

# ROSS-TOWNSHIP

Comprehensive Recreation, Park, and Open Space Plan

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# Acknowledgements

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# Table of Contents

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Understanding Ross Township.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Listening to Community Residents .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Appreciating Existing Conditions .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<i>Key Goals and Recommendations .....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Other Goals of the Plan .....</i>	<i>6</i>
 <b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	 <b>7</b>
<b>Comprehensive Recreation, Park, Open Space, and Open Space Plan .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<i>The Planning Process .....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Parks and Recreation - The benefits are endless .....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>How to Use this Plan .....</i>	<i>10</i>
 <b>CHAPTER 1:COMMUNITY BACKGROUND .....</b>	 <b>13</b>
<b>Profile of Ross Township, Allegheny County .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Demographics .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<i>Population.....</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Age Distribution.....</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Household Data.....</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Income Comparisons .....</i>	<i>17</i>
<b>Community Resources.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<i>Government.....</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Schools.....</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Municipal Facilities.....</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>Transportation .....</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>Historical Description of Parks &amp; Recreation Functions .....</i>	<i>19</i>
 <b>CHAPTER 2: INVENTORY &amp; ASSESSMENT .....</b>	 <b>21</b>
<b>Recreation Facilities.....</b>	<b>23</b>
<i>Hierarchy of Parks.....</i>	<i>23</i>
<b>Regional Recreation Opportunities.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<i>Allegheny County Parks.....</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>Regional Trails.....</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>Pennsylvania State Parks .....</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>Regional County Parks Outside Allegheny County .....</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>Local Recreation Facilities.....</i>	<i>31</i>
<i>Municipal Facilities.....</i>	<i>33</i>
<b>Spatial Analysis .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Comparison of Ross Township Area Parks and Open Space to NRPA Standards .....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Administration, Recreation Programming, Maintenance, and Finances .....</b>	<b>49</b>

# Table of Contents

<i>Administration</i> .....	50
<i>Recreation Programming</i> .....	53
<i>Maintenance</i> .....	58
<i>Finances</i> .....	60
<b>CHAPTER 3: PUBLIC INPUT .....</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>    Public Participation .....</b>	<b>65</b>
<i>Study Committee Meetings</i> .....	65
<i>Public Meetings</i> .....	66
<i>Community Recreation Questionnaire</i> .....	68
<i>Teen Questionnaire</i> .....	69
<i>Internet Blog</i> .....	69
<i>Key Person Interviews</i> .....	70
<b>    Common Themes Among Public Input Venues.....</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>CHAPTER 4: VISION, GOALS, &amp; IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES .....</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>    Looking to the Future .....</b>	<b>75</b>
<i>Mission Statement</i> .....	75
<i>Vision Statement</i> .....	75
<i>Goals</i> .....	75
<i>Implementation Strategies/Recommendations</i> .....	75
<b>    Mission Statement of the Ross Township Parks and Recreation Department.....</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>    Ross Township Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Vision Statement.....</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>    Goals and Implementation Strategies .....</b>	<b>76</b>
<i>Goal #1</i> .....	76
<i>Goal #2</i> .....	80
<i>Goal #3</i> .....	83
<i>Goal #4</i> .....	85
<i>Goal #5</i> .....	87
<i>Goal #6</i> .....	87
<i>Goal #7</i> .....	88
<b>    Implementation Strategies Tables .....</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>    Ross Parks Rehabilitation Plan .....</b>	<b>89</b>
<i>Park Rehabilitation Strategy Charts</i> .....	91
<i>Park Rehabilitation Phasing Plan</i> .....	97
<b>CHAPTER 5: GREENWAYS .....</b>	<b>99</b>
<b>    What is a Greenway? .....</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>    Why Develop Greenways in Ross Township? .....</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>    A Vision for Greenways in Ross Township .....</b>	<b>102</b>

