play without permission and regardless of field conditions, thus damaging the fields.

Lighting

- Soccer needs more field space and lights. They play year round: indoors in winter, practice outside in summer, spring & fall play. They play at GPCC with lights, Colwell, Colonial Middle School, and in Miles Park in Whitemarsh. The Colonial School District will be developing two soccer fields on 6.96 acres behind the Plymouth Whitemarsh High School.

- Not enough time under the lights (EPVP field 2 & football field).

- Lighting would extend the use of limited facilities. The additional use would require additional maintenance, labor costs, utility costs, and cyclic replacement of lighting equipment. Utility costs are projected to increase in line with the rising price of oil. Electricity is projected to increase significantly in 2006 and 2007.

- Lighted fields should be compatible with surrounding land use. Advances in technology in lighting have reduced spill over effects from sports field lighting by concentrating the light in the area needed for play.

Land for Additional Fields/Regional Considerations

- Land for additional sports fields in Plymouth Township is very limited and very expensive.

- Sports groups operate regionally. Discussions with neighboring municipalities and the School District should be held to explore regional solutions to the need for more sports fields.

Conclusions and Recommendations

1. **Continue to set the standard for quality parks and recreation programs.**

   Insure that all programs and service retain the Plymouth hallmarks of superior customer service, high caliber staff, quality experiences in the programs, and responsiveness to participant requests or concerns.

2. **Expand programs and program areas only after carefully considered analysis of the impact of the change.**

   - Recognize that programs and services appear to be at their maximum based upon current facility size, parking limitations, and staff hours. ***The Township offers over 2,000 scheduled events annually. This is in comparison with similarly sized townships that offer 160 to 400 events annually.***

- Develop an assessment of the impact of the program changes through the proposed **Impact Statement for Programs** referenced in the management chapter of this plan regarding:
  - program staff needed for the new program
  - impact on existing staff time
  - impact on existing programs
  - financial cost of new program
  - revenue sources or sponsorships for new program
  - funding or revenues that would be displaced by the new program

3. Consider nature and environmental education as the next specialty area.

- Design Harriet Wetherill Park as a natural area.

- Examine nature and environmental services as a program area in the development of the Wetherill Master Park Plan. Determine how this will fit in the overall department and program structure.

- Explore a partnership with the Colonial School District in the area of environmental education and nature.

- Investigate a partnership with Montgomery County Parks & Heritage Services regarding environmental education.

- Establish connections to the Schuylkill River in conjunction with regional partners. Places for citizens to access the river may only be possible through the adjoining communities, but Plymouth could establish connections through trails and other revitalization projects along the river.

4. Explore the creation of a "healthy community" program.

- As a result of the top public health issue of lack of physical activity and the obesity problem among youth, explore a partnership with GPCC, school district, hospital and PANA (Pennsylvania Activities and Nutrition Advocates) to create a program targeting these issues in the community. PANA and Healthy Communities are regional programs targeting healthy lifestyles among teens and youth. These programs are in their infancy. There is a potential for partnerships and perhaps funding. The Department could continue to monitor PANA's progress in order to determine how to become involved in emerging opportunities.

- Charge the fitness director with developing this program, setting goals and objectives. The director would be responsible for coordinating with other managers such as marketing, aquatics and so on to make this a joint program.

- Insure that the program could be absorbed within the resources of the department or through other partnership or grant funding sources. Carry out the program as resources allow.

- Target youth and senior adults, which is consistent with the GPCC management consultant's recommendations.

5. **Continue to develop and distribute Leisure Visions.**

   - While ultimately it would be less costly and easier to have the WEB site serve as the "go to" source for information about parks and recreation in the Township, some people are not ready for this as found in the survey. People look forward to getting **Leisure Visions** - whether they use the programs or not! Encourage people to use the WEB site and on-line registration in **Leisure Visions**.

   - Consider having a series of focus groups to discuss the publication itself. Through directed questioning of target groups such as adults, seniors, teens, parents, GPCC users, non-participants and so on, the department may generate ideas to make **Leisure Visions** even more effective with the public. Use LERN information and consultations to enhance the effectiveness of the departmental publications. Pursue the department's new tool for classifying programs according to advertising output.

   - Create and implement an incentive program to reward productive suggestions that result in better public service, increased revenue, or enhanced staff experiences.

6. **Continue to practice "listenomics".**

   - One of the most productive things that staff does in the Parks and Recreation Department is to listen deliberately to the public. Learning to ask the right questions will help the staff zero in on specific ways to improve services, facilities and operations. This could be a topic of discussion at departmental staff meetings in order to create more awareness of the importance of asking targeted questions.

   - Put into practice carefully considered responses to public ideas and suggestions.

7. **Continue to look at support issues that affect programs and services.**

   - Explore hours that serve people best especially programs for children that require extended hours for working parents.

   - Insure that top-notch instructors and program contractors are retained. They are the difference between success and failure in public recreation programming.

   - Calculate and adopt the funding formula for programs and services that includes direct costs for the programs such as instructor wages and materials; administrative costs which cover overhead of administration and program space; and promotional costs.

   - Consider the facility and staff needs that are basic to offering programs that draw people to facilities. This includes parking, fitness center size, and current sports field numbers and maintenance. Look at sports regionally with other townships.

   - Recognize that community sponsored events such as races, parades, special events, volunteer park improvements, and so on actually require a substantial commitment from the Parks and Recreation Department. This includes management participation in planning meetings for many months; coordination; staff time in planning, directing, and controlling the event. Carefully consider the parks and recreation commitment required to support the event prior to agreeing to undertake it.

Chapter 6
Management & Financing

PLYMOUTH TOWNSHIP
PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT

MONTGOMERY COUNTY
1784

DCNR

Pennsylvania Recreation & park SOCIETY, INC.

Greater Plymouth
COMMUNITY
C • E • N • T • E • R

Chapter

6

Management & Financing

The Plymouth Township Parks & Recreation Department manages a vast array of complex and challenging functions. The myriad tasks and projects run the gamut from managing a multi-million dollar budget to comforting a lost child.

Administrators need a diverse set of skills and techniques to manage the complex systems in the ever-changing and demanding world of public parks and recreation. Successful operations are rooted in effective management. While it is important to do things right, it is even more important to do the right things.

Doing the right thing is the forte of Plymouth Township. The Township has made a series of decisions and commitments to providing the highest quality public recreation services in Pennsylvania. The huge scale of managing public recreation services is shown in the attendance figures below. **These numbers show that nearly 800 people visit GPCC everyday!**

Go Figure!

Recreation Attendance in 2004:

- **Total GPCC Visitation: 276,605**
- **Fitness Center and Aerobics: 78,886**
- **Youth Programs: 25, 372**
- **Rentals and Birthday Parties: 21,118**
- **Swim Lesson Participation: 10,416**
- **Adult Programs: 10,140**
- **Summer Camps and After School Registrants: 1,241**

The Township did its homework well. Plymouth undertook the studies and planning required to assess the benefits, conditions and potential pitfalls of undertaking major projects since the start of parks and recreation planning in 1992. These included comprehensive park, recreation and open space plans; three public opinion surveys, interviews, and focus groups; feasibility study for the community center; annual community center management assessments; updates for the comprehensive park, recreation and open space plans and park master plans. The Township looked not only at the relatively exciting aspects of the projects such as designing and building facilities but also at the more mundane aspects of the projects: operations, funding and management.

The Department has been working over the last ten years to establish a management team with the capacity to address all aspects of the municipal parks, recreation and open space system. The Township has supported the Department in putting into place a cadre of individuals with specific skills and responsibilities for a well-rounded team. They have expertise in management, recreation programming, marketing and promotion, information management and technology, fitness, aquatics, financing and customer service. Within this structure, the staff operates as a team with the flexibility and commitment to get the job done. This will enable the Department to once again make the changes necessary to position Plymouth Township parks and recreation system for the future.

Purpose of the Management and Financing Assessment

The purpose of the management and financing assessment was to work with the Plymouth Township Parks and Recreation Department in taking a fresh look at operations, revenues and expenditures. The assessment addressed organizational structure, staffing, employee development, public involvement, maintenance, information, and budget including revenues and expenditures.

Parks and Recreation Department Organization

Figure 4 depicts the Plymouth Township Parks and Recreation Department Organizational Structure. The Plymouth Parks and Recreation Department has 27 full time employees and over 100 seasonal and part-time employees and independent contractors.

Management

The chief management positions for this department are the Director of Parks and Recreation and the Assistant Director of Parks and Recreation.

The Director is responsible for the overall management and administration of the Parks & Recreation Department including planning, directing, controlling and evaluating all aspects of the system including personnel, administration, programs, services, promotion, financing, parks planning, GPCC and all other matters. The Director works closely with the Assistant Director and the Director of Buildings and Grounds. The Director and the Assistant Director collaborate in creating and sustaining important community partnerships such as with the Colonial School District. The Parks and Recreation Director is responsible for implementing the policy directives of Council through the Township Manager.

The Assistant Director's primary responsibilities are overseeing the GPCC operations, programs, scheduling, group services including permits for GPCC and park use, and working with the Director in public private partnerships. The Assistant Director has supervisory responsibility for the four division managers and the information technology specialist. The Assistant Director assumes the responsibilities of the Director in the Director's absence.

Plymouth Township has assembled an important group of supporting professional staff as part of the management team. These include:

- **Special Projects Administrator** is vital to the organization in terms of being responsible for major projects and financial matters. Projects include the parks, recreation and open space plan, park master planning, grants, financial projections, and GPCC evaluation. In the complex operation of the GPCC, new park planning, and park revitalization this position is indispensable.

- **Recreation Publications & Information Administrator** is a key position that helps to assess community needs, identify trends, advertise and promote Plymouth Township Parks & Recreation. This position is responsible for producing and evaluating a portion of the administrative reports for informed decision-making by the management team on future directions. This position is vital to success in achieving future revenue goals for GPCC and to sustain and enhance current levels of participation.

- **Administrative Assistant** works closely with the Parks and Recreation Director, Assistant Director, Special Projects Administrator, Recreation Publications and Information Administrator and Administrative Manager. This position provides continual details for the many fiscal reports, use reports, area reports, payroll, purchasing, invoice functions and miscellaneous clerical duties. The Management Information System (MIS) flows through this position into the hands of management for decision-making.

- **Technical Specialist** is responsible for computer classes for the public, staff computer training, and making sure that all computer hardware and software operates properly. The Technical Specialist is responsible for the oversight of the department's computer software system, Rec Trac, and other technical systems such as telephones and time clocks.

All of the above positions assist in coordinating reports that are used to make management decisions. The Recreation Publications and Information Administrator and Special Projects Administrator report to the Parks & Recreation Director. The Technical Specialist reports to the Assistant Parks & Recreation Director.

Organizational Divisions

The Department is organized into the following divisions: Recreation Programs, Fitness & Sports, Aquatics, and Administration.

Recreation Program Manager administers the program division of parks and recreation. The manager plans, monitors and evaluates all recreation programs and services for general recreation programs in the community and the GPCC, special events, birthday parties, building rentals and the Pro Shop. The manager supervises program area staff including full time, part-time and seasonal staff as well as contract employees.

Fitness and Sports Manager is responsible for management of the GPCC fitness center, gym, sports programs, fitness and wellness programs, leagues, and land aerobics. The manager supervises personnel that include full and part time fitness specialists, instructors, league staff and attendants.

Aquatics Manager is responsible for operation and management of the GPCC aquatics center including pool care, all certification and training. This position entails planning,

implementation and evaluation of the aquatics programs; supervision of lifeguards and swim instructors; coordination of aquatics programs with other parks and recreation departments, agencies and partners.

Administrative Manager is responsible for customer service. This position supervises all employees in customer service including GPCC front desk management, registration, finances, ticket sales and administration of daily functions related to customer care as well as all clerical functions.

Parks Maintenance

Parks maintenance falls within the Buildings and Grounds Division of Plymouth Township's overall organization. The Buildings and Grounds Director is responsible for planning, directing, and evaluating parks, recreation facilities and custodial services. The organizational structure is shown in **Figure 5**.

Professional Parks & Recreation Positions

Management positions dealing with parks and recreation require a high level of professionalism and appropriate certification and licensure. The Director of Parks and Recreation and the Assistant Parks and Recreation Director are Certified Parks and Recreation Professionals (CPRP), under the auspices of the National Park & Recreation Association and the Pennsylvania Recreation & Park Society. Their combination of expertise works well for Plymouth Township.

The number of full-time and part-time positions creates a large workload for the Department in terms of recruiting, hiring, training, supervising and evaluating the number of employees in the system. Consequently attracting and retaining dedicated, skilled, and highly qualified people is in the best interest of the Township in terms of both service delivery and cost containment.

Training in the Recreation Area

Since 2002, staff in the recreation area of the Plymouth Township parks and recreation system participated in 159 training courses some with multiple sessions on different topics resulting in over 300 training experiences. The range of skill development and certification included CPR, First Aid, AED, Aquatics Facility Operation, Park and Recreation Professional Certification, Fire Extinguisher use, Harassment Prevention, Communication, Pesticides, Computer Software, Liability, Recreation Programming, and Supervision.