# Table of Contents

<i>Natural Systems Greenways</i> .....	102
<i>The Process of Identifying Natural Systems Greenways</i> .....	103
<i>Natural Resource Protection Recommendations</i> .....	105
<i>Natural Systems Greenways Proposed Wooded Hillside Overlay</i> .....	106
<i>Recreation &amp; Alternative Transportation Greenways</i> .....	106
<i>Proposed Pedestrian Improvements</i> .....	107
<i>Proposed Bicycle Network</i> .....	107
<b>Greenway Demonstration Projects.....</b>	<b>108</b>
<b>CHAPTER 6: MASTER PLANS .....</b>	<b>113</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>115</b>
<b>The Design Process .....</b>	<b>115</b>
<i>Public Participation</i> .....	115
<i>Site Analyses</i> .....	117
<b>Recommendations and Implementation .....</b>	<b>129</b>
<i>Recommended Improvements</i> .....	129
<i>Estimate of Probable Construction Costs</i> .....	137
<b>APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>141</b>
<b>Appendix A: Regional Parks Inventory</b>	
<b>Appendix B: Park Analysis Matrix</b>	
<b>Appendix C: Meeting Minutes &amp; Questionnaire Results</b>	
<b>Appendix D: Sample Maintenance Standards</b>	
<b>Appendix E: Funding Sources</b>	
<b>Appendix F: Open Space Protection Methods</b>	
<b>Appendix G: Pocopson Township - Conservation of Natural Features Ordinance</b>	

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This summary provides an overview of the key findings and recommendations of the plan.

## INTRODUCTION:

This introduces the planning process.

## CHAPTER I: COMMUNITY BACKGROUND

This chapter gives an overview of Ross Township and its residents. The background information provides the context within which this Plan was developed.

## CHAPTER 2: INVENTORY & ASSESSMENT

The inventory and assessment of the recreational opportunities in this chapter establish a baseline of existing conditions for recreation, parks, and open space opportunities.

## CHAPTER 3: PUBLIC INPUT

Public input is a key component in the development of successful planning efforts. This chapter describes the public participation process and summarizes the results of each venue of participation.

## CHAPTER 4: VISION, GOALS, & IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

The public participation process culminates in the vision, goals, and recommendation/implementation strategies for the future of recreation, parks, and open space, which will guide future efforts. These are described in this chapter.

## CHAPTER 5: GREENWAYS

The Plan includes an analysis of natural features and related recommendations. These are described in this chapter.

## CHAPTER 6: MASTER PLANS

As an addendum to the Comprehensive Recreation, Parks, and Open Space Plan, the Township chose to include master plans for three of their parks. This chapter defines the planning process and describes the resulting master plans.

## APPENDIX

The appendices provide supporting information for the remainder of the report.

# Executive Summary



# Executive Summary

Ross Township is located just north of the City of Pittsburgh in Allegheny County. It is a dynamic and ever-changing community. Parks and recreation have played a key role in the Township for decades. This recreation, park, and open space plan will be critical to improving the quality of life for current and future residents while protecting the Township's natural and rural character. The process utilized to develop this Plan included extensive public participation, detailed inventory and assessment, and the development of recommendations for the future of parks and recreation for Ross Township.

## UNDERSTANDING ROSS TOWNSHIP

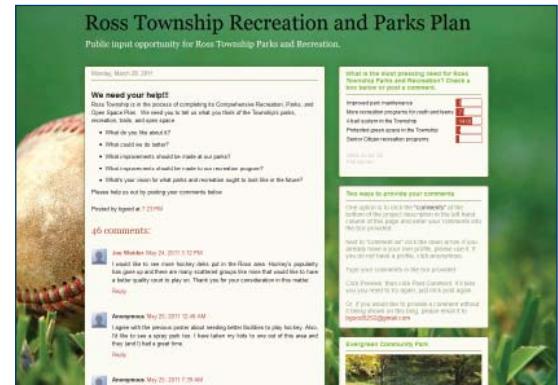
When planning for the future of recreation, parks, and open space in a community, it is important to develop an understanding of the community as a whole. Information on demographics and community resources provides a context within which this Plan was created. A familiarity with this information ensures the development of a plan that is realistic, sensitive to current issues, and tailored to this unique community.

## LISTENING TO COMMUNITY RESIDENTS

Providing opportunities for Ross residents to voice their opinions about the Township's recreation, parks, and open space was an important asset in developing viable recommendations for the future of parks and recreation. Public input opportunities were provided through public meetings; working with a study committee comprised of local residents; key person interviews; an internet based interactive blog; and separate recreation questionnaires for the general public and teens.

Common themes that were identified by listening to community residents are the need to:

1. Maintain and upgrade existing parks
2. Expand recreational programming options
3. Further develop the Community Center use and programming
4. Improve ballfields
5. Provide a swimming pool or spray park
6. Work with Bellevue Borough to develop an agreement for Township residents to use their pool at non-resident rates
7. Develop a trail system throughout the Township for walking, running, biking, connecting Township facilities and other regional trails
8. Protect natural features in the Township
9. Develop deck hockey facilities
10. Provide a dog park or access to local parks for dogs
11. Develop a multi-field sports complex
12. Provide a large community park
13. Ensure safe playgrounds
14. Improve community awareness of facilities and programs



**Ross Township Recreation and Parks Plan**  
Public input opportunity for Ross Township Parks and Recreation.

What is the most pressing need for Ross Township parks and recreation? Check a box or more if you'd like.

Improved facilities  
More recreational programs for residents  
A new center in the Township  
Programs for seniors in the Township  
Drama/Other/recreational programs

Leave a comment  
Any questions?

**What is the most pressing need for Ross Township parks and recreation? Check a box or more if you'd like.**

• What do you need?  
• What do you want?  
• What improvements should be made at our parks?  
• What improvements would you like to see in recreation programs?  
• What's your vision for what parks and recreation ought to look like in the future?

Please help us out by posting your comments below.

Posted by [Joe Winkler](#) at 7:27PM

**Joe Winkler** May 24, 2011 03:52 PM  
I would like to see more hockey rinks put in the Ross area. Hockey is popularly played in the winter months and the Ross area has a lot of people that would like to have a better facility or rink in place. Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

**Anonymous** May 25, 2011 03:46 AM  
I agree with the previous poster about needing better facilities to play hockey. Also, I'd like to see a spray park too. I have taken my kids to one out of this area and they loved it and had a great time.

**Anonymous** May 25, 2011 03:46 AM  
I agree with the previous poster about needing better facilities to play hockey. Also, I'd like to see a spray park too. I have taken my kids to one out of this area and they loved it and had a great time.

15. Provide sled riding areas in local parks
16. Finish the plan with a WOW! Factor
17. Manage finances well, finding new sources of revenue
18. Ensure adequate staffing for administration, programming, and maintenance

## APPRECIATING EXISTING CONDITIONS

An inventory of existing recreation resources revealed that there are twenty-two Township-owned parks, seven school properties with recreation facilities, Bellevue Borough Park, and numerous privately owned recreational resources located in Ross Township.

The Township's parks system is very typical of many older municipalities. It provides community parks located in key areas throughout the Township that are supplemented by smaller playgrounds, parks, and ballfields. Local schools extend the park system by providing additional playground and sports facilities.

Regional parks in Beaver, Butler, and Allegheny Counties, as well the Pennsylvania State Parks, complement the local system by providing a variety of facilities and activities not otherwise available. They serve a much broader area than just the individual municipalities. Regional trails, including the Montour Trail, the Rachel Carson Trail, and other developed and proposed trails all provide part of a trail system for the entire region, bringing recreational opportunities to area residents.

The combination of analyzing the community, inventorying and assessing existing parks and recreation opportunities, and gathering input from the public resulted in the development of a vision statement for the future of parks and recreation in Ross Township. Excerpts from that Vision are highlighted in the box below.



### ROSS TOWNSHIP PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE VISION STATEMENT

It is the Vision of Ross Township to provide superb parks and recreation opportunities to its residents and to protect and preserve the natural features within the Township.

## KEY GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The most significant need that was identified during the planning process was to upgrade and maintain the Township's existing parks as key resources in the community. The Study Committee promoted the idea that Ross Township Parks should be first-class community facilities. As a result, two goals have been developed, along with numerous implementation strategies to move the Township toward meeting that need.