Figure 4

Plymouth Township

Parks & Recreation Staff Organization Chart

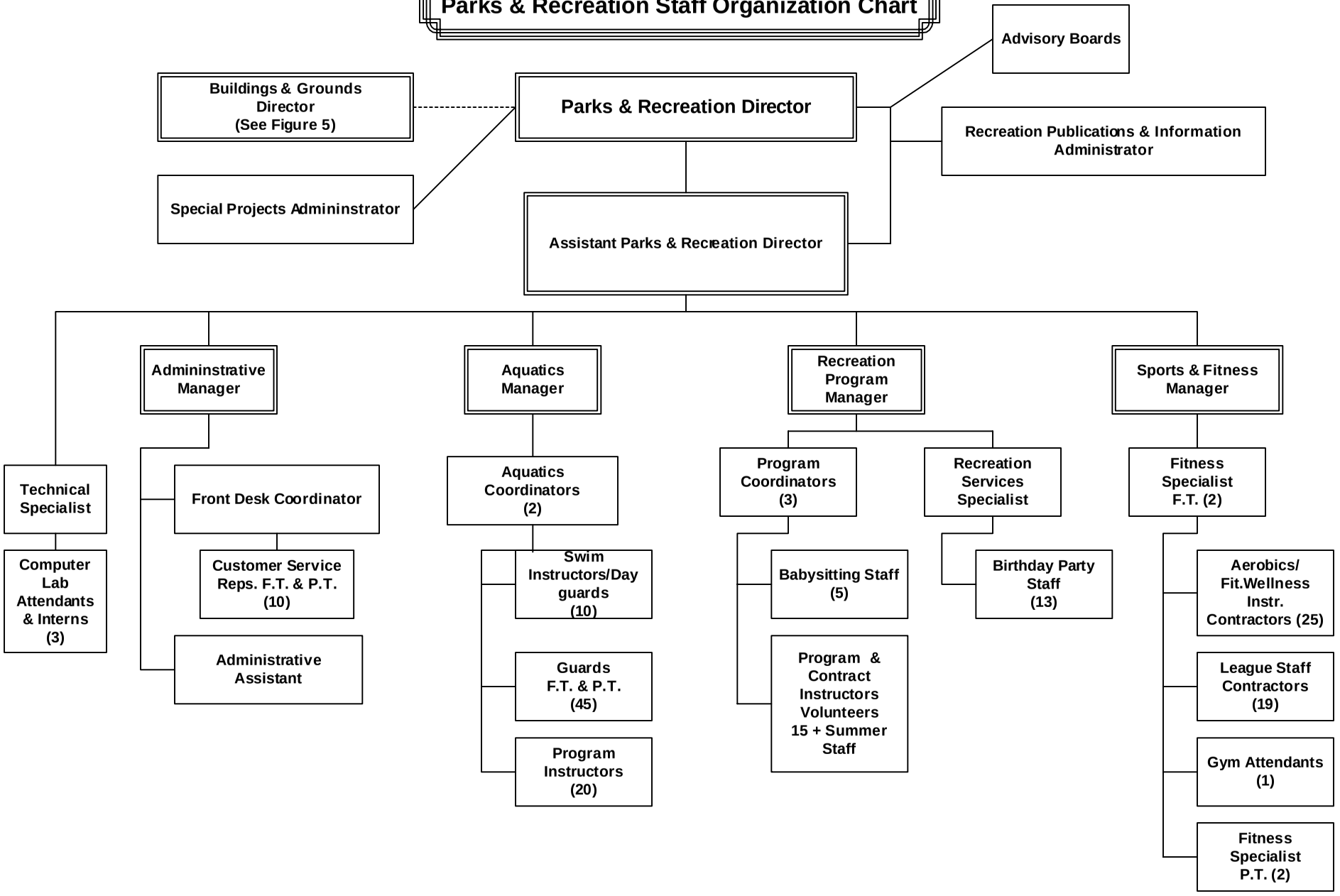
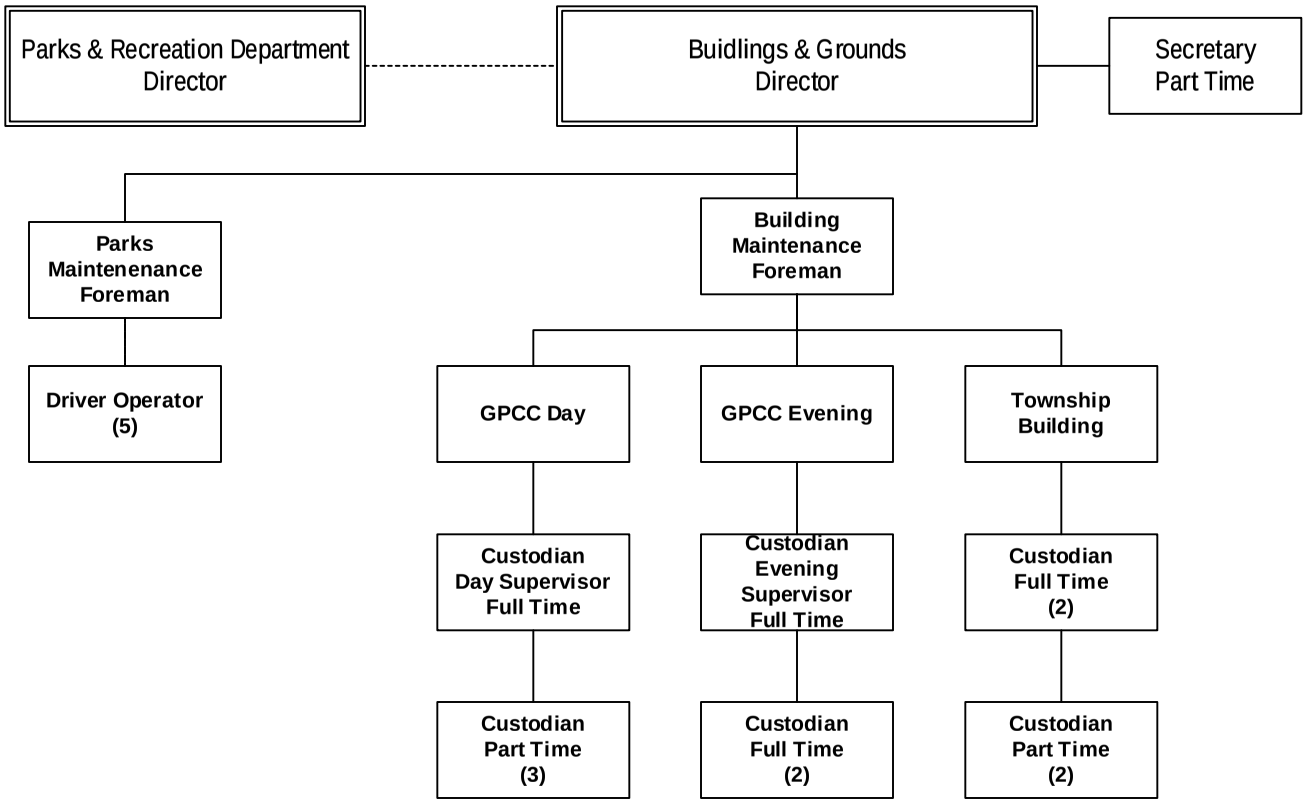


Figure 5
Plymouth Township
Buildings & Grounds Department
Organizational Chart



Parks and Recreation Department Operations

Plymouth Township's organizational structure is set up to empower the four main functional areas: Recreation Programs, Fitness & Sports Aquatics and Administrative Services. There is overlap and continuous communication among the divisions as well as the support positions such as Public Relations and technical support. Within this structure, it is crucial that the divisions function collaboratively; this is a challenge given the large size of the organization

Recreation Programs

1. **Recognize the large number of programs and services that are already available.**

2. **Look at where there may be program holes.** Figuring out how to bring more men into GPCC and other programs could be identified as a potential new area. While teens keep being mentioned as more in need of services, the department's previous work in teen recreation planning as well as interviews with teens and focus groups found that this area has been exhausted for now. Focusing on growing the next generation of teen GPCC and other program users should be the direction. Children and youths that use GPCC are more likely to continue using the GPCC in the future.

3. **Explore the support issues related to program and recreation participation.** Continuing to evaluate programs with participants will be crucial to future sustained participation. This includes issues such as the management of potentially unruly groups that deter others from participating or joining; pricing; location; hours; and so on.

4. **Develop the program management plan for the next fiscal year in the fall.** The plan should address the market segments to be addressed; total number of services, locations, events or programs to be offered for each programming season; income goals that also include provision of services for those with financial needs. It is important to create a program vision for three to five years out and then develop the program management plan in detail for the first year. It is equally important that the program plan be realistic. Use this approved plan as a guide and for decision-making purposes when other programs are requested to be put into place. Programming benchmarks could include the following[10]:

    - New programs – 20%
    - Overall cancellation rate – 15%
    - New program cancellation rate – 30-50%
    - Divisions – keep the same program areas as available now within the current workload.

[10] Based upon formula supplied by LERN, the Learning Resources Network which is the leading association in lifelong learning programming. LERN PO Box 9 River Falls, Wisconsin, 54022. <Http://www.lern.org.

While LERN recommends that 20 percent of a municipal park and recreation organization's programs be new annually, this percentage appears to be high given the scope and sheer number of programs offered by Plymouth Township. For Plymouth, new programs offered annually should be in the five percent range which would be about 35 new programs within existing program areas. The recommendation for new programs is based upon the premise that existing programs would be evaluated to determine which ones could be discontinued due to low interest and changing trends or needs. It does not mean that 35 programs should be added to existing program offerings; *some programs should be discontinued as new ones are planned*. Systematizing overhead calculations and their application to program fees and charges should be implemented. This will be especially important as revenues from programs and passes level off.

Fitness & Sports

While the fitness center is very popular, its five year history has shown it to be undersized for community needs. The public participation process found that more children and youth would like to get involved with fitness and training. It is also evident that certain classes like aerobics are declining in popularity.

1. **Implement the recommendations of Ballard*King in the fitness area**. Work on developing the adult sports teams' area. Explore potential niche markets such as men's basketball. Also consider the non-traditional activities such as kickball and dodge ball which are increasing in popularity nationwide. Expand the emphasis on the entire fitness area rather than focusing on the small cardio and weight room in order to build up clientele. Areas to pursue include personal fitness training, yoga and Pilates. Actively exploring various options, developing strategies for increasing fitness participation, outlining a marketing approach, and writing all of this down in a plan with timeline, roles, responsibilities and bench marks of success is crucial to maximizing the potential of the fitness area.

2. **Strive for a continuous array of new fitness activities or twists on old ones.** It is important to keep the fitness center lively with new attractions to prevent boredom and keep people coming back. Include basic leagues that people expect to be available in a gym.

3. **Start subscribing to fitness publications from the western areas of the USA such as Los Angeles where fitness is always cutting edge**. Monitor trends on the Internet as well. Use these as information sources to create variety in GPCC.

4. **Develop a "Healthy Communities" program in partnership with Colonial School District, Montgomery Hospital, Bryn Mawr Hospital, health care providers in the Township, PANA and others**. Target reducing childhood obesity through activity and reducing sedentary lifestyles of adults. Seek grant funds to start a program using advice from PANA.

Aquatics

The pools offer the capacity for drop-in recreational swimming and fitness as well as organized scheduled programs, lessons and events.

1. **Continue to provide excellent swim lessons.** Provide lessons for all ages and abilities.

2. **Continue to be the regional hub of "train the trainers" in aquatics.** This includes Water Safety Instructor Training, lifeguard training and so on.

3. **Add more specialty programs like Pool-O-Ween.** These attractive types of programs get people in to the GPCC and serve as both a program and a marketing tool. Achieve balance among scheduled programs, drop-in swimming and fitness and specialty programs.

4. **Use the pool as an advertising tool.** The uniqueness of the pool lends itself to photos and advertising that cannot be duplicated by another organization in the area. Capitalize on this Plymouth Township niche.

5. **Develop a training center for water based recreation should priorities and schedules allow.** With the new emphasis on recreational use of the Schuylkill River, use the GPCC to train people in sports such as kayaking and canoeing. Include information such as where "to put in and take out". Work with other providers to sponsor programs and trips that will actually get people on the river. Focus on the goal of creating experiences for people in which they can develop life-long skills for active healthy lifestyles.

Administrative Services

The Parks & Recreation Department has been improving its administrative and customer service steadily over the past five years. The Department has instituted many successful management initiatives that resulted in streamlined operations that improved efficiency and service. These measures included the new key and locker system and a new phone system. Recently instituted was the daily access pass. Throughout the public participation process, the public lauded customer service.

1. **Continue the ongoing training program for administrative and customer services.**

2. **Collect and document information for use in marketing and advertising**.

3. **Be attuned to asking perceptive questions about customer ideas and experiences within GPCC and the Plymouth Township Parks and Recreation system**.

Cross Pollination of Services

With the size and complexity of the GPCC and other township parks and recreation services, it would be very tempting for each division or functional area to operate

independently. It is important that the divisions "cross pollinate" their services throughout departmental operations to maximize public service and spark program innovations.

1. **For programs that involve or could involve multiple divisions, assign one division the lead team responsibility.** Each of the other program areas would assume a support role in making the program happen.

2. **Support the informal communication network in which staff members talk about their work efforts and what is happening within their division and with the clients.** The lunch room has a valuable, warm atmosphere for sharing. Continue to use staff meetings to formalize information sharing.

Public Relations & Promotions

The cross pollination of services is most apparent in the area of Public Relations and Promotions which supports and interacts with all other divisions. This position is responsible for all advertising. Having a public relations position in a Parks and Recreation Department puts Plymouth Township at the forefront of public recreation. The position builds public awareness about parks and recreation. Higher public awareness leads to higher participation and ultimately higher revenues. To take Public Relations to the next level, the Department could consider the following:

1. **Recognize that there are three major areas for promotion: GPCC, recreation programs, and parks**. Continue to support an effective internal communication system so that all divisions are aware of what other divisions are doing. Continue to use the staff meetings and informal discussions to make sure that staff has a broad view of all departmental efforts, not just their own program area.

2. **Develop a strategic written marketing plan.** Identify specific target goals with specific results. Now that GPCC has celebrated its fifth anniversary, participation and numbers are likely to plateau based on the assessment by Ballard*King, the community center operations consultant. Therefore targeting very specific tasks such as retaining a defined percentage of members every year; attracting a defined number of new members; getting a targeted number of men to join GPCC or buy passes and others will help to focus efforts on certain niche aspects of parks and recreation. Actions could include focus groups to cull ideas and concerns, incentives, discounts, prizes, special tagged close parking spot for a month as a reward and others to be discovered. Develop and implement programs as a marketing tool to get human traffic into the GPCC so that they can see and experience it. The goal would be that they would return to use the center and encourage other people to do so as well.

   Develop a three year marketing strategy with a general approach and goals. Establish a very specific marketing program for the next fiscal year. It should include:

   - Regular evaluation and needs assessment
   - Promotional methods: pricing

- Advertising in various media should be strategic as well. It could include "blitzes" rather than an ad here and there; creation of a mascot, targeted use of the logo, working with people to figure out how to make the WEB site the "go to" place for information about parks and recreation.
- LERN guidelines should be phased in for marketing and program management.

3. **Deal with public relations concerns identified in the public participation process for this plan**. These include the following general statements:

    - Use publications to inform the public about pricing to convey broad public awareness of the value of the center. Develop strategies to educate people who do not use the Center. Developing strategies should include the identification of target audiences most likely to use the center, exploration of effective ways of reaching this audience through a variety of means, creation of potential incentives to get people to try out GPCC along with a strong outreach program to implement the incentives, and the development of a follow-up system to determine the effectiveness of educational efforts. Ideas include handouts for people who come for center events such as parties, sports events, concerts and so on, news feature stories with members articulating the value and benefits of the GPCC, Leisure Visions articles with facts presented as information "bytes" to get the message of GPCC value across, kiosk in the Mall, the use of "Clipper" or other direct mail coupon services, and many others that could be explored.
    - Develop a written statement to standardize how front line staff discuss GPCC pricing polices. The goal should be to inform the public as well as build a perception of great value for the money.
    - Use the WEB site to educate members, potential members and the general citizenry about GPCC and its value.
    - Include information such as rebates from health insurers for regular use of the GPCC thus lowering the cost of passes and programs. For example some insurance companies will rebate for fitness facility membership and use.
    - People don't know what municipality they live in when it comes to residency rates.

    These are all a matter of education and creating good will through understanding. People that use GPCC value it and understand the fee structure.

4. **Build the data base on people who use GPCC and programs as well as those who cease use.** Detailing who the customers are along with their preferences and interests will help the Department to plan services as well as to promote them. This component should include program evaluation, information from registrations, quick surveys, and outreach. Outreach should include focus groups on various topics to find out what the customers want. A focus group should consist of about six to ten individuals sitting around a table with a facilitator asking a set of directed questions. This could be done between Public Relations and Recreation staff. It is also important for the front desk people and program staff to develop interviewing skills to ask insightful questions to ascertain

customer likes, dislikes and ideas. Ferreting out this kind of feedback will help in the planning and delivery of programs and services.

Recognize that not every citizen will use public recreation and parks but that even if they don't, citizens still value township parks and recreation. Therefore, it is important to focus on the customers the Department has and to get them to participate more in other programs. Retaining customers and getting them involved in other activities is most important. It is easier and less costly to retain a current member than it is to get a new member. With membership at its peak and the GPCC being five years old now, focusing on creating new members in the future is important. Excellent customer service to children and youth builds the next generation of members. Targeting identified client groups and finding ways of reaching people in this group are discussed above in item three.

Future Division: Nature and Environmental Education

Long term, the next new division of the Plymouth Township Parks and Recreation Department to be considered would be nature and the environment. The addition of this division would require the re-organization of the parks and recreation system. The division could be phased in over time as follows:

- Development of the Harriet Wetherill Park Master Plan.
- Identification of phases of park development ranging from simple signage and trails in the short term and potentially up to a full-scale nature center many years into the future. Phasing will depend upon available financing including municipal and non-municipal sources.
- Identification of programs ranging from self-directed immediately up to full-service environmental education in partnership with the Colonial School District, Montgomery County Parks & Historic Services, scout groups, private schools or others over time.



Pathways to the Future: Nature will be the next program area.

Figure 6

Partial Job Description and Qualifications

Plymouth Township Naturalist

QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

The Naturalist should have a degree in environmental, biology, botany, conservation or a related field and have experience with parks, recreation, outdoor education, facility management, and working with the public.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- **Manages the natural areas of the park lands, buildings and trails within accepted standards and practices of conservation and natural resource management.**
- **Coordinates field experience, guided tours and educational programs for local schools, groups and families; and administers departmental nature programs for all ages including adult education.**
- **Establishes and coordinates nature-related clubs, group volunteer programs and services for all ages and types of groups.**
- **Conducts research, establishes interpretative and educational displays throughout municipal buildings and grounds and writes nature based articles for township publications.**
- **Assists with the coordination of maintenance for all natural areas in township parks.**
- **Supervises seasonal staff, instructors and volunteers. Coordinates with all programming and facility partners for long-term projects and educational programs.**
- **Works on fundraising and partnership development programs along with parks and recreation department staff.**

Maintenance

The Buildings and Grounds Director is responsible for planning, controlling and evaluating park and recreation facility maintenance. Currently, the Buildings and Grounds Department is responsible for maintaining about 134 acres of parkland. These lands are primarily active recreation areas with a focus on sports facilities. The sports turf management program should be stepped up in order to keep the fields in top condition.

Recently the Township has undertaken more nature based projects such as the pier at East Plymouth Valley Park and some stream bank stabilization work. Another 15 acres of parkland will be added at the Harriet Wetherill Park. With 67 acres, the Wetherill farm will be the township's largest park. The new acreage being folded into the system is a departure from park maintenance historically in Plymouth. This will require a new set of resource management skills.