## **Goal #1**

Sustain a parks system that provides recreational opportunities throughout the Township. Develop Evergreen, Ross, and Denny parks as the recreational gems of the Township. Maintain neighborhood parks and ballfields that meet local recreational needs. Focus on upgrading and maintaining existing parks. Provide parks that offer a balance of both active and passive opportunities.

## **Goal #2**

Establish a park maintenance system that ensures a high standard of safety and care in all Township parks.

To accomplish these goals, the Plan proposes a Parks Rehabilitation Plan that identifies upgrades needed at individual parks. A series of recommendations are intended to establish guidelines from which Township officials can move forward with upgrading the Township's parks system.

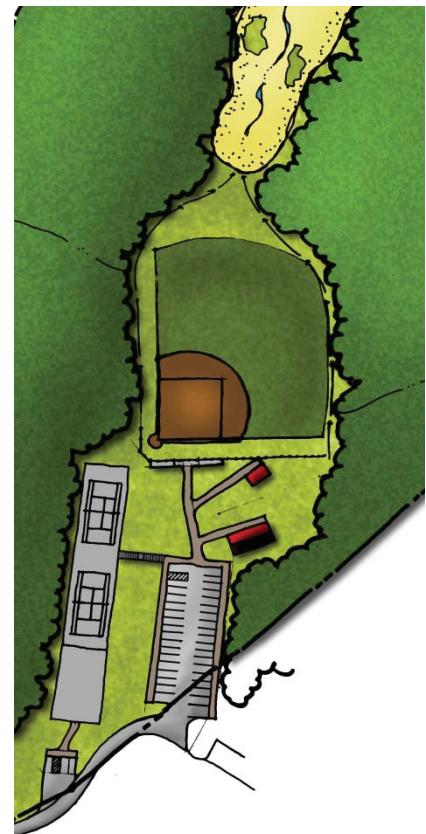
Common themes throughout the parks system were to upgrade existing recreational facilities in each park; rehabilitate the infields, turf, fencing, bleachers, and other amenities at the Township's ballfields; update playgrounds to ensure they meet current safety standards; bring all parks and facilities into compliance with ADA Standards; and enhance trails for long-term sustainability.

To ensure that the park upgrades are accomplished in an orderly and systematic fashion, a phasing plan was developed to assist Township officials in implementation. The phasing plan allows for the Township to budget a like amount annually throughout the rehabilitation process. In most years, the budget amount will be about \$125,000. The hope is that the Township will allocate the funds for these renovations from their annual capital budget while using grant funding for implementation of the larger projects at Herge, Denny, and Evergreen Parks. The phasing plan schedules parks of the highest priority in the first three phases while ensuring that at least one park in each Ward is completed during that timeframe. As well, Park Master Plans have been prepared for Herge, Denny, and Evergreen Parks that propose significant long-term upgrades for each.

The **Herge Park Master Plan** proposes to address safety concerns at the playground; make the park more usable by the adjacent elementary school; upgrade the baseball field; and bring the park into compliance with ADA standards.

In **Denny Park**, a major effort is proposed to improve stormwater runoff concerns by creating a regional stormwater infiltration area to handle water coming under Interstate 279. This will result in the elimination of one of the park's baseball fields. Additionally, the upper section of the park will be expanded to include a new picnic shelter, playground, improved basketball and tennis courts, and a new pervious surface parking lot. A nine-hole disc golf course is proposed in the woodland area northeast of the baseball field.

**Evergreen Park** will be improved as a less active community park. Enhancements will improve the areas around the two ponds by making the fishing deck handicapped accessible; adding a new fishing deck adjacent to the main parking lot; and constructing a safer walkway between the upper and lower ponds.



The trails throughout the park will be upgraded to make them more useful and sustainable. The parking lots will nearly double in size, and the stream that runs through the park will be naturalized by removing the gabions, laying back the banks, constructing pools and riffles, and planting riparian buffers on either side. All existing facilities in the park will be upgraded and brought into compliance with ADA and safety standards. It is also recommended that a forest and habitat plan be completed for the park's woodlands.

## OTHER GOALS OF THE PLAN

Facility improvements, while certainly one of the top priorities, were not the only issues addressed. The following five additional goals, supported by numerous implementation strategies are addressed in great detail in the Plan.