Maintenance is the single largest recurring expenditure in park and recreation operations. Over the lifetime of a park, about 75 percent of its cost is in maintenance while only about 25 percent is in acquisition, development, design, and construction[11].

While routine maintenance has been the focus in the township parks, a broader view of park care should be considered. A holistic perspective on the parks would incorporate park planning, use policies, maintenance, and facility management. In order to do this, a formal, written maintenance management system should be developed and put into place. Potential areas for consideration for maintenance in the future include the following:

1. **Develop standards of care for the facilities, parklands and natural areas.** Not all park areas should be maintained to achieve a manicured appearance. Naturalization is better for the environment, less costly and in accordance with public preferences in Plymouth Township for natural resource conservation. Standards can and should vary within parks as well as among parks. To advance the standards of care concept, public education is required in order to inform the citizens that the township is adopting a more naturalized approach. Otherwise, citizens misperceive the naturalization as reduced maintenance. Information at park kiosks, mowing a pathway along newly formed meadows, and articles in the **Leisure Visions** and the **Township Newsletter** can help to educate citizens.

   Suggested Maintenance Modes for Park Care

   Because of the wide variance in park systems, a standard maintenance classification system does not work. The National Recreation and Park Association has suggested a system of maintenance modes that provide guidelines for ways of maintaining parks from intensive to least intensive[12]. Maintenance modes can be used to describe approaches to a park as a whole or for selected components within parks. These can help Plymouth Township set up a standardized approach to park maintenance to further understanding and expectations about the level of care of township parks.

   Mode I: State of the art maintenance. High quality diverse landscape such as public squares, government grounds or high visitation parks.

   Mode II: High level maintenance. Well developed parks with reasonably high visitation.

   Mode III: Moderate level maintenance. Locations with moderate to low development and visitation. Agencies with budget restrictions that cannot provide a higher level of maintenance.

[11] Lay, Francis. (1978). *Management of Grounds and Site Maintenance Operations*. **Manual of Site Management**, Environmental Design Press. p.4.
[12] National Recreation and Park Association. (1986) **Park Maintenance Standards**.(Alexandria, VA: NRPA)

Mode IV: Moderately low level of maintenance. Low level of development and visitation, undeveloped areas, and remote parks.

Mode V: High visitation natural areas. Size and importance of park as well as frequency of visitation may dictate a resident maintenance or management staff. Trails and roads well developed. Buildings, trail heads and other facilities may be on-site.

The challenge in Plymouth Township is to insure that modes are actually applied at varying levels. Not every park or facility in the parks should be designated as Mode I maintenance. Each park and its amenities should be designated as a particular mode in order to prioritize maintenance tasks better.

Table 20
Modes and Tasks for Park Maintenance

Task	Mode I	Mode II	Mode III	Mode IV	Mode V
Turf Care	Mowed every 3-5 working days. Aeration four times annually. Weed control to achieve 99% weed free turf.	Cut once every 5 working days. Aeration twice a year. Weed control with 5% weeds. Re-seeding when bare spots present.	Cut once every 10 working days. Not aerated. Weed control at 50% weeds. Re-seeding with major bare spots only.	Periodic mowing to meet local requirements or reduce fire danger. Weed control only for noxious weeds.	Not mowed except for parking lots and along pathways. Weed control on noxious weeds.
Fertilizer	Adequate fertilizer applied to achieve even supply of nutrients for entire year.	Adequate to insure turf and plants are healthy &growing vigorously.	Only when turf vigor is low.	None	None
Irrigation	Sprinkler irrigated.	Some type of irrigation available.	Climate dependent. Usually not done in PA.	None	None
Litter Control	Minimum of once daily seven days a week.	Minimum of once daily five days a week.	2-3 times weekly maximum.	Once a week or fewer times.	Based on visitation.
Pruning	Dictated by species for high quality well maintained appearance.	Once a season.	Once every 2-3 years when health or reasonable appearance warrants.	No regular trimming. Safety may dictate pruning requirements.	For safety only.
Disease/Insect Control	Preventive to control disease so that public never notices a problem.	Done when disease is noticeable.	Only on epidemic or serious complaint basis.	None except if epidemics threaten resources or the public.	Only for safety or for public use.

Table 20 (Continued) Modes and Tasks for Park Maintenance					
Task	Mode I	Mode II	Mode III	Mode IV	Mode V
Snow Removal	Same day after ½" snow accumulates.	Removed by noon day after snow fall.	Based on local requirements usually within one day of snow.	None except where major access is required.	One day service on roads and park areas.
Lighting	Repaired as soon as problem discovered.	Repaired when reported as not working.	When there is a complaint or an employee notices.	On compliant or discretionary basis.	On compliant or discretionary basis.
Surfaces	Sweeping, cleaning and washing so that at no time does dirt or sand detract.	Cleaned and swept when appearance has noticeable deteriorated.	Cleaned on complaint basis.	When safety is a concern or budget is available.	Cleaned on complaint basis if budget is available.
Repairs	Immediately done upon discovery of problem.	When safety, function or appearance is in question.	When safety or function is in question.	When safety or function is in question.	Same year service when appearance is poor.
Inspection	Daily.	Daily when staff is scheduled.	Once per week.	Once per month.	When staff is available, once daily.
Floral Plantings	Extensive and unusual. Multiple blooming seasons.	Some plantings present. No more than two blooms per year.	Only perennials or flowering trees and shrubs.	None, just wildflowers, perennials, flowering trees.	None except at special locations like buildings.
Restrooms	Multiple servings daily.	At least once a day. Maybe more in high use areas.	Minimum of 5 times per week. Seldom more than once daily.	5 times per week.	Geared to visitor level, once a day usually. More if visitation is high.
Special Features	Highest possible maintenance for flags, fountains, art, parking etc.	For safety, function and appearance.	Minimum – only for safety and function.	Minimum – only for safety and function.	For safety, function and appearance.

2. **Develop standards of time for accomplishing tasks**. At present the Township is spending about $4,377 per acre for maintenance annually. This figure includes salaries, benefits, wages, materials and supplies for park maintenance divided by the total park acreage in the Township. This is on the high end of per acre maintenance costs in comparison with similarly sized municipalities and even with larger park systems nationwide. Maintenance costs generally range from about $1500 to $3000 per acre. This plan recommends developing a formalized maintenance management plan with standards of time for accomplishing tasks as a way of insuring that Plymouth Township gets the most for its maintenance dollar. Time standards and written goals could result in the Township being able to achieve more in terms of park maintenance than it presently does. This could result in very much improved park appearance with features such as plantings. Most importantly restrooms should be serviced seven days a week with multiple servicings per day.

3. **Create a written maintenance management plan for both the parks and for GPCC**. With the Township's $25 million dollar investment in parks and recreation facilities since 1992, the importance of maintenance in terms of protecting this investment cannot be overstated. The most effective way to insure that maintenance is at a level commensurate with investment and that it is accomplished at the most efficient level possible is through a written formalized maintenance management plan. Computerizing data to produce real time information will enable the Township to allocate labor and materials to where they are needed most. It is important to note that this plan is not recommending a reduction in maintenance funding, but instead is recommending that the Township develop and implement a Maintenance Management Plan to get the most value for its maintenance investment.

4. **Consider applying for a Peer-to-Peer Grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources to bring in a parks professional to help in designing the formalized maintenance management system.**

5. **Develop a Maintenance Impact Statement for all capital improvements and park master site plans.** Look for alternatives to providing the maintenance with township forces and resources where possible. Involve the Buildings and Grounds Director in the park master planning process.

6. **Computerize the maintenance workload/cost tracking system.** Use the reports for planning, scheduling and allocating resources as well as in setting policies such as fees and charges. Use grant funds to purchase computer software for maintenance tracking. Network with other park maintenance managers elsewhere to determine how they use computer software for effective maintenance planning and management.

7. **Plan on allocating a sufficient budget for managing and programming Harriet Wetherill Park based on the following factors.**

    - The park is a natural resource based park and will require less intense maintenance than traditional parks with athletic fields.

    - It will be a premiere nature based park in a highly developed region.

    - Natural resource management requires a different type of management and care than required at groomed parks with active recreation. The management of a natural resource based park requires attention to the ecology of the site using environmentally sound practices. It will be important for the Plymouth staff to acquire expertise in natural resource management within the organization. When the Township moves ahead with staffing this area, the Township should explore the re-organization of parks and recreation.

8. **Explore the concept of establishing Site Watch in Plymouth Township.** Use the Upper Dublin model to adopt Site Watch here in partnership with the Colonial School District. Site Watch would be a regional program, school district wide, thus fostering consistency in public expectations about ball field use and

regulations regarding use. **For this reason Site Watch should be led by the Colonial School District which is the hub of a service area shared by three municipalities.** This will help to deal with issues such as "rogue teams" that use fields without the required permits; use of ball fields when they are too wet which causes serious turf damage; and inappropriate public behavior. Site Watch is a roving crew of park ambassadors who look out for the parks and park visitors. They help to provide a presence in the parks that leads to proper and enjoyable use of facilities as well as some level of protection for parks, especially ball fields.

9. **Design park maintenance uniforms to increase public awareness and recognition of the parks and recreation system.** Any medium that the Department can present its logo should be used.

Volunteerism

Organizationally, volunteers fall under the Recreation Program Manager. Volunteerism should continue to operate as is with the support organizations, the volunteer boards organized sports groups service clubs, scouts, and community service projects. Because of the extensive amount of time that volunteers require, volunteerism in Plymouth Township should be directed towards groups rather than individuals. Volunteer groups include the following:

- **Plymouth Township Parks, Recreation and Shade Tree Board** assists the Director of Parks and Recreation and serves as a liaison between the Department, Township Council, the Colonial School District School Board and citizens of the Township. Council appoints seven members for rotating terms of service. The Board consists of dedicated citizens who have served for many years. Consideration should be given to appointing future board members who have a strong interest in advocating parks, recreation, conservation, and natural resource protection. The board's demographic composition should include a diversity of interests and ethnicity.

- **Sports Organizations** provide youth sports to families in the community.

- **Advisory Boards for special projects as needed**. The Plymouth Township Parks and Recreation Department uses citizen's advisory boards for projects such as the development of this plan: **Plymouth…*Naturally!*** and for the development of the Harriet Wetherill Park Master Plan.

Employee Development and Training

The Department of Parks and Recreation has line items in the budget for conferences, seminars, annual meetings, memberships, dues, and subscriptions. The Director and/or Assistant Director attend annual parks and recreation conferences and workshops held in Pennsylvania and the National Recreation and Park Association Congress annually. While extensive training opportunities are available, there is no formal employee development program. A training program would assess the current levels of skills, define core

competencies that the Department would like to build upon, and outline the development program for the staff over the next five years. This would be beneficial from two perspectives: it would be a sound approach to investing in labor, the township's largest expenditure in parks and recreation and it would provide a career development benefit for the staff.

With the large number of part-time staff, training is especially important. Part-time staff is frequently the only contact that the public has with the overall Parks and Recreation Department.

Training is essential in keeping up with regulations, technology, and trends. Training needs for parks and recreation fall into two departments: Parks and Recreation and Buildings and Grounds. Regulations, guidelines, and standards in parks and recreation are evolving and deal with such diverse topics as herbicide and pesticide spraying, playground safety standards, trail planning and management, and health guidelines. GPCC staff is also certified in First Aid, CPR, AED, WSI, Lifeguard and Aquatics Facility Operation. Our changing society has resulted in issues that impact services for children and youth: child custody, abuse, discipline issues, juvenile justice, violence, substance abuse, and other major concerns that were not in the picture just a few years ago.

Plymouth Township Parks and Recreation Department insures that its staff has the proper, current certifications and licensing for all positions requiring it. Certification, licensing and continuing education requirements for Plymouth Township staff is significant. The cost of training and continuing education is expensive and must be kept current.

Consideration should be given to the following actions for employee development:

1. **Conduct a training needs assessment within the Department from the perspective of departmental needs and employee development.** Identify the objectives of the training for the Department and the employee. Training needs should include both required certifications and programs that will enable management and staff to keep up with trends, identify new opportunties for revenue generation and learn new methods for limiting exposure to liability. Prioritize the training. Set the employee development for a five-year time frame, each year implementing the first year of the program and adding the fifth year.

2. **Budget about one percent of the operating budget annually for maintaining certifications and licensure that are essential to department operations and for employee development.** Phase in the training budget over the next five to ten years in order to reach the target allocation and investment.

3. **Include a variety of training modalities.** The employee development program can include in-service training; self-directed improvement though participation in seminars, conferences and so on; orientation for new and seasonal employees; rotating employees through jobs other than their own; brown bag lunch discussion sessions and networking with other parks and recreation departments. The idea is that training can be low cost and does not always have to be conferences.

4. **Institutionalize the training by scheduling department training sessions or "pizza lunches" for this purpose.** The trainee would use this forum to present summary

information of how the training could be applied in the Department as well as to distribute materials or other media obtained at the training program.

Partnerships and Sponsorships

Partnerships with other organizations in the community enhance public service at reduced costs. The Department works with area businesses and organization on events and activities.

Colonial School District

Two areas present possibilities for school district partnerships: nature/environmental education and Site Watch. The Plymouth Township Parks and Recreation Department made a presentation to the School Board regarding an environmental partnership at Wetherill Park. Subsequently, the School District and board members took a tour of the site. Exploration of this partnership should continue.

The second partnership area, Site Watch, is already under consideration by the School District. Discussions among the Township, adjoining municipalities, the School District regarding collaboration through Site Watch should be undertaken as staff time permits for the Plymouth staff.

Sponsorships

The Department has worked diligently over the years to generate corporate sponsorships and partnerships with the private sector. As a result, GPCC is the home of Montgomery Hospital's Women's Conference and the GPCC Health Fair and projects such as Comcast's "Community Day of Caring". Private sponsorships greatly help with Plymouth Township Day and the performances in the park. They provide cash gift certificates and products to support township programs. The challenge with sponsorships is that most business partnerships have already been established. Unless new partners come along, it appears that sponsorships have leveled off.

Plymouth Township Parks and Recreation Department Sponsorships

- **30 Sponsors**
- **27 Contributors**
- **41 Group and Organizational Supporters**

Risk Management

The most effective measures that a municipality can take in reducing exposure to liability is to design and construct facilities properly and the have an effective maintenance management system supported by written documentation. It is important for Plymouth Township to have a written formal maintenance management system for both the parks and for GPCC for this purpose. Plymouth Township is a participant in DVIT (Delaware Valley Insurance Trust). DVIT conducts safety inspections and is providing a grant to carry out the recommendation of this plan to computerize the maintenance management system for parks and recreation. The Township is an annual participant in DVIT's risk management programs; this demonstrates the municipality's commitment to a high standard of care.

Financing

Financing public parks and recreation services is a major challenge. Plymouth Township has had resources sufficient to invest in the quality of life in the community for such things as the GPCC, park revitalization, and the acquisition of open space. Revenues from host fees from the Trash to Steam Plant and the Earned Income Tax enacted in 1991 helped to support capital improvements as well as operations. However, times have changed and now fiscal belts are being tightened in Plymouth Township. Faced with the loss of $1.5 million dollars annually from the Earned Income Tax to the Colonial School District, the Township no longer has funding available at the levels of previous years.

Parks and Recreation Revenue Sources

Most parks and recreation systems rely heavily on tax dollars to fund operations. Financing trends show that parks and recreation is moving more towards a market-based economy in which the users pay for services or facilities from which they directly benefit. Plymouth fits this pattern.

The GPCC recovers about 80 percent of its annual operating costs through fees and charges. Programs outside the walls of the GPCC recover about 45 percent of their cost. Programs such as park maintenance do not recover any costs as they are facilities that are open and useable by the public at large.

The budget tables cover years 2000-2005. GPCC opened in April of 2000. **Table 21** presents the GPCC Operating Expenditures. **Table 22** presents the GPCC Revenues. **Table 23** presents the Recreation Operating Budget. **Table 24** presents the Parks Operating Budget**.**

The Department is constantly on the look out for ways to control or reduce operating expenditures. A fine example of this approach is the energy management study of the GPCC. As a result of the study, energy conservation improvements were made in the center that resulted in energy cost containment. The cost of the study has paid for itself in energy cost savings. While recreation centers around the country have been experiencing

escalating energy costs, Plymouth Township has been able to contain energy. This will be even more important in the coming years as energy costs are projected to dramatically increase. These results show the merits of the Department's approach to investing money in projects that will long term either save money or generate revenues.

GPCC, Parks and Recreation OPERATING Budget Findings

GPCC

- The target recovery rate for GPCC operations is 80 percent and should remain at that level in the future. This translates into a subsidy of about $400,000 annually in tax dollars. Years 2003 and 2004 were highly successful years with about 85 percent and 90 percent cost recovery respectively. These years in fact represent "high water marks" in terms of revenues. Revenue growth may be limited to increased fees versus increased pass holders and program participants.

In 2004, the most recent complete fiscal year, the operating expenses for GPCC were about $1,912,479. Operating revenues generated totaled $1,718,363, for $194,116 in township support. The years 2004 and 2005 are assumed to be GPCC's peak year in terms of revenue generation and cost recovery.

General Fund: Parks and Recreation

- **Table 23** shows that the Parks and Recreation Department programs outside the walls of GPCC brought in $131,000 in 2004. Expenditures were about $299,000 for a cost recovery rate of about 44 percent. This is favorable especially in light of GPCC's high recovery rate.

- The Parks Budget is for park maintenance. In 2004, Plymouth Township spent $591,679. With about 134 acres of park land, this equates to $4,377 per acre, higher than average park maintenance costs that typically run elsewhere at about $1500 to 3,000 per acre. **Table 24** shows that fees generated for park use cover only about two percent of expenses. The development of a planned maintenance management system is expected to include programs for athletic field management, natural resource protection, beautification, turf management, forestry, information management and other areas to be identified. Data collection needs to be computerized in order to develop information and reports required for informed decision-making. The goal for Plymouth Township should be to establish a maintenance management system that measures up to professional and industry guidelines and that generates a favorable rating of 80 percent in public opinion research about the parks.

Table 21 Greater Plymouth Community Center Operating Budget 2000-2005 EXPENDITURES						
EXPENDITURES	2000 Actual	2001 Actual	2002 Actual	2003 Actual	2004 Actual	2005 Budget
Salaries	$535,599	$608,776	$675,631	$746,459	$826,662	$883,379
Salary Secretary Clerical	126,354	183,878	190,468	196,428	200,598	209,469
Wages Maintenance	134,478	158,748	168,434	201,593	215,749	210,000
Wages Program Supervisors	5,194	35,504	42,142	41,859	45,557	48,782
Temps/Instructors Wages	30,619	54,987	61,045	42,208	31,513	48,858
Mat./Supplies – Office	38,593	21,943	20,274	9,641	14,329	24,675
Uniforms – CC	5,444	3,859	3,153	3,695	3,105	4,300
Program Mat./Supplies	20,179	22,357	32,991	38,337	53,377	70,365
Program Equipment	5,770	5,414	5,801	2,909	3,803	4,800
General Bldg Equip Repl.				3,768	4,088	13,000
Pool Equip Repl.					13,606	25,000
Computer System, Supplies				20,100	18,069	26,750
Contracted Services	39,171	37,808	44,913	39,969	28,133	37,290
Contracted Services Instruct.	22,330	51,898	56,305	62,002	42,875	53,275
Mat./Supplies – General	37,607	32,693	40,457	38,995	25,700	26,000
Mat/Supplies – Pool					13,313	13,000
Grant Expenditures					1,162	7,500
Telephone	18,404	17,732	18,616	17,789	20,132	17,000
Vehicle Allowances	2,294	1,973	2,430	2,302	2,562	2,250
Advertising/Printing	39,994	18,856	43,131	40,937	35,676	38,590
Fuel and Light	232,270	297,737	298,907	269,443	246,493	268,000
Water and Sewer	Included in above			26,967	23,308	24,800
Maint. & Rep. – Grounds	1,623	41	2,614	2,749	2,799	3,850
Maint. & Rep. – Building	15,911	13,071	13,921	29,767	19,795	18,500
General Expense	14,715	12,422	11,704	10,207	7,317	6,500
Minor Equipment	4,634	5,057	8,051	6,009	2,780	4,000
Fitness Equip Repair				6,150	9,978	14,095
Total Operating Expenses	$1,331,182	$1,584,754	$1,740,989	$1,860,285	$1,912,479	$2,104,028
OPERATING DEFICIT	(783,613)	(450,675)	(441,754)	(284,698)	(194,116)	(356,328)
Oper Revs/Oper Exps	41.1%	71.6%	74.6%	84.7%	89.9%	83.1%

Table 22 Greater Plymouth Community Center Operating Budget 2000-2005 REVENUES						
Revenues	2000 Actual	2001 Actual	2002 Actual	2003 Actual	2004 Actual	2005 Budget
CC Program Revenues	$129,829	$287,380	$359,457	$378,531	$454,613	$477,340
CC Pass Sales Revenues	286,299	574,120	617,177	740,412	797,735	827,200
CC Daily Admissions	53,060	136,245	160,035	211,015	225,885	220,000
CC Rental Revenues	34,552	64,621	79,007	106,504	113,525	112,000
CC Misc. Revenues	13,251	8,099	11,554	52,633	26,876	8,000
Pro Shop Sales	5,139	4,802	5,357	11,793	9,333	9,400
General Services	25,438	58,812	66,648	74,698	90,396	93,760
Total Operating Revenues	547,569	1,134,079	1,299,235	1,575,586	1,718,363	1,747,700
Interest	48,355	40,364	33,284	26,091	38,070	25,000
Total Revenues	$595,924	$1,174,443	$1,332,520	$1,601,677	$1,756,433	$1,772,700
Cost Recovery Rate*	41.1%	71.6%	74.6%	84.7%	89.9%	83.1%

* excludes the Interest

Table 23 Recreation Operating Budget (non-GPCC recreation programs) 2000-2005 Expenditures and Revenues						
RECREATION	2000 Actual	2001 Actual	2002 Actual	2003 Actual	2004 Actual	2005 Budget
EXPENDITURES						
Salaries	$116,930	$114,920	$104,204	$93,563	$103,264	$161,470
Uniforms, Materials, Supplies, Equipment	8,586	6,616	3,313	5,345	2,850	6,085
Ticket Sales	56,493	59,506	53,213	60,812	67,821	67,000
Outside Services - Contracted	29,186	29,191	34,319	41,959	53,406	85,110
Advertising and Printing	14,987	32,451	25,835	22,368	18,105	19,250
General Expense	16,103	20,326	3,265	11,859	10,336	26,820
Contribution to Sports Organizations & Library	28,885	26,385	35,082	41,625	43,350	46,725
Total Recreation Expenditures	271,170	289,395	259,231	277,531	299,132	412,460
REVENUES						
Parks and Program Fees	68,830	69,147	61,663	69,312	55,521	82,000
Sponsorships & Donations				Incl. above	7,370	10,000
Recreation Tickets	58,510	56,909	56,326	63,846	68,184	67,000
Total Revenues	$127,340	$126,056	$117,989	$133,158	$131,075	$159,000
Cost Recovery Rate	47%	43.6%	45.5%	48%	43.8%	38.5%

Table 24 Parks Operating Budget 2000-2005 Expenditures and Revenues						
PARKS	2000 Actual	2001 Actual	2002 Actual	2003 Actual	2004 Actual	2005 Budget
EXPENDITURES						
Salaries	$323,560	$330,908	$337,945	$366,467	$373,085	$382,221
Uniforms, General Materials, Supplies	11,566	6,580	7,009	8,872	9,228	8,300
Outside Services	21,107	20,998	22,509	43,883	43,613	43,670
Utilities and Phone	12,721	32,115	37,572	56,762	71,976	56,000
Maintenance &Repairs – Parks &Buildings	16,707	7,211	23,110	9,582	29,667	25,000
General Expense	4,853	5,354	4,473	4,226	4,395	4,000
Major Equipment Purchase	26,189	37,673	32,169	50,108	3,699	5,000
Materials & Supplies - Equipment	25,809	15,312	20,227	20,044	33,702	26,500
Maintenance Materials, Supplies-Vehicles	11,799	8,795	10,459	11,521	12,633	11,000
Minor Equipment	16,404	15,024	5,685	18,930	9,681	10,700
Total Parks Operating Expenditures	470,715	479,970	501,158	590,395	591,679	572,391
REVENUES						
Parks Facility Use Fees				3,120	5,336	4,000
NCAA Field Rental Fees				8,650	8,476	7,700
Total Parks Revenues				$11,770	$13,812	$11,700
Cost Recovery Rate				2%	2.3%	2%

Per Capita Operating Investment in Parks and Recreation

In 2004, Plymouth Township invested about $940,040 in overall parks and recreation operating including the GPCC. This is about $58.58 per capita. According to Pennsylvania's most recent annual budget and salary survey information (2004), the per capita municipal investment for communities with populations of 15,000 to 19,999 ranged from $2.08 to $178.07. The average was $28.87. In 1994, the average per capita municipal investment in parks and recreation in the United States was $45. **Table 25** presents the Township's per capita investment in parks, recreation, GPCC and the total investment.

Table 25 Plymouth Township 2004 Per Capita Investment Parks, Community Recreation Programs and GPCC	
Functional Area	Per Capita Investment
Parks	$36.01
Recreation outside GPCC	$10.47
GPCC	$12.10
TOTAL	$58.58

GPCC, Parks and Recreation CAPITAL Budget

Since 1994, Plymouth Township has invested over $25 million dollars in parks, recreation and open space preservation capital projects. These include:

- Acquisition of the former Highfield Elementary School for rehabilitation, demolition and addition for the Greater Plymouth Community Center.
- Construction of the GPCC.
- Acquisition of seven parcels abutting the GPCC site for improved access and support facilities for the community center.
- Development and/or rehabilitation of township parks and recreation facilities including: Colwell Park, Community Center Park, JFK Park, East Plymouth Valley Park, Bicentennial Park, Alan Wood Park, and Black Horse Park.
- Acquisition of the Harriet Wetherill Park land.

The Township used a combination of township taxes, recreation impact fees for new development, trash-to-steam host fees, private fund-raising and grants, gifts and donations to generate the capital funds needed.

Aggressive Fundraising for Capital Projects

The Plymouth Township Parks and Recreation Department aggressively seeks grants to fund projects and programs. The Township received about $2,019,864 in grants since 1991. This included government grants from Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the Montgomery County Open Space Program and Safe Routes to School funds. Of this amount, Montgomery County contributed $1,189,859 for land acquisition. The department has successfully secured grants from non-governmental sources including local businesses and foundations. In addition to the grants, Plymouth Township successfully conducted a private fund-raising campaign for the development of the GPCC. The campaign yielded about $600,000 to construct the center.

Future Directions in Capital Funding

While Plymouth Township has no debt, Council is approaching future investment very carefully. Future considerations for major capital funding could include:

- Periodic necessary repair of the GPCC. The Township could consider establishing a reserve fund of about two to four percent of the development cost of GPCC annually in accordance with the previous feasibility studies conducted by Ballard*King. This would be about 400,000 annually.
- Annual investment of $400,000 in park capital improvements.
- Preservation of open space.
- Phasing in nature-based enhancements that follow the future recommendations of the Harriet Wetherill Park Master Plan.

Management and Financing Analysis

In a time of increasing accountability for all levels of government, decision-makers, staff and citizens alike, expect efficient and effective operating systems. Plymouth Township has a professional management team that is committed to responsible, accountable creative and first rate public service through parks and recreation.

Management Strengths

Plymouth's Parks and Recreation management team has the right positions, management systems, and staffing levels to continue to provide excellent public service within the present scope of services and programs. The managers and staff are dedicated and enthusiastic about Plymouth Township's parks and recreation system and GPCC as well as honing their careers in this fine system.

Adding new programs, new program areas and facilities would require an assessment to determine if human and financial resources are sufficient to undertake the proposed actions successfully.

The management systems developed and put into place in the Greater Plymouth Community Center are the finest in the United States.

Ballard*King, 2005
National Consultants for Community Center Operations

The GPCC management systems have provided the municipality with real time, solid information on which to base decisions that have resulted in cost savings and improved efficiency. An example of such a system is the energy management system that has contained energy costs while other systems are seeing seriously escalating expenditures in this area.

These positive statements are underscored by 19 awards that Plymouth Township has garnered for its parks and recreation accomplishments.



Plymouth Township received the Governor' s Award for Local Government Excellence in 2003 in recognition of the development of the Greater Plymouth Community Center.

Management Challenges

With five years of success at GPCC, a completely revitalized park system and the acquisition of an important natural area, Plymouth Township is not in a position to coast. Challenges include:

- Creating an employee development and training program, especially for part-time staff.
- Forming and enhancing partnerships for future endeavors such as the nature program areas and the potential site watch program in collaboration with the Colonial School District.
- Developing a strategy to deal with the many and varied requests and ideas for additional programs and services.
- Setting priorities based upon **Plymouth…*Naturally!*** rooted in authentic information about available resources and trust in the professional managers in providing good advice to Council to make informed policy decisions.
- Establishing written formal maintenance management systems for both the parks and the GPCC custodial and periodic maintenance.

Fiscal Strengths

The GPCC recovers about 80 percent of its operating budget through fees and charges. Municipal recreation programs outside of GPCC recover about 45 percent. The Township has invested a substantial amount of money in parks and recreation that essentially delivers a legacy for future generations. People many generations from now will benefit from the wisdom and courage of elected officials' decisions since 1992. Plymouth Township also has no debt. The parks, the GPCC and the recreation facilities are in good to excellent condition at present as a result of the major investments made by the Township over the last 13 years.

Fiscal Challenges

Capital

The investment that positioned Plymouth Township as a top notch parks and recreation system requires on-going attention. Just as a house requires on-going maintenance, regular bill payment, and cyclic repairs, GPCC and the parks require similar care and investment. Setting aside about $400,000 annually for GPCC and $400,000 for park improvement is a challenge for any municipality and more so for one with an operating budget reduction of $1.5 million annually. In 2005 capital and mechanical needs increased. Expect this increase to become the pattern due to the aging and intense use of equipment in GPCC. Some community needs are going unmet because of limitations in terms of both land and money. Sports teams need more space for fields as well as lighting. The fitness center in GPCC is undersized but expansion would be costly. The Wetherill site is ripe with potential but within a climate of limited funding.

Operating

In addition to capital reserve funds, the Township needs to allocate about $400,000 annually for GPCC operating expenses. For the 2006 budget, Plymouth Township reduced its commitment to GPCC through reduced funding appropriations. To continue to generate high revenues that contribute to supporting the center, GPCC must remain clean and attractive. Staff must continue to be friendly and helpful. Without high quality maintenance and staff, GPCC conditions will noticeably deteriorate resulting in customer dissatisfaction and subsequent revenue losses. Continued township operating support is crucial to maintaining the high standards of care required to bring people into the center that will spend their money on passes, program and events.

Among the most crucial aspects of financing is operating with the present recreation staffing levels. One of the reasons that things work so well now is that work load and staff levels are balanced. Tipping the scale by adding work beyond staff capacity will result in employee turnover, lower quality service and ultimately diminished public satisfaction. There appears to be a tendency for the municipality to want to run more non-revenue producing programs. This will strain the General Fund that would need to provide for the costs that non-revenue producing programs require.

Operating funds for the parks should continue at present levels for existing parks. The master site plan for Harriet Wetherill Park will project the operating costs and revenue potential for this site. This information can be used in conjunction with the development of a formalized maintenance management system. These plans will focus in on how to maximize the current park maintenance budget to make the most use of the funds available. With Plymouth Township's high quality parks and recreation system, $4,000+/acre is generous support for park maintenance for which maximum results should be returned.

Setting priorities for wise use of Plymouth's financial resources will be crucial in the future to sustain the high caliber of facilities, maintenance and services.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Fiscal resources in Plymouth Township are tight and getting tighter even though the Township is debt free. The Township has made remarkable capital investment in GPCC, land acquisition and park development and revitalization as well as in generously supporting the operational level required to manage these endeavors successfully. The following recommendations could guide the future management and funding directions in Plymouth Township:

1. Continue to **be the model for high quality management**, facilities, programs, and services.

2. Keep **the standard for state-of-the-art customer service**. The relationship with the community and individual participants is notably unique.

3. Prior to undertaking additional projects, create a **Management Impact Statement** (MIS) as shown on page 150. Projects would include park and

recreation facility improvements. Do not add projects for which it would not be possible to maintain the high level of quality now provided or that would negatively impact other existing programs, facilities and human resources. Revise the program proposal form to include similar planning concepts from the MIS to create a Impact Statement for Programs (ISP) rather than add the MIS as another requirement for programs and services.

4. **Place reasonable expectations regarding workload and projects for management team and staff**. Recognize the need to avoid overtaxing our resources especially staff. Provide a professionally rewarding work experience. Offer competitive compensation, flexible hours fitting a recreation mission, training and professional development opportunities. There is a tendency in excellent systems to increase expectations and assignments that eventually overtax human resources and diminish the quality of public service.