1. Offer a balance of recreational programming that meets the needs of all residents of Ross Township.
2. Maintain an organizational structure that has sufficient resources to administer, program, maintain, and operate the Ross Township parks and recreation system and Community Center.
3. Provide a system of multi-use, non-motorized trails that provide for exercise, alternative transportation, and recreation.
4. Protect and preserve the natural features of Ross Township in a way that provides for their long-term sustainability.
5. Secure funding for operations, planning, developments, acquisition, and preservation through a variety of sources.

# Introduction

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# Introduction

## COMPREHENSIVE RECREATION, PARK, AND OPEN SPACE PLAN

Recognizing the importance of a quality, Township-wide recreation, park, and open space system, the Ross Township Commissioners retained the recreation planning firm of Pashek Associates to assist in the development of this Comprehensive Recreation, Park, Open Space, and Greenway Plan. Pashek Associates worked closely with the project Study Committee throughout the planning process. The approach used to generate the Plan included a detailed inventory and professional assessment, an extensive public input process, and the development of a vision for the future of recreation, parks, and open space in Ross Township.

This Plan is designed to serve as a tool for addressing the current and future recreation needs of Township residents and to establish a framework for the decisions that must be made in order to provide adequate recreation facilities and programs. This Plan is broad in scope, encompassing a variety of issues pertinent to parks, recreation and open space in the Township. It lays the groundwork for the continued successful planning and development of recreation, parks, facilities, and programs.

An understanding of the Township's existing recreational opportunities provides a context within which realistic and responsive recommendations are developed

### THE PLANNING PROCESS

The Planning Process took the Township through a three-step progression of questions. Those questions are:

#### Where Are We Now?

This question required the research of existing conditions. What are the Township's recreational and natural resources, and where are they located? What facilities and resources are available within the existing Township parks and recreation system? What recreational facilities are available in the Township that are offered by local municipalities, non-profit recreation providers, school districts, private entities, and other government agencies? And, what is the administrative structure that manages major recreation and/or parks systems throughout the Township, and how does it function?

#### Where Do We Want To Be?

This question was intended to reach out to the public in a variety of venues to help project what the future of parks and recreation should be in Ross Township. Public participation was gathered through six sources: a study committee that represented the residents of the Township, two public meetings, key person interviews, an internet-based blog, a community recreation questionnaire, and a teen recreation questionnaire. Additionally, analysis was done on the findings of the existing conditions to determine needs for the future.

### THE COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING PROCESS

WHERE ARE WE NOW?



WHERE DO WE WANT TO BE?



HOW DO WE GET THERE?

## **How Do We Get There?**

The culmination of the answers to the two previous questions provides the direction on how to accomplish the recreational needs, wants, and desires of the Township. It includes a vision statement that paints a picture of what the future should be; goals for bringing the vision to fruition; and implementation strategies to accomplish the goals.

## **PARKS AND RECREATION - THE BENEFITS ARE ENDLESS**

Parks and recreation is a critical component of community services for all Pennsylvania residents. Ross Township has long played a significant role in the provision of parks and recreation through its extensive park system and more recently its Community Center. As well, many local communities, sports organizations, seniors groups, arts organizations, recreational clubs, public entities, private business, and non-profits have come together to provide exceptional recreational opportunities throughout the Township.

As one looks at parks, recreation, and open space across the country, the benefits are evident –senior citizens exercising to stay active and healthy; youth learning life skills by playing baseball, soccer or other youth sports; families strengthening relationships by hiking, biking or picnicking together; communities coming together through special events.

Parks and recreation opportunities encourage citizens to be engaged in their communities as volunteers, stewards, advocates and students. Access to parks and recreation facilities leads to healthy lifestyles for people of all ages. Activities in parks build self-esteem, reduce stress and improve overall wellness. Parks give communities a vital identity. Well-maintained, accessible parks and recreation facilities are key elements of strong, safe, family-friendly communities. Parks enhance property values, contribute to healthy and productive workforces and help attract and retain businesses

## **HOW TO USE THIS PLAN**

Ross Township's Comprehensive Recreation, Park, and Open Space Plan will be a powerful tool in the Township's effort to continually build and support a high quality recreation and open space system. It provides direction for the Township to sustain and enhance the quality of recreational opportunities, park facilities, open spaces, and trails.