5. **Formalize the maintenance management system** for parks and recreation facilities. Establish and implement park maintenance standards. Establish a computerized information tracking system to generate information about cost centers. This will enable the Township to make real-time informed decisions about planning, directing, controlling and evaluating maintenance in much the same way that the GPCC is managed. Consider seeking a Peer Grant to formalize the system.

6. **Plan to fund the regular revitalization of parks** on a ten year schedule. Since the parks have been master planned, designed and revitalized over the last ten years, the focus will be on the replacement and upgrading of individual components in the parks such as playground equipment, resurfacing of game courts, re-roofing, and keeping up with the ever-changing needs and interests of the community.

7. **Marketing**. Develop a strategic marketing plan based upon a written statement of outreach goals and results for identified target areas. Major focus should be on the community center. Consider involving a professional marketing firm should the need arise and funding be available.

8. **Financing**. Develop financial recommendations for capital development and operations. Refer to the fiscal challenges described above.

    - For capital development, the four main areas are Open Space Preservation, Harriet Wetherill Park, Park Improvements and GPCC improvements or additions “within the box” of the center.

    - Consider establishing the definition of capital expenditures as items that cost more than $5,000 and last more than five years. This would cover major, and perhaps minor, equipment purchases and park improvements. With such as definition, these purchases would move from operating expenditures into capital expenditures. This would make analysis of operating expenditures more accurate from an operational standpoint.

- **Continue to set 80 percent cost recovery as the goal for GPCC**. Recognize that GPCC might exceed this revenue goal in any given year but that this should be considered an exception with praiseworthy results but NOT the level of expectation. The primary recommendation is to continue to strive for 80% cost recovery at the GPCC. Recognize that it is crucial for the Township to provide the full 20% annual operation subsidy in order to maintain the high quality of the facility and programming and thus attract enough pass holders and participants to achieve this 80% goal. Note that the GPCC management consultant suggests that for the longer term it may be more realistic to expect 75% cost recovery.

- For community programs and services offered outside the GPCC and financed within the general fund, strive for 45% cost recovery.

- **It is strongly recommended that Plymouth Township allocate the full amount needed for capital and operating funding in 2007 and beyond.** To sustain and enhance a parks, recreation and open space system the caliber of Plymouth Township, continued investment is essential.

- **Phase in the area of nature and environmental education over time** to enable the Township to take small steps from self-directed experiences to full scale natural resource programming and education through partnerships.

- **Consider other township projects and planning efforts as a means to secure parks and recreation improvements for which funding is not available through traditional parks and recreation sources**. For example land developments can often yield trails and linkages. Stormwater management projects can provide support for recreation facilities. Transportation projects can produce dedicated non-motorized pathways. Consider using overall township planning and land development projects as a means to extend the trail system, create riverfront access and water based recreation opportunties.

In the 20 years I have lived in Plymouth, the parks have improved incredibly. You have really done a nice job! The key is now to continue to be a leader in parks and recreation and not to be satisfied with the current condition.

Survey Respondent

MIS
Management Impact Statement

Purpose

1. To assess the impact of a proposed project in terms of capital and operating costs including cost, human resources required and effect on other parks and recreation facilities and services.

2. To use this information to make an informed decision about moving ahead with the proposed project.

Method

Determine:

1. Capital cost of the proposed project.

2. Operating costs for the proposed project. Include:

- Number of staff hours required
- Cost of the staff hours
- Cost of materials and supplies
- Miscellaneous costs

3. Impact on other facilities and programs should the proposed project/service be implemented.

- Will the project/service require funds needed for other facilities/programs?
- Will the project/service require staff time needed for other services/programs?
- How will the project impact the quality of service that Plymouth Township has set as a goal?

4. Revenue Sources

- Grants
- Donations
- Township funds – additional appropriation
- Township funds – within current budget
- Non-tax funds to be generated from the project/program

Decision-Making

Based upon the above information, does Plymouth Township have the resources to move ahead with this project?

Chapter 7
Conclusions

Quotes from the Plymouth Township Survey:

"I love the Township."



"Plymouth Township is a good place to raise my family. You are always improving the way of life. It's safe, clean and a good community."



"I'm getting older and don't find the time to do all that's offered. The park is beautiful and a great place for younger folks to spend their time. Keep up the good work."



"You are a good township & any question I have are always answered by polite and kind people."

"Plymouth Township is a great place to live and work. Keep improving our parks and safe places to walk/ride bikes."

"In the 20 years I have lived in Plymouth, the parks have improved increadibly. You have really done a nice job! The key is now to continue to be a leader in parks and recreation and nnt to be satisfied with the current codition. Send people to conferences; see what's going on in other counties or states."

Chapter

7

Putting the Pieces Together

The preceding chapters examined the individual components of Plymouth's parks, recreation and open space system in light of the township's major investment and accomplishments since 1994. This chapter draws on all aspects of the planning process. The inventory, analysis, goals and potential actions need to be combined with the resources of Plymouth Township, financing, and the strengths of the Parks and Recreation Department in order to develop realistic strategies and defined priorities.

Plymouth Township in Focus

Plymouth Township is a highly desirable suburban community in which to live, work, own a business, raise a family, and retire. The population of 16,045 is expected to increase by about 1,000 people over the next 25 years. The Township is fortunate in having successful commercial and office development that contributes to its solid tax base. Plymouth Township has invested about $25 million completing the recommendations of its previous parks, recreation and open space plans of 1994 and 1995. Accomplishments include:

- Revitalization of the municipal parks
- Development of the Greater Plymouth Community Center
- Preservation of the Wetherill Farm
- Growth of scheduled recreation opportunties from 50 to over 2,000 annually
- Recognition as one of the best managed systems in the United States
- Receipt of 19 awards for top quality services, facilities and management

The Next Ten Years

Plymouth Township is poised to enter a new era of physical austerity. The municipality is debt free but anticipating operational funding challenges in the future.

Plymouth Township is nearly fully built-out with only about 592 acres of land remaining that could be developed. Land in Plymouth Township is very expensive and highly desirable for development. Should the Township wish to acquire additional park land or open space, a bond or other financing measure would be required. Other options for land conservation include donations, bargain sales of land, bequests, life estates, conservation easements and farmland preservation funds. Since it is likely that the remaining large parcels would be developed at some time in the future, working with landowners and developers now to negotiate conservation-by-design types of development could result in some open space preservation as well as rights-of-way for trail and greenway connections.

The riverfront offers potential for redevelopment as revitalization along the Schuylkill River takes off in Montgomery County. With riverfront redevelopment comes the opportunity for creating public access to the Schuylkill for recreational purposes, principally for trails, walkways and water-based activities.

Plymouth Township has a premiere parks and recreation system. It is a model nationwide in terms of facilities, management, public service, and commitment to the quality of life. The major challenge for Plymouth Township over the next ten years will be to sustain and enhance the quality of its facilities and services at the high standard now in practice.

Two important focus areas emerged in the planning process: natural resource preservation/environmental education and the establishment of a formalized planned maintenance management system. Public opinion clearly underscored support for the Township in the conservation of the natural and scenic beauty of the community. The level of the township's investment in parks and recreation facilities mandates the establishment of a system to formally plan, direct, control and evaluate the maintenance management. Just as other management systems were developed and formalized since 1994, it is now an appropriate time to formalize indoor and outdoor facility maintenance management systems.

Blueprint for 2006-2015

1. Continue to **be the model for high quality management**, facilities, programs, and services.

2. Maintain **the standard for state-of-the-art customer service**. The relationship with the community and individual participants is notably unique.

3. **Pursue the conservation of open space** through a variety of means including acquisition, easements and conservation by design. This encompasses both the immediate needs to conserve important sites within the narrow window of opportunity of the next five years as well as the generational approach to land redevelopment along the river and around the GPCC campus. Establish open space and natural resource management as a departmental function. Consider how to add 98 acres of parkland to meet community needs through 2020.

4. **Develop natural resource preservation and education program** in Plymouth Township to complement the full range of services already available. This will be a major initiative representing a whole new area of public service, recreation, education and partnerships for Plymouth Township. The foundation of this area will be Harriet Wetherill Park.

    - Master plan Harriet Wetherill Park. Address design, maintenance, and programs.
    - Phase in programs and facilities over the next ten years. This would range from a basic park with walking paths to programs in the outdoor setting and

then to potentially a nature center depending on resources and philosophy determined through the master planning process.
- Consider a partnership with the Colonial School District to serve school groups as the primary client group for programs.
- Consider a partnership with Montgomery County Parks and Heritage Services.
- Consider partnership programs with private schools, scouts, environmental agencies, etc
- Enhance natural areas in existing parks.

5. **Create a Management Impact Statement** (MIS) prior to undertaking additional projects. Projects would include programs, services, and facilities. See attached MIS. Do not add projects for which it would not be possible to maintain the high level of quality now provided or that would negatively impact other existing programs, facilities and human resources. Modify the current program proposal from to include concepts from the MIS to create a Program and Service Impact Statement.

6. **Place reasonable expectations regarding workload and projects for management team and staff**. Recognize the need to avoid overtaxing our resources especially staff. Provide a professionally rewarding work experience. Offer competitive compensation, flexible hours fitting a recreation mission, training and professional development opportunities. There is a tendency in excellent systems to increase expectations and assignments that eventually overtax human resources and diminish the quality of public service.

7. **Formalize the maintenance management system** for parks and recreation facilities. Establish and implement park maintenance standards. Establish a computerized information tracking system to generate information about cost centers. This will enable the Township to make real-time informed decisions about planning, directing, controlling and evaluating maintenance in much the same way that the GPCC is managed. Consider seeking a Peer Grant to formalize the system.

8. **Stay within the current parameter of programming with the exception of the addition of nature and environmental education.** Develop Management Impact Statements (MIS) for significant changes or additions to programs including locations, staffing and funding impacts that would affect workload and other programs.

9. **Plan for the regular revitalization of parks on a ten year schedule**. Since the parks have been master planned, designed and revitalized over the last ten years, the focus will be on the replacement and upgrading of individual components in the parks such as playground equipment, resurfacing of game courts, re-roofing, and keeping up with the ever-changing needs and interests of the community. Develop additional athletic fields to meet present and future community needs.

10. **Develop a strategic marketing plan.** Create a written statement of outreach goals and results for identified target areas. Major focus should be on the community center. Consider involving a professional marketing firm should the need arise.

11. **Continue to use a mix of public and private funds for parks, recreation and open space.** For capital development, the four main areas are Open Space Preservation, Harriet Wetherill Park, Park Improvements and GPCC improvements or additions "within the box" of the center. The key message for operating funds is to continue to set 80 percent operating cost recovery as the goal for GPCC. Recognize that GPCC might exceed this revenue goal in any given year but that this should be considered an exception with praiseworthy results not the level of expectation.

The following chapter makes recommendations for addressing the 11 focus areas of **Plymouth…*Naturally!***.

Chapter 8
Goal & Recommendations

- *Since Play is a fundamental need, playgrounds should be provided for every child as much as schools.*

  Theodore Roosevelt

- *Recreation is no longer simply having fun. Rather, it involves the kind of America we have, and want to have, and the kind of people we are likely to become.*

  Laurance S. Rockefeller

- *We do not cease playing because we grow old, we grow old because we cease playing.*

  Joseph Lee

- *In wildness is the preservation of the world.*

  Henry David Thoreau

- *What is important in recreation is the seeing eye, the hearing ear, the hand with the touch, the voice that lifts, the face that lights up- And even more the spirit.*

  Howard F. Braucher

Chapter

8

Recommendations

These recommendations are a suggested course of action for Plymouth Township to pursue over the next ten years. The Township can work at the actions incrementally: through an annual action plan, a medium term program of five to ten years and long term strategies that require more intense planning, investment and partnerships. By having a slate of actions identified and adopted, elected and appointed officials, community organizations and citizens have a common reference for township plans and actions.

The 11 focus areas highlighted in the previous chapter serve as the organizing framework for the following recommendations:

1. Model of high quality management, facilities, programs, and services.

2. State-of-the-art customer service.

3. Open space conservation.

4. Natural resource conservation.

5. Management Impact Statements.

6. Reasonable staff workload and projects.

7. Formalized maintenance management system.

8. Stay within the current parameter of programming with the exception of the addition of nature and environmental education.

9. Ongoing revitalization of parks on a ten year schedule.

10. Strategic marketing.

11. Financing through a mix of public and private funds for parks, recreation and open space.

1. Continue to be the model for high quality management, facilities, programs, and services.

The Plymouth Township Parks and Recreation Department will continue to be model park system through a strong foundation composed of the following elements:

A. Mission Statement Continue to post and use the following mission statement in all publications. Use the mission statement to guide decision-making and the allocation of resources.

Parks and Recreation Department Mission Statement

The mission of the Plymouth Township Parks and Recreation Department is to enhance the quality of life in the community through stimulating recreational activities and programs while preserving the natural beauty of park facilities through continuous care.

Since GPCC is a unique facility and operated as an enterprise fund, continue to use its own mission statement

GPCC Mission Statement

The mission of the Greater Plymouth Community Center is to provide exceptional recreational, wellness and educational programs for people of all ages and abilities in a state-of-the-art facility staffed by dedicated and trained professionals.

B. Leadership. Develop and support strong leadership among management, staff and elected officials to articulate the potential and importance of parks and recreation.

C. Listen and Respond to the Community. Remain highly responsive to community needs. Involve key stakeholders in the planning process and in undertaking projects.

D. Build Plymouth Township's park, recreation and open space constituency. Develop a base of public supporters with individuals, community organizations, business, social service organizations, the schools and other private and public organizations needs to continue.

E. Continue to work with others! Collaborate with other community organizations and boards. This includes Montgomery County, the Colonial School District,

sports organizations, businesses, health care providers, neighboring municipalities and others.

F. Maintain the Department's business-like approach to parks and recreation. Continue to collect data; document facts and figures; use organizations for data collection; report and disseminate information to stakeholders. Develop a formalized maintenance management system with a computer software program.

G. Implement the Plan. Carry out the recommendations on the proposed implementation schedule, designate who will be responsible for identified actions and how Plymouth Township will obtain the resources to undertake the action.

H. Continue the departmental accountability. Manage the practices that insure accountability of tax dollars and other resources as well as those that document the clear benefits to Plymouth Township. Use the benefits to project the value of proposed projects being considered for implementation.

I. Continue to be Action Oriented. Take advantage of emerging opportunities and changing needs in a timely manner.

2. Keep the standard for state-of-the-art customer service.

The Plymouth Township Parks and Recreation Department has a unique relationship with its clients. Citizens have high positive regard for the management and staff.

A. Continue to evaluate each and every program. Consider "quick" evaluations at periodic times throughout a program, especially the more expensive ones, in order to make course corrections while the program is underway. Use the feedback to make changes that will improve public service.

B. Focus on frontline staff. Develop an employee training program especially for frontline staff. This should include both orientation and in-service training.

C. Develop an on-going needs assessment system. This can be a mix of formal and informal methods including focus groups, targeted surveys, telephone interviews, and simple conversations with participants and visitors.

D. Monitor trends. Designate monitoring trends an official responsibility of designated positions. Keeping GPCC fresh and vibrant depends on anticipating trends and interests as a basis for program and service planning. Anticipating trends and customer needs will help GPCC meets is goal of retaining a defined percentage of its pass holder rate from one year to the next.

3. Pursue the conservation of open space.

Employ a variety of means including acquisition, easements and conservation by design. Include both the immediate needs of conservation of important sites within the narrow window of opportunity in the near future as well as the generational approach to land redevelopment along the river and around the GPCC campus. Establish open space and natural resource management as a departmental function.

A. Designate the following priorities for land acquisition and conservation as:

- Properties adjacent to or providing linkages with other municipal parks or county trails with particular emphasis on the perimeter parcels of Harriet Wetherill and the Community Center Parks.

- Undeveloped properties of reasonable size with natural features and scenic beauty.

- Properties adjacent to the river or offering river views.

- Existing public and private institutional properties with historical or open space value.

B. Acquire the Wetherill home site as the top priority for township open space preservation. The 15 acre site will complement the 52 acres previously purchased for Harriet Wetherill Park and expand the parkland and protected open space of the municipality. The tract offers a diverse natural landscape suitable for environmental education activities and programs and passive resource based recreation pursuits. The natural resources of the site are important as wildlife habitat in this ever suburbanizing area of Montgomery County. The site has the possibility of trail connections that will link the site to regional long-distance trails and the proposed municipal trail system.

The site will be the Townships first natural park and offers a natural setting for many outdoor natural pursuits as well as a demonstration area to illustrate to residents about the importance of conservation of natural resources.

C. Notify property owners of large parcels that the Township is interested in open space conservation. Determine the level of interest of the landowners in the conservation of their land. Obtain the assistance of the Montgomery County Lands Trust in making the landowner contacts.

D. Undertake a Growing Greener Assessment. This is the first step to incorporating conservation design that builds the green infrastructure/greenway system through the land development process.

E. Consider conservation design for development of remaining opens space by working with the landowners and potential developers. Use examples of successful developments in other communities as advocated by the Natural Lands Trust. Consider retaining conservation land planning professionals to provide advice to Plymouth Township on conservation design.

F. Update the Plymouth Township Comprehensive Plan of 1990. Focus on revitalization of the riverfront and creating linkages to the Montgomery County Trail system.

G. Consider the acquisition of 98 acres of parkland for community use. The park mission should be to serve a mix of active recreation and nature based recreation. Ideally a community park should be 50 to 80 acres in size.

H. Pursue the establishment of the regional Agricultural Security Area (ASA). Continue to work with Whitpain, Springfield, and Whitemarsh Townships and the farmers in Plymouth Township to move ahead with the ASA. Assist local farmers in securing farmland preservation funds should they decide to conserve their farms.

I. Collaborate with Conshohocken and Norristown Boroughs and Plymouth Township landowners in creating riverfront access for Plymouth residents. Designate a contact to insure ongoing communication with these municipalities in order for Plymouth Township to work with them on riverfront and open space projects of mutual benefit. Promote and support riverfront access initiatives that will further public access to the Schuylkill River; facilitate connections to riverfront amenities, parkland, and trails; and provide visual access to scenic areas along the river.

J. Carry out, monitor, and update the Mandatory Dedication of Parkland Ordinance. Utilize the park or recreational facilities, land and/or fees provisions of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code and the Plymouth Township Subdivision and Land development Ordinance of 1980, as amended. Review and update fees regularly.

K. Protect natural resources. Enhance riparian buffers and stabilize stream banks, monitor and remove invasive species, protect significant natural resources. Develop a natural resource management component for the Plymouth Township Park Maintenance Management Plan that will be created in the future.

4. Establish natural resource conservation and environmental education as the next focus area for the Plymouth Township park and recreation system.

Nature will be a major initiative representing a whole new area of public service, recreation, education and partnerships for Plymouth Township. The foundation of this area will be Harriet Wetherill Park.

A. Master plan Harriet Wetherill Park. Address design, maintenance, and programs. Explores passive resource based recreation opportunities for the park. Consider incorporation of environmental education and landowner demonstration exhibits to educate landowners about the importance of conserving natural resources.

B. Phase in programs and facilities over the next ten years and beyond. This would range from a basic park with walking paths to programs in the outdoor setting and then to potentially a nature center depending on resources and philosophy determined through the master planning process.

C. Explore a partnership with the Colonial School District regarding environmental education. Consider shared staffing, joint programs and tying Wetherill Park with the school district's environmental education curricula.

D. Coordinate with Montgomery County Parks and Heritage Services. Explore the potential for working together in the area of environmental programming.

E. Expand partnerships with private schools, scouts, environmental agencies and others in the area of environmental education and Harriet Wetherill Park.

F. Enhance natural areas in existing parks.

5. Adopt the practice of developing a Management Impact Statement (MIS) for proposed projects or a Program/Service Impact Statement for programs.

Create a Management Impact Statement (MIS) prior to undertaking park and recreation facility improvements as well as for additional projects, programs or major events. Use the information generated to determine if it would be possible to successfully go forward with the project while maintaining the high level of quality now provided or if it would negatively impact other existing programs, facilities and human resources. Modify the current program proposal form to include concepts from the MIS. Determine the following:

A. Capital cost of the proposed project/service.

B. Operating costs for the proposed project/service. Include:

- Number of staff hours required
- Number of meetings required, especially if a special advisory committee is formed for the project.
- Cost of the staff hours
- Cost of materials and supplies
- Miscellaneous costs

C. Impact on other facilities and programs should the proposed project/service be implemented.

- Will the project/service require funds needed for other facilities/programs?
- Will the project/service require staff time needed for other services/programs?
- How will the project impact the quality of service that Plymouth Township has set as a goal?

D. Revenue Sources

- Grants
- Donations
- Township funds – additional appropriation
- Township funds – within current budget
- Non-tax funds to be generated from the project/program

Decision-Making

Based upon the above information, does Plymouth Township have the resources to move ahead with this project?

6. Place reasonable expectations regarding workload and projects for management team and staff.

Recognize the need to make the best use of township parks and recreation resources especially staff. Guard against "burnout". Provide a professionally rewarding work experience. Offer competitive compensation, flexible hours fitting a recreation mission, training and professional development opportunities. There is a tendency in excellent systems to increase expectations and assignments that eventually overtax human resources and diminish the quality of public service.

A. Continue to set annual goals and work objectives for each manager and staff member. Formalize this in writing to be signed by the employee and his/her supervisor.

B. Use the Management Impact Statement and the revised program proposal form as a tool for revising staff annual goals and objectives accordingly. If a new program or project is being proposed for the next fiscal year, develop an MIS or PSIS for it. Determine if the staff time and budgetary cost can fit in with the current budget. If the numbers exceed current staff time or the financial resources available, determine how to obtain the additional resources or determine what other programs or services would need to be cut in order to undertake the proposed program or project. The purpose of the MIS tool is to insure that projects and program can be undertaken successfully at the desired quality levels of Plymouth Township.

C. Parks and recreation staff should identify the programs, projects and services that they will undertake annually. Use the budget to show the resources that are being allocated to programs. Use the Management and Program/Service Impact Statements as tools in the discussion and decision-making process about proposed projects or services. If new or expanded programs are proposed, determine through the impact statement process if they can be done within current resources in accordance with the work program. If the resources are not available for the proposed program or service, the respective programs and service could be deferred to the next budget cycle and considered then.

D. Continue to do an annual report that documents accomplishments, work load including the impact of unplanned projects, assessment of community needs and projection of emerging opportunities.

E. Continue regular meetings of Council and the Parks and Recreation Director.

7. Formalize the parks and recreation maintenance management system.

Create and implement park maintenance standards. Establish a computerized information system for workload/cost tracking. This would provide information regarding how human and financial resources are used by location, facility type, or specific cost centers such as soccer fields, playgrounds, natural resource protection or others to be identified. This will enable the Township to make informed decisions about planning, directing, and evaluating maintenance in much the same way that the GPCC is managed. This recommendation is a natural progression in the township's development of management systems for all of the parks and recreation operations.

A. Consider seeking a Peer-to-Peer Grant. The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources provides grants that enable parks and recreation departments to obtain professional consulting services for identified purposes such as formalizing a maintenance management system. This $9,000 grant would require a match of $1,000 for a total project cost of $10,000. Involve the maintenance staff as well as the managers in the development of the system.

B. Develop quality standards for the condition of parks. Include standards for specific areas within parks as not all parks nor all facilities within parks have to be cared for at the highest levels. Consider the establishment of park quality standards as a task of the Peer-to-Peer project referenced above.

C. Establish time standards for the accomplishment of tasks. Setting time standards follows the development of park quality standards.

D. Create work schedules that are geared towards achieving the standards assigned to a particular park or facility Work schedules should be for daily, weekly, monthly, seasonal and annual timetables.

E. Establish a written or computerized system for inspections and reporting. Consider the use of PDA's for maintenance personnel in order to document findings in real time. Look for a software system that enables the use of PDA's.

F. Conduct an information needs assessment of managers and staff in Parks and Recreation and Buildings and Grounds. Determine what kind of information people need to make decisions related to parks, recreation and maintenance.

G. Invite the township's equipment supplier/manufacturer to come in to evaluate the equipment that the Township now has. Make recommendations for future equipment choices. Immediate needs include a four wheel utility vehicle for the parks as well as equipment for ball field maintenance.

H. Recruit and hire future natural resource specialist in light of the establishment of Harriet Wetherill Park and the recommended emphasis on natural resource conservation. Seek an experienced naturalist or a person with a degree in environmental sciences. Natural resource management expertise is needed to advance Plymouth Township's goals for Harriet Wetherill park as well as the for the natural resource management of all township lands.

8. Focus on staying primarily with the current parameters of programming.

With over 2,000 scheduled programs/events annually, the Parks and Recreation Department has been successful in growing its services since 1994. While it is important to grow programs and services to continue the vibrancy of the department's services, it is also important to do so with the same level of quality.

A. For now, retain the three program areas of Aquatics, Programs, and Sports & Fitness. Work within these areas to keep activities and service fresh by monitoring trends, listening to participants, and creating new opportunties accordingly.

B. Consider the addition of nature based programming and environmental education based upon staff capacity and resources. As Harriet Wetherill Park is master planned, consider phasing in nature and environmental education there. Phasing in nature could start with bare bones, self-directed opportunties and range to the upper end with a full-service nature center and curriculum based program. This should happen over a period of years as resources and opportunties through partnerships develop. Ultimately, nature and environmental education might merit becoming a program division like Aquatics, Programs and Sports & Fitness. The park will require expertise in natural resource management, conservation, biology, and environmental sciences. This will require staff with expertise, education and experience in these areas to manage the natural resources and programs.

C. Consider having Sports & Fitness branch out into the area of dealing with the obesity program among the youth. The public participation process revealed interest among the community's youth in using GPCC more for fitness and training. Putting the fun into fitness would have a great home in GPCC. This would also place GPCC in a leadership role in the community through the formation of and advisory board of educators, health care providers, nutritionists, PANA (Pennsylvania Activity and Nutrition Advocates) and others who would come together to address this issue collaboratively. Use a team approach incorporating representatives of all of the divisions of GPCC in this effort.

D. Consider establishing a "Lead Team" management approach to programs such as targeting the obesity issue. Using a Lead Team approach, the Parks & Recreation Department would designate a lead team to be in charge of a project or program but the other program areas would work in collaboration with the Lead Team. The Lead Team would be responsible for the cross-pollination of all the program areas regarding large programs or projects under development or implementation. This would foster maximization of all the program areas in achieving the overall goals of the department rather than potential competing goals of individual program areas.

E. Explore water-based recreation as a lifetime physical activity in the Sports & Fitness and Aquatics areas. Use GPCC as training center for water based recreation. GPCC could serve a regional training location for water-based recreation.

F. Incorporate the recommendations of the Ballard*King report in the program area. This includes the formation of additional adult leagues as revenue generators. Work on developing the adult sports teams' area. Explore potential niche markets such as men's basketball. Consider the non-traditional activities such as kickball and dodge ball which are increasing in popularity nationwide. Expand the emphasis on the entire fitness area rather than focusing on the small cardio and weight room in order to build up clientele. Areas to pursue include a limited personal fitness training program, yoga and Pilates. Actively exploring various options, developing strategies for increasing fitness participation, outlining a marketing approach, and writing all of this down in a plan with timeline, roles, responsibilities and bench marks of success is crucial to maximizing the potential of the fitness area.

9. Plan for the targeted expansion and regular revitalization of parks and recreation facilities.

Since GPCC has been constructed and the parks have been master planned, designed and rehabilitated over the last ten years, the focus should be on the replacement and upgrading of individual components. This would include playground equipment, resurfacing of game courts, re-roofing, and equipment replacement as well as keeping up with the ever-changing needs and interests of the community. The following items should be considered in light of the resources available.

A. Target acquisition and development of parkland to meet current and future needs for expanded facilities. Acquire 98 acres of parkland**.** Expand existing park sites through the acquisition of contiguous acreage. Explore the acquisition of "brownfield" land for community parkland development.

B. Develop a comprehensive greenway and trail system throughout the municipality and linking regionally. Link community destinations with trails to promote pedestrian and bicycle accessibility and conservation areas along streams. Explore the creation of greenways and trails through land acquisition, easements, donations, and use of existing rights-of-way and public lands. Partner

with adjacent municipalities, Montgomery County, and PennDOT to expand the system and connect regionally.

C. **Add ball fields** for soccer, lacrosse football, and flat field practice areas in new and expanded parks.

D. **Implement a ten year capital improvement program for GPCC and the parks** as shown in **Chapter 9 Action Plan** to update, revitalize, and incorporate cyclic improvement.

E. **Assess the potential reconfiguration of the GPCC's indoor space including the relocation of the maintenance garage.**

F. **Improve existing parks** by enhancing the convenience of using the facilities, enhancing the visual image of the park site, and introducing additional recreation opportunities.

G. **Undertake site plans for sections of parks that the Township wishes to improve.**

10. Develop a strategic marketing plan.

Create a written statement of outreach goals and results expected for identified target areas. Major focus should be on the community center. Consider involving a professional marketing firm should the need arise and funding becomes available.

A. **Conduct an inventory of all current marketing initiatives**. Include Leisure Visions, Township newsletter, cable television, newspaper ads, direct mail, e-mail, WEB site, display cases, fliers, Pro-Shop merchandise, uniforms, signs, events, printed materials and all other items.

B. **Write down the reason why the Parks &Recreation Department does each one of these**. Try to relate the reason to results.

C. **Conduct an inventory of all the marketing initiatives that the Department does not do**. Write down the reason(s) why not for each item identified.

D. **Try to develop a tracking system to determine how successful these initiatives are in generating participation**. Potential mechanisms include: attaching coupons to written materials or on the WEB site, customer referrals for discounts, coded telephone systems, codes on direct mail or e-mails or newspaper ads, or asking on registration forms.

E. **Evaluate the mechanisms to see if they are creative enough.** The mechanism might be fine but the level of creativity might not be.

F. **Experiment with different mixes of advertising.** For example, instead of sporadic newspaper ads, try a flood of ads at fewer but more strategic times during the year.

G. Hold advertising and promotional focus groups. Use both customers and non-customers to determine what works, what does not work as well, and potential new directions.

H. Deal with pricing issues that affect the Parks and Recreation Department. This includes GPCC being perceived as too expensive; that some residents think everything should be free; and that residents and non-residents have strong feelings about fee-differentials. This is a matter of public education directly related to advertising and promotion: it's about how people perceive GPCC policy.

I. Target specific groups and goals. Instead of advertising GPCC as a whole, identify important groups or programs on which to base goals e.g. retain 75 percent of annual pass holders; increase number of birthday parties by a designated number and so on. By identifying specific targets, the staff will be able to formulate strategies for reaching those particular targets/goals.

J. Develop a written marketing plan. Identify the goals, targets and specific actions. Create a one year calendar by month of all initiatives and how they will be tracked.

K. Explore major signage for the corner of Germantown Pike and Jolly Road or Germantown Pike and Walton Road. Investigate computerized LED or digital signage. It is important to get the right design that conveys the high caliber operation of Plymouth Township. The site should be master planned to insure that the sign is positioned correctly, has a high caliber design and materials and is located within a very attractively landscaped site.

L. Use staff, training programs, and networking to develop new ideas. Be open to considering retaining a professional marketing consultant for advice on promoting GPCC, especially if any difficulties regarding participation and revenues are anticipated.

11. Continue to invest in Plymouth Township's parks and recreation system through a mix of public and private revenues.

To sustain and enhance a parks, recreation and open space system the caliber of Plymouth Township, continued investment is essential. Unless GPCC is maintained in as a clean, attractive and safe facility with professional, friendly staff, the center will not be able to generate sufficient income as a result of declining visitor satisfaction. Decreasing revenues from fees and charges would require even higher investment by the Township just to keep the Center open. Long term it would be cost effective to invest in the GPCC to maintain the high standards of care that yield revenues from fees and charges.

A. Focus capital development funding in four areas. These include Open Space Preservation, Harriet Wetherill Park, Park Improvements and GPCC improvements or additions "within the box" of the center.

Open Space Preservation

- Purchase the 15 acre Wetherill property using funds from the Montgomery County Open Space program.
- Pursue Plymouth Township's highest priorities for land acquisition and conservation including the following when funding is available:
    - Properties adjacent to or providing linkages with other municipal parks or county trails with particular emphasis on the perimeter parcels of Harriet Wetherhill and the Community Center Parks.
    - Undeveloped properties of reasonable size with natural features and scenic beauty.
    - Properties adjacent to the river or offering river views.
    - Existing public and private intuitional properties with historical or open space value.
- Acquire 98 acres of parkland for a community park with mix of active and passive recreation. Look for opportunties adjacent to existing parks.
- Work with local farmers and Montgomery County to establish a Regional Agricultural Security Area and secure farmland preservation funds for those who are interested in preserving their farmland.
- Pursue Transportation Enhancement funds to create trail connections to Montgomery County's trail system.
- Use the land development process to identify potential land for open space; trail and greenway connections; and riverfront access. Township officials, including the Zoning Officer, who review land development proposals should become familiar with the sections of this plan dealing with parks, open space, trails and greenways. They should then review proposals to insure that trails, connections, river access and other potential recreation and open space lands are identified and negotiated in the planning process,

Harriet Wetherill Park – Phase in the development of this natural area as funding and partnerships are available. Pursue grant funding.