The Plan provides a framework to fulfill Ross Township's vision for the future of recreation, parks, and open space. It recognizes the Township's desire to maintain its natural features while meeting the recreational needs of its residents.

### **Parks & Recreation**

**BE HAPPIER • Build Family Unity • Feel Great**

- TAKE CARE OF LATCH KEY CHILDREN
- **reduce unemployment • INCREASE COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS • Expand Knowledge • Lose weight • diminish chance**

of disease • **Build self-esteem • Reduce stress**

- **promote sensitivity to cultural diversity**

- **Provide safe places to play • Generate revenue • lower healthcare costs**

- **Meet friends • educate children and adults • Relax - *Keep Businesses from leaving* •**

**Elevate Personal Growth - Strengthen Neighborhood Involvement • conquer**

**boredom • provide childcare - Boost Economy**

- **curb employee absenteeism • increase tourism - Build strong bodies • increase property value • attract new businesses - Preserve plant and animal wildlife • instill teamwork - Live longer • create memories**
- **protect the environment - Clean air and water • boost employee productivity • look better - Enhance relationship skills • decrease insurance premiums • control weight - Offer places for social interaction • diminish gang violence - TEACH VITAL LIFE SKILLS • provide space to enjoy nature - Quench Competitive Thirst**

**The Benefits are Endless...**

The recommendations presented in this document offer a clear direction for future recreation, park, and open space initiatives in the Township. The wide scope and short, middle, and long-term range of the implementation strategies assist in realistic planning for implementation. The detailed information provided will assist in setting financial goals and the appropriate allocation of needed Township support.

The broad scope of this Plan includes the documentation and analysis of a variety of issues pertinent to recreation, parks, and open space in Ross Township. The document will be a valuable resource of supporting information as the implementation strategies are completed, new strategies are developed, and documentation of existing conditions is needed.

The Plan provides the Township with a wealth of data and background information to support the enhancement of its recreation facilities, preservation of the Township's natural features, and development of trails.. The Plan provides needed information to support grant applications for improvement and expansion of recreation facilities.

Local residents will be the ultimate beneficiaries of updated recreation facilities and preserved resources based on the outcomes of the Plan. Residents have demonstrated a perpetual interest in the growth of a high-quality system of recreation, parks, and open space. This Plan offers convenient, practical information for public consumption. Additionally, many of the key components can be used by the Township or local organizations to garner support for proposed projects or funding assistance.

# Chapter 1: Community Background

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# Chapter 1: Community Background

## PROFILE OF ROSS TOWNSHIP, ALLEGHENY COUNTY

Created in 1809, Ross Township is located immediately north of the City of Pittsburgh in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania. Comprising 14.4 square miles, the Township completely surrounds West View Borough. The two municipalities make up the entirety of the North Hills School District.

The Township is bordered by McCandless Township to the north, Hampton Township to the northeast (touching at one point), Shaler Township to the east, Reserve Township and Pittsburgh to the south, the borough of Bellevue to the southwest, Kilbuck Township and Ohio Township to the west, and the borough of Franklin Park to the northwest.

The Township features scenic views of its natural landscapes, forests, architectures, and history. It is also well known for its commerce, its schools, and its superior quality of life.

### Ross Township

Municipal Classification – First Class Township

2010 Population – 31,105

Number of Households – 14,125

Median Household Income - \$57,354

Median Age – 45.4

Government – Board of Commissioners

School District - North Hills

Community Parks – Evergreen, Denny, Ross Parks

### Township Parks and Recreation Facilities

Amity Park

Ann Allison Park

Brethauer/Nelson/White

Denny Park

Evergreen Park

Herge Park

John Herb Field

Johnanna Memorial Field

Main Boulevard Park

Maple Park

Mayer Park

Osterle Park

Quail Park

Rosecliff Park

Ross Community Park

Ross Community Center

Sangree Park

Scharmyn Park

Second Avenue Park

Seville Park

Ted Bartlett Memorial Field

Tyler Park

Windhurst Field



# DEMOCRAPHICS

It is important to take into consideration the characteristics of the Township's demographics when planning for the future of parks, recreation, and open space. The following information gives a summary description of the Township's socio-economic characteristics that will influence its parks and recreation.