Park Improvements – Make strategic improvements to the parks to enhance visitors' convenience, enhance the visual image, introduce additional recreation opportunities, and address resource protection. Allocate about $400,000 annually for park capital improvements from the General Fund.

GPCC – Develop a written 10 year capital improvement plan for the periodic replacement of GPCC equipment and furnishings. Establish a capital replacement fund in the amount of two to four percent of the GPCC construction cost or about $400,000 annually.

B. For operating funds, set or maintain goals for cost recovery and township commitment to operational support. The primary recommendation is to

continue to strive for 80% cost recovery at the GPCC. Recognize that it is crucial for the township to provide the full 20% annual operation subsidy in order to maintain the high quality of the facility and programming and thus attract enough pass holders and participants to achieve this 80% goal. Note that the management consultant suggests that for the longer term it may be more realistic to expect 75% cost recovery. For community programs and services offered outside the GPCC and financed within the general fund, strive for 45% cost recovery. It is strongly recommended that Plymouth Township allocate the full amount needed for capital and operating funding in 2007 and beyond. To sustain and enhance a parks, recreation and open space system the caliber of Plymouth Township, continued investment is essential.

C. **Strive to achieve balance in terms of projects and programs undertaken.** Insure that the township's standards of high quality facilities and services are maintained when new tasks are added. Consider staff and financial resources that are available. Bear in mind that the Township already offers over 2,000 organized and scheduled programs annually. Develop consensus on priorities for projects and services.

Chapter 9
Plan Implementation



Planning for the future







Chapter

9

Implementation Schedule

The Implementation Schedule sets forth the time frame for the actions Plymouth Township will undertake in the short, medium, and long term. Not everything can be accomplished at once. Opportunities arise and needs change, requiring this schedule to be flexible. The Implementation Schedule is organized around the eleven point program for park, recreation and open space improvements.

Recommendation 1. Continue to be the model for high quality management, facilities, programs and services					
Action	**Description**	**Cost/Potential Revenue Source**	**2006-2007**	**2008-2011**	**2012-2015**
Adopt the nine point management model for Plymouth Township administration & operations.	Mission statement, leadership, listen to community, build consistency, work with others, continue business-like approach, implement the plan, foster accountability, remain action oriented.	Staff time and budget for projects.	→	→	→
Recommendation 2. Maintain the standard for state-of-the-art customer service					
Action	**Description**	**Cost/Potential Revenue Source**	**2006-2007**	**2008-2011**	**2012-2015**
Train staff to listen and pursue customer comments	In-service training	Part of training program and budget	√	→	→
Continue to evaluate programs, services and events	Written evaluations, instructor listening and documentation	Part of program management	→	→	→
Conduct on-going needs assessment	Mix of informal staff/customer discussions, telephone and on-site surveys, focus groups	Staff time	→	→	→
Monitor trends	Assign this as staff responsibility to designated staff	Staff time	√	→	→

√ - Initiate → Carry out Both depend on availability of resources

Recommendation 3. Pursue the conservation of open space					
Action	**Description**	**Cost/Potential Revenue Source**	**2006-2007**	**2008-2011**	**2012-2015**
Acquire the Wetherill tract	15 acres	Source: Montgomery County Open Space funds and Township funds	√		
Pursue conservation easements or acquisition of large undeveloped properties. Notify property owners of township's interest in land conservation including public and private properties with historical and open space value.	Develop an approach to meet with property owners that would include expertise in land use and financial planning.	Township representatives and Montgomery County Lands Trust representative	√	→	→
Undertake Growing Greener Assessment	Retain organization trained in such assessments	$1,500	√		
Consider conservation design for development of larger properties	Retain conservation design planning organization	$10,000 per property	√		
Update the Plymouth Township Comprehensive Plan	Retain a planning firm with expertise in revitalization expertise as well as community planning experience	$75,000-100,000		√	
Consider the acquisition of 98 acres of parkland	For a community park with mix of active and passive recreation	To be determined. Source: Grants, township funds	→	→	→
Pursue establishment of Agricultural Security Area	Work with Whitemarsh, Whitpain, Springfield & Montgomery County Farmland Preservation Program	Volunteer time to coordinate. No cost to township. Potential Agricultural Preservation funds to Plymouth farmer(s) for farmland preservation.	→	→	
Collaborate with Conshohocken and Norristown Boroughs and Plymouth landowners on potential riverfront access and revitalization	Will create access to river for Plymouth residents	Staff and volunteer time	→	→	→
Review Mandatory Dedication of Land Ordinance to unsure that fees are at proper level.	Fees generate park and recreation funding source	Cost of attorney fees	→	→	→

Recommendation 3. (Continued) Pursue the conservation of open space					
Action	**Description**	**Cost/Potential Revenue Source**	**2006-2007**	**2008-2011**	**2012-2015**
Protect natural resources via management of publicly owned properties	Develop natural resources management plan	Staff time; coordination with county extension agent; include in development of formal maintenance management system	√	→	→
Recommendation 4. **Establish natural resource conservation and environmental education as the next focus area for the Plymouth Township park and recreation system.**					
Action	**Description**	**Cost/Potential Revenue Source**	**2006-2007**	**2008-2011**	**2012-2015**
Phase in nature programs and facilities.	Based on master plan, add facilities	$3.5 to 5.2 million as funds become available over time		√	→
Create, sustain and enhance partnerships in nature based programs and facilities	Include Montgomery County Parks & Historic Services, Colonial School District, scouts, and other environmental organizations.	Staff time. Design programs to recover costs.		√	→
Enhance natural areas in parks	Develop natural resource management plan in conjunction with the formalization of the park maintenance management system.	Staff time. Assistance from Montgomery County Conservation District. Tap into Peer grant in maintenance system development.		√	→
Recommendation 5. **Adopt the practice of developing a Management impact Statement for proposed projects or a program/service impact statement for programs and services.**					
Action	**Description**	**Cost/Potential Revenue Source**	**2006-2007**	**2008-2011**	**2012-2015**
Develop and institute the maintenance impact statement as a management tool.	Use model proposed in **Plymouth…*Naturally!***	Staff time. Potential maximization of department resources as a result of MIS use.	√	→	→
Modify and use the recreation program proposal form to create a Program/Service Impact Statement.	Incorporate concepts from the MIS with the program proposal form. Devise one single form. Do not create an additional form.	Staff time. Potential maximization of staff time, facilities and funding for maximum public service.	√	→	→

√ - Initiate → Carry out Both depend on availability of resources

Recommendation 6. Place reasonable expectations regarding workload and projects for management team and staff.					
Action	**Description**	**Cost/Potential Revenue Source**	**2006-2007**	**2008-2011**	**2012-2015**
Continue to set annual goals and work objectives for each manager and staff person. Use the MIS or P/SIS to evaluate proposed changes in workload.	Formalize this in writing and continue to use it as basis for evaluations and planning.	Staff time.	→	→	→
Continue to develop an annual report.	Document the Parks & Recreation Department accomplishments, emerging needs and opportunities.	Staff time and production cost	→	→	→
Recruit and hire a natural resource specialist for next program area and the Wetherill Park.	Develop qualifications that include education and experience in a similar setting.	To be determined		√	→
Recommendation 7. Formalize the parks and recreation maintenance management system.					
Action	**Description**	**Cost/Potential Revenue Source**	**2006-2007**	**2008-2011**	**2012-2015**
Develop a formalized maintenance management system for parks, recreation, open space and trails.	Seek a Peer-to- Peer grant to retain a park and recreation professional to work with township staff on this.	$10,000. $9,000 from PA DCNR. $1,000 from Plymouth Township.	→	→	→
Develop a formalized maintenance management system for GPCC	Use the park maintenance management system planning process and resulting plan as guide.	Potential consulting costs of $10,000. Potential peer grant in the future	→	→	→
Acquire, install software and train staff to get maintenance management system up and running.	TRIMS software; conduct information needs assessment department-wide regarding maintenance	DVIT grant will fund this.	√		
Evaluate township park maintenance equipment	Invite equipment manufacturers to come in to evaluate it.	Staff time		√	

√ - Initiate → Carry out Both depend on availability of resources

Recommendation 8. Stay within current programming parameters and explore nature as the next area.					
Action	**Description**	**Cost/Potential Revenue Source**	**2006-2007**	**2008-2011**	**2012-2015**
Retain Aquatics, Fitness, and Sports & Fitness as the three program areas.		Current budget and projected revenue sources	→	→	→
Explore nature and environmental education as future program area.	Master plan Wetherill Park. Include program component.	Use PADCNR grant for master plan to explore this program area.	√		
Consider targeting the obesity issue among youth as a target area for Sports & Fitness	Conduct research. Interview and coordinate with PANA. Develop PSIS to determine if/when this could be undertaken.	Staff time. Potential grant funds.		√	
Develop "Lead Team" Approach to program planning and management	Use representatives for all divisions to develop programs or events. Assign one person as the Lead for the project.	Staff time and collaborative spirit.	√	→	→
Explore water-based recreation as lifetime physical activity in the Sports & Fitness and Aquatics divisions.	Look at non-traditional programs that train people for other activities such as kayaking etc.	Staff time. Potential revenues.		√	
Recommendation 9. **Plan for targeted expansion and revitalization of parks & recreation facilities.**					
Action	**Description**	**Cost/Potential Revenue Source**	**2006-2007**	**2008-2011**	**2012-2015**
Pursue the acquisition of land contiguous to township parks, especially the Community Center Park and Harriet Wetherill Park.	To be determined	County and state grant funds and potential future township funding	→	→	→
Target acquisition and development for needed sports facilities. Expand existing parks wherever possible.	Land suitable for athletic field development and lifetime fitness facilities.	To be determined	→	→	→
Develop a comprehensive greenway and trail system throughout the municipality and linking regionally.	Secure corridors through land acquisition, easements, donations, use of existing right-of-ways and public lands	To be determined	→	→	→

Recommendation 9. (Continued) Plan for targeted expansion and revitalization of parks & recreation facilities.					
Action	**Description**	**Cost/Potential Revenue Source**	**2006-2007**	**2008-2011**	**2012-2015**
Add sports fields as resources are available.	All sports need fields	Fields for soccer & lacrosse should be the priority. Training areas are needed.	√	→	→
Implement 10 year Capital Improvement program.	In Appendix A of this plan	Depends upon funding including grants, other private sources and township support.	→	→	→
Recommendation 10. **Develop a strategic marketing program.**					
Action	**Description**	**Cost/Potential Revenue Source**	**2006-2007**	**2008-2011**	**2012-2015**
Inventory all current marketing methods. Determine their value in terms of results.	Include costs and staff time.	Staff time	→	→	→
Develop a tracking method to assess value and results of advertising efforts.	Staff could use methods such as coupons, coded telephone calls etc.	Staff time	√	→	→
Develop method for regular updating of community needs.	Use focus groups, interviews, surveys and informal conversations	Staff time		√	
Monitor pricing perceptions	Use focus groups of participants and non-participants	Staff time	→	→	→
Target specific groups for advertising	Priority should be on retaining current customers.	Staff time and marketing budget	→	→	→
Develop a strategic marketing plan	Target specific functions, client groups, and any other factor that reaches identified groups.			√	
Consider placement of signage to advertise.	Consider electronic signage in tasteful, attractive design for Germantown Pike and for Walton Rd.	$20,000-40,000		√	

Recommendation 11.
Continue to invest in the township parks and recreation system with a mix of public and private sources.

Action	Description	Cost/Potential Revenue Source	2006-2007	2008-2011	2012-2015
GPCC operating	Support about 20 percent of the operating cost of GPCC. Twp support is essential to revenue generation.	Varies by year. About $400,000 annually from General Fund transfer. Generate 80% operating costs from non-tax source.	→	→	→
GPCC capital	Set aside funds in a capital reserve annually for future repairs and improvements	$400,000 in municipal support annually	→	→	→
Programs (non-GPCC)	Strive to generate about 45 percent of the program cost through non-twp. revenues.	At least $200,000 needed in municipal support annually.	→	→	→
Parks Capital Funding	Maintain existing facilities. Explore potential for Plymouth Township to finance major land acquisition and park, trail development. Consider retaining financial planning experts to assist.	$400,000 annually	→	→	→
Park Operating Funding	Maintain at current level	Strive to maximize the $600,000 annual park maintenance budget. Develop a formalized maintenance plan to allocate resources and track costs more effectively.	√	→	→

√ - Initiate → Carry out Both depend on availability of resources

Appendix A: Capital Improvement Program

The recommendations of this plan will require Plymouth Township to make both capital and operating expenditures. Determining capital costs can be somewhat nebulous. Many communities use their own work forces and are able to 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 opinions based on the best available information and are subject to change when each project is further evaluated and designed based on current survey information. In addition, the projected costs are based on 2005 costs for contracted labor, and do not consider any particular source of revenue. Design, survey, engineering, contractor bond, insurance, and contingency fees have been included based on typical percent of the projected development costs. These fees should be re-defined after an approach and scope are determined for each project.

Plymouth Township has a well developed park and recreation system with many of the parks recently renovated and a practice of cyclical upgrade in the parks. Improvements outlined in the Capital Improvement Program generally represent minor aesthetic and functional improvements to the system that will enhance the users' experience.

Plymouth Township Parks and Recreation Facilities Capital Improvement Program					
Park Improvement	Quantity	Cost Opinion	2006-2007	2008-2011	2012-2015
Greater Plymouth Community Center and Park					
Five project areas are proposed: ▪ Develop a splash pad area on the wooded homesite along Germantown Road. Include the splash pad equipment, surfacing, medium picnic pavilion, access walkways, restroom, landscaping, and site amenities. The splash pad area will be completed in four phases. ▪ Extend a trail from the playground to Jolly Road. ▪ Expand the parking area at the corner of Germantown Road and Walton Road and add landscaping. ▪ Replace the pedestrian bridge at the soccer field. ▪ Replace the pavilion at the sand volleyball courts.					
Playground Running Track Resurfacing					
Repair Surface/Paint Playground Running Track	LS	$2,250			
SUB-TOTAL		$2,250		√	
Splash Pad Area – 4 Phases					
Phase 1 – Design					
Survey	LS	10,000			
Design and Engineering (15%)	LS	71,000			
SUB-TOTAL		$81,000		√	

Park Improvement	Quantity	Cost Opinion	2006-2007	2008-2011	2012-2015
Phase 2 – Site Work, Restrooms/Pavilion/Trail					
Demolition/Site Preparation	LS	$8,400			
Earthwork	LS	15,000			
Erosion Control Measures	LS	9,600			
Stormwater Facilities	LS	18,000			
8’ Bituminous Trail	12,500 LF	21,000			
Med. Pavilion/Restroom	LS	150,000			
SUB-TOTAL		$222,000			√
Phase 3 – Splash Pad					
Splash Pad – Equipment /Surfacing/Installation	LS	150,000			
Splash Pad Fencing	LS	16,800			
SUB-TOTAL		$166,800			√
Phase 4 – Landscaping, Amenities					
Signage	LS	12,000			
Site Amenities	LS	27,200			
Landscaping	LS	18,900			
Sub-Total		$58,200			√
SUB-TOTAL		$528,000			
Playground to Jolly Road Trail					
8’ Bituminous Trail	500 LF	$7,000			
SUB-TOTAL	LS	$7,000		√	
Germantown Pike/Walton Road Parking Area					
Parking Area and Drive	LS	$50,000			
Landscaping	LS	6,000			
SUB-TOTAL		$56,000	√		
Pedestrian Bridge Replacement					
Pedestrian Bridge	LS	$35,000			
Landscaping	LS	3,000			
SUB-TOTAL		$38,000			√
Adult Fitness Trail					
Fitness Stations (10)	LS	$32,850			
SUB-TOTAL		$32,850			√
Pavilion Replacement					
Pavilion	LS	$85,000			
Landscaping	LS	3,000			
SUB-TOTAL		$88,000		√	
TOTAL Greater Plymouth Community Center& Park		***$751,850***			
East Plymouth Valley Park					
Five project areas are proposed: ▪ Bridge reconstruction to reinforce the front bridge ▪ Resurface parking lot ▪ Basketball court upgrades: resurfacing, new standards, shade structure, site amenities, and landscaping. ▪ Streambank stabilization and landscaping.					
Parking Lot Resurfacing					
Parking Lot Resurfacing	LS	$15,000			
SUB-TOTAL		$15,000	√		

Park Improvement	Quantity	Cost Opinion	2006-2007	2008-2011	2012-2015
Bridge Reconstruction					
Demolition/Site Preparation	LS	$5,000			
Bridge reinforcement	LS	75,000			
Erosion Control Measures	LS	5,000			
SUB-TOTAL		$85,000	√		
Streambank Stabilization – 2006					
Streambank Stabilization/ Riparian Buffer Enhancements	LS	$20,000			
SUB-TOTAL		$20,000	√		
Basketball and Tennis Court Upgrades					
Basketball Court Resurfacing and Standards	LS	$100,000			
Tennis Court Backboard	LS	6,500			
Shade Sails	LS	15,000			
Site Amenities	LS	4,000			
Landscaping	LS	3,000			
SUB-TOTAL		$128,500		√	
Hub Area Upgrades					
Information kiosk	LS	$20,000			
Walls to define area	LS	8,000			
Site Amenities	LS	20,000			
Landscaping	LS	8,000			
SUB-TOTAL		$56,000	√		
Ball Field Upgrades					
Annual Ball Field Upgrades	Allowance ($5,000/year)	$20,000			
SUB-TOTAL		$20,000	√	√	√
Streambank Stabilization – 2007					
Streambank Stabilization/Riparian Buffer Enhancements	LS	$20,000			
SUB-TOTAL		$20,000	√		
TOTAL East Plymouth Valley Park		***$344,500***			
John F. Kennedy Park					
Three projects are proposed: ▪ Resurface the tennis court and multipurpose court ▪ Streambank stabilization and landscaping. ▪ Develop restrooms					
Court Resurfacing					
Tennis/Multipurpose Court Resurfacing	LS	$60,000			
SUB-TOTAL		$60,000	√		
Streambank Stabilization/Landscaping					
Streambank Stabilization	LS	$20,000			
Site Amenities	LS	4,000			
Landscaping	LS	9,500			
SUB-TOTAL		$33,500			√

Park Improvement	Quantity	Cost Opinion	2006-2007	2008-2011	2012-2015
Restroom					
Construct Restroom	LS	$80,000			
SUB-TOTAL		$80,000	√		
TOTAL John F. Kennedy Park		***$173,500***			
Colwell Park					
Two project areas are proposed: ▪ Landscape enhancements ▪ Multipurpose court resurfacing					
Landscaping/Sign					
Landscaping	LS	$14,000			
Sign	LS	10,000			
SUB-TOTAL		$24,000	√		
Court Resurfacing					
Multipurpose Court Resurfacing	LS	$45,000			
SUB-TOTAL		$45,000			√
TOTAL Colwell Park		***$69,000***			
Black Horse Park					
Four project areas are proposed: ▪ Upgrade the existing playground with new panels and accessory pieces, covered picnic tables, and landscaping. ▪ Upgrade the ball field with a new backstop and fencing. ▪ Resurface the basketball courts and add new fencing. ▪ Install a new sign and landscaping.					
Playground Renovations					
New play panels/pieces	LS	$17,500			
Covered Picnic Tables	2	4,000			
Site Amenities	LS	2,500			
Landscaping	LS	1,000			
SUB-TOTAL		$25,000	√		
Ball field Upgrades					
Backstop	LS	$7,000			
Fencing	LS	18,000			
SUB-TOTAL		$25,000	√		
Basketball Court Resurfacing					
Court Resurfacing	LS	$45,000			
SUB-TOTAL		$45,000			√
Sign and Landscaping					
Sign and Landscaping	LS	$15,000			
SUB-TOTAL		$15,000			√
TOTAL Black Horse Park		***$110,000***			
Bicentennial Park					
Three project areas are proposed: ▪ Trail loop extension ▪ Gazebo, decorative pavement, and landscaping ▪ Streambank stabilization and landscaping.					

Park Improvement	Quantity	Cost Opinion	2006-2007	2008-2011	2012-2015
Trail Loop Extension					
Site Prep.	LS	$4,000			
Erosion Control	LS	5,000			
Loop Trail	LS	18,000			
Landscaping	LS	2,000			
SUB-TOTAL		$29,000		√	
Gazebo					
Gazebo	LS	$15,000			
Brick Pavement	LS	5,000			
Landscaping	LS	2,000			
SUB-TOTAL		$22,000		√	
Streambank Stabilization/Landscaping					
Riparian Buffer Enhancements/Streambank Stabilization	LS	20,000			
Landscaping	LS	7,000			
SUB-TOTAL		$27,000			√
Pedestrian Bridge					
Pedestrian Bridge	LS	85,000			
SUB-TOTAL		$85,000			√
TOTAL Bicentennial Park		***$163,000***			
Alan Wood Park					
Two project areas are proposed: ▪ Basketball court upgrades to include resurfacing and new fencing.					
New Sign					
New Sign	LS	$7,500			
SUB-TOTAL		$7,500	√		
Basketball Court Upgrades					
Court Resurfacing and Fencing	LS	$30,000			
SUB-TOTAL		$30,000			√
TOTAL Alan Wood Park		***$37,500***			
GRAND TOTAL		***$1,596,500***			
Harriet Wetherill Park					
The master plan will be developed in 2006 and phased park development will follow.					
Park Master Plan					
Park Master Plan	LS	$52,000			
SUB-TOTAL		$52,000	√		
Park Development					
Park Improvements * (passive recreation and environmental education)	$50,000 – 75,000/acre (69.83 acres)	$3,491,500 – 5,237,250		√	⇒
SUB-TOTAL		**$3,491,500 – 5,237,250**			
GRAND TOTAL Harriet Wetherill Park		***$3,543,500 – 5,289,250***			

* There is a broad range of development options for the Harriet Wetherill Park as well as phasing options. Grants, partnership, donations, and community project could reduce municipal funding requirements. The 2006 master plan will further define the future development costs for park development.

Park Improvement	Quantity	Cost Opinion	2006-2007	2008-2011	2012-2015
Park Maintenance Equipment					
Truck	1	$40,000	√		
Mower	1	30,000	√		
Truck	1	55,000		√	
Miscellaneous		25,000		√	
TOTAL		**$150,000**			
Greater Plymouth Community Center Building					
Building Cyclic Repairs	Budget 2% - 4% of $12,000,000 annually = $240,000–480,000/yr)	$720,000 - 1,440,000 (3 year period) $960,000 – 1,920,000 (4 year period)	√	√	√

Appendix B

Plymouth Township
Report: Public Opinion Survey on Parks, Recreation and Open Space

2005

I. Introduction

Plymouth Township conducted a direct mail survey to assess public opinion about the parks, recreation and open space. The Township wanted to determine the opinions, ideas and concerns of the residents to serve as a foundation for updating **Pathways to the Future** (the township's parks and recreation plan of 1994 and the **Plymouth Township Open Space Plan** of 1995). By understanding the citizens' needs and interests, the municipality will be able to direct its planning efforts and resources for the benefit of the public as well as for the conservation of natural resources most effectively.

II. Process

Organization, Goals and Survey Instrument – Plymouth Township retained Toole Recreation Planning in association with YSM to conduct the public opinion survey for **Plymouth…*Naturally!*.** The Plymouth Township Parks and Recreation Department and the consultants worked together collaboratively throughout the survey process. A CPRP (Certified Park and Recreation Professional) developed the survey instrument in partnership with the Parks and Recreation Department and the Plan Study Committee. The goal was to obtain citizen input regarding:

- Parks and recreation facilities
- Greenways and trails
- Preferences regarding the use and conservation of Harriet Wetherill Park
- Level of satisfaction with the parks and recreation system
- Program preferences
- Attitudes towards township support of parks and recreation
- Public priorities for future directions in parks, recreation and open space

Random Sample: Return Number Matters - A random sample of 1,000 households was drawn so that every household in Plymouth Township had an equal chance of participating in the survey. The goal was to achieve a return of 361 completed surveys so that the survey findings would have a high level of confidence and a low margin of error.

Distribution – Respondents received a pre-survey letter informing them that they would be getting a questionnaire the following week. The pre-survey letter informed the respondents about the project, the importance of their response and the time frame. The survey was mailed out via first class mail along with a cover letter and a self-addressed stamped reply envelope the next week. One week after the surveys were mailed out, a follow-up post card was sent as a reminder for people to return their surveys or thanking them if they already had.

III. Survey Follow Up

In addition to the postcard reminder, follow up included telephone calls to the respondents who had not yet returned their surveys. Toole Recreation Planning is licensed by the PUC in accordance with the "Do Not Call" regulations to make telephone calls to survey participants. Up to three calls were made to a random group of 100 non-respondents asking them to complete and return their questionnaire. The phone calls yielded the following:

- Unreachable: 43 of the survey sample who had not returned a questionnaire were unreachable. That is they did not respond to the survey or any of the telephone calls.

- Refusals: 32 non-returned questionnaires refused in telephone follow up. Of the refusals, some were "hang ups" while others refused after listening to the purpose of the call. The main reasons given for refusals were happy with the parks and recreation system in Plymouth Township, too busy, or lack of interest.

- Reachable and Non-refused: 25 of the survey sample contacted said they would either fill it out or they asked for another questionnaire which was then mailed to them. Interestingly, those contacted who had not yet returned the survey stated that they thought that the parks and recreation system was just fine and that there was no need to comment on it.

IV. Return

Of the 1,000 surveys mailed, 52 were undeliverable due to incorrect addresses, changes of address, refusals and deaths effectively reducing the sample to 948. Completed questionnaires returned totaled 362 within the response period. Another 15 were returned after that for a total of 377 completed surveys for a return rate of 40 percent. The yield produced exceeded the number required to achieve a statistical level of confidence of 95 percent +/- 5 percent.

The follow up phone calls were crucial to this survey. The calls determined that the citizens randomly selected for the survey did not respond to a great extent because they were satisfied with the parks and recreation system. Several commented on the great improvements made in the system over the last 10-15 years.

Respondent Characteristics

Respondents provided demographic information that included their gender, age group, educational level, and household composition.

Respondent Age Group

About 40 percent of the respondents were in the 45 to 59 year age group. The next largest responding groups consisted of 30 percent in the 25 to 44-age cohort. About

27 percent were 60 or older. The age group of 18 to 24 made up less than one percent of the respondents.

Gender of Respondents

Of those who answered the question about respondent gender, 42 percent reported that they were males and 27 percent females. Males were over-represented in the survey responses in comparison to the population as whole.

Household Composition

About 31 percent of the respondents had retired adults living in the household. About six percent had people with disabilities. Respondents reported the following percentages regarding the presence of children and youth in the household.

- Elementary school students – 16 percent
- High school students – 14 percent
- Middle school students – 13 percent
- Pre-schoolers – 12 percent
- Young adults – 11 percent
- College students – 10 percent

V. Summary of Overall Findings

The eight major findings of the survey include the following:

1. The respondents have an overall favorable impression of Plymouth Township's recreation programs with 60 percent of the respondents rating them as good to excellent. The top programs of interest to the survey respondents were adult recreation programs, studio arts, self-improvement programs, and environmental education.

2. The respondents are satisfied with the parks with 70 percent of the respondents rating them as good to excellent. About 71 percent of the respondents reported using parks and recreation facilities in the Township – only five percent reported not being interested in them. Another 16 percent stated that they never use parks and recreation facilities but still think that parks are important to have! GPCC is a source of great community pride with respondents expressing that they have moved to the Township because of it or showing it off to their out-of-town visitors.

3. For Harriet Wetherill Park, about seven out of ten respondents listed walking paths as a most preferred facility.

4. Regarding the Schuylkill River, walking and biking paths along the river were a priority to 72 percent of the respondents while preservation of the riverfront was a priority to 71 percent.

5. The priority for the future focus of parks and recreation in Plymouth Township, according to 70 percent of the respondents, should be open space and natural resource preservation.

6. Over half of the respondents want Plymouth Township to maintain its commitment to parks and recreation while another 26 percent want the Township to increase its commitment. Less than 2 percent want the Township to decrease its commitment. About 17 percent said they'd be willing to pay more in taxes for parks and recreation and 18 percent would be willing to pay user fees and charges. About 45 percent think that parks and recreation is nice to have but they aren't willing to pay more taxes or user fees. About one in five wanted more information before they could answer.

7. Follow up telephone calls revealed that many non-respondents were satisfied with the parks and recreation system and saw no need to complete the questionnaire.

8. **Leisure Visions** is the most important method for getting the word out about parks and recreation in Plymouth Township, followed by the newspapers. The internet is expected to become increasingly more important in terms of distributing information with about 28 percent expecting it to be their preferred source in the future. It is important to continue to monitor this over time and respond to changes in public preferences.

VI. Survey Implications

Survey findings provided an overall sense of direction for Plymouth Township in parks, recreation, open space greenways and trails. Survey findings "take the pulse" of the general public. The findings and implications are important because they represent the opinions of the silent majority. While it is important to take into consideration the opinions of citizens that are organized according to special interests, it is equally important to balance those needs with those of the public at large.

Maintain the Commitment to Parks and Recreation

The citizens sent a strong message of being pleased with the accomplishments of Plymouth Township over the last ten to 15 years in parks and recreation. While there is concern about not wanting to pay more in taxes generally, the citizens do not want to see any decrease in the municipal support of parks and recreation.

Protect the Natural Resources, Open Space and the Schuylkill River

Manage public lands from a natural resource conservation perspective rather than as traditionally mowed and manicured facilities. Provide public education about this change. Focus on Harriet Wetherill Park as the next significant initiative in parks and recreation. Continue to focus on riverfront planning with the goal of securing public access, views and preservation of the riverfront. Collaboration with neighboring municipalities will be crucial to attain the Plymouth Township residents' desire to have a protected riverfront with adjoining trails for walking and biking.

Trails

Continue planning on trails and connections, especially to get residents to the Montgomery County bike paths in the township and the region.

Programs and Services

Promote opportunities and what to do. Respondents appear to want to know what to do as well as to take part in self-improvement programs and adult education that would broaden their leisure base. Begin to offer nature oriented opportunties.

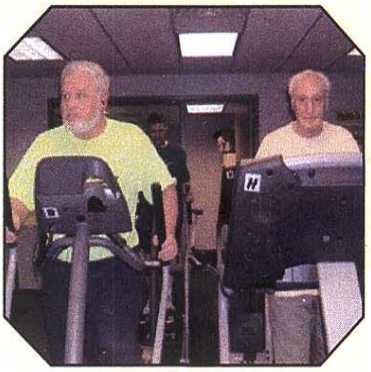
Education and Outreach

Informing the residents about recreation opportunities including programs and facilities is important. Equally important is educating residents about the value of GPCC in terms of membership, programs and services.

Plymouth Township Parks and Recreation Awards

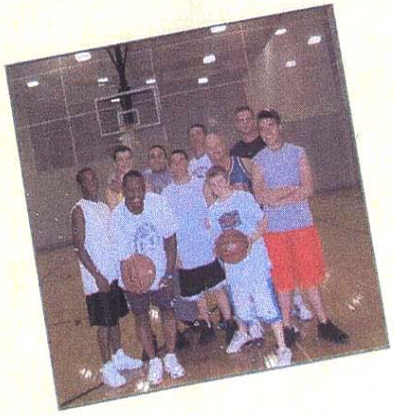














1996

PRPS Publication Fall 1995 Leisure Visions
PRPS Excellence in Programming Fit-N-Fifty

1997

PRPS Excellence in Programming 3 F

1998

1998 3CMA Award of Excellence for Video

1999

PRPS Publication GPCC-Enriching the Community

2000

2000 Greater Valley Forge Transportation Management Association Millennium Award

2001

PRPS Publication GPCC Leisure Visions GPCC Grand Opening Edition
PRPS Excellence in Programming Just for Me
PRPS Local Government Award
2001 Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce Community Development Award

2002

PRPS Excellence in Programming Corporate Fun League
PRPS Excellence in Programming Birthday Party Packages
PRPS Distinguished Member Award Karen Franck

2003

PRPS Excellence in Programming Pool-O-Ween
2003 Governors Award for Local Government Excellence

2004

PRPS Excellence in Programming Nut Bunch

2005

PRPS Excellence in Programming Friday Chill-Out
PRPS Excellence in Programming Pre-School Special Event Series
2005 Red Cross Partnership Award

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