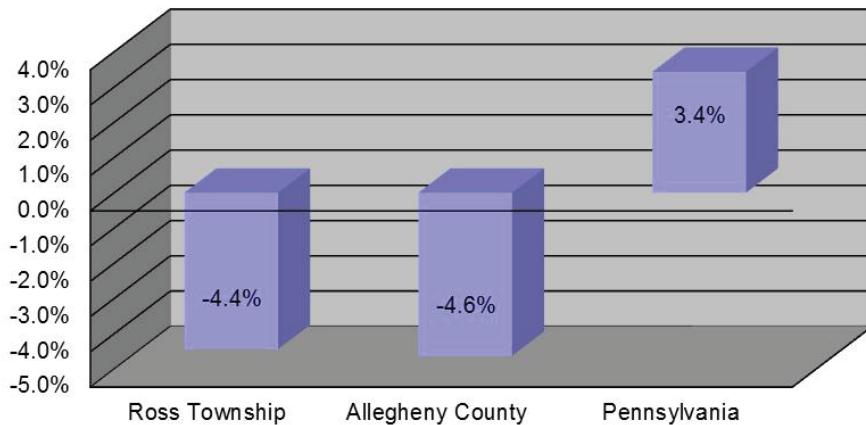
## POPULATION

In 2010, the population in Ross Township was 31,105; 16,498 were female and 14,607 were male.

Between 2000 and 2010, the population of Ross Township decreased by 4.4%. In comparison, Allegheny County decreased by 4.6% while the State population increased by 3.4%. This indicates that there is a slight out-migration of residents from Ross Township.

	Population Data			
	2000	2010	Difference	% inc/dec
Ross Township	32,551	31,105	-1,446	-4.4%
Allegheny County	1,281,666	1,222,348	-59,318	-4.6%
Pennsylvania	12,281,054	12,702,379	421,325	3.4%

Population Trends, 2000 - 2010

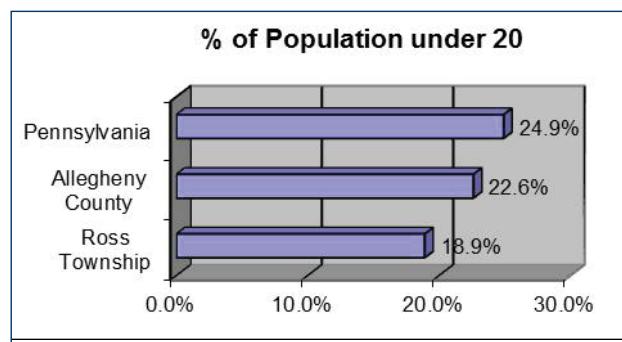


## AGE DISTRIBUTION

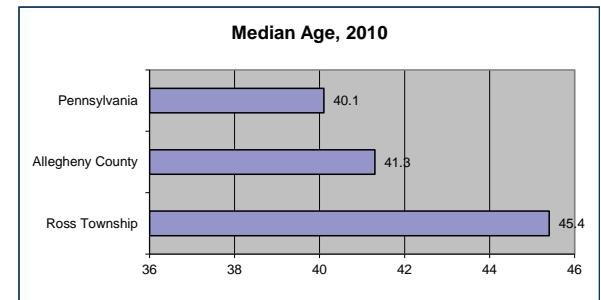
Understanding how population is distributed among various age groups is relevant when determining how to meet the recreational needs of an area. For purposes of benchmarking and comparison, the distribution of the population within certain age ranges in the year 2010 has been compared to the corresponding statistics for the County and the Commonwealth. By doing so, we can draw the following conclusions about the Township.

The age distribution data shows that overall, Ross has a slightly older population than either Allegheny County or the Commonwealth.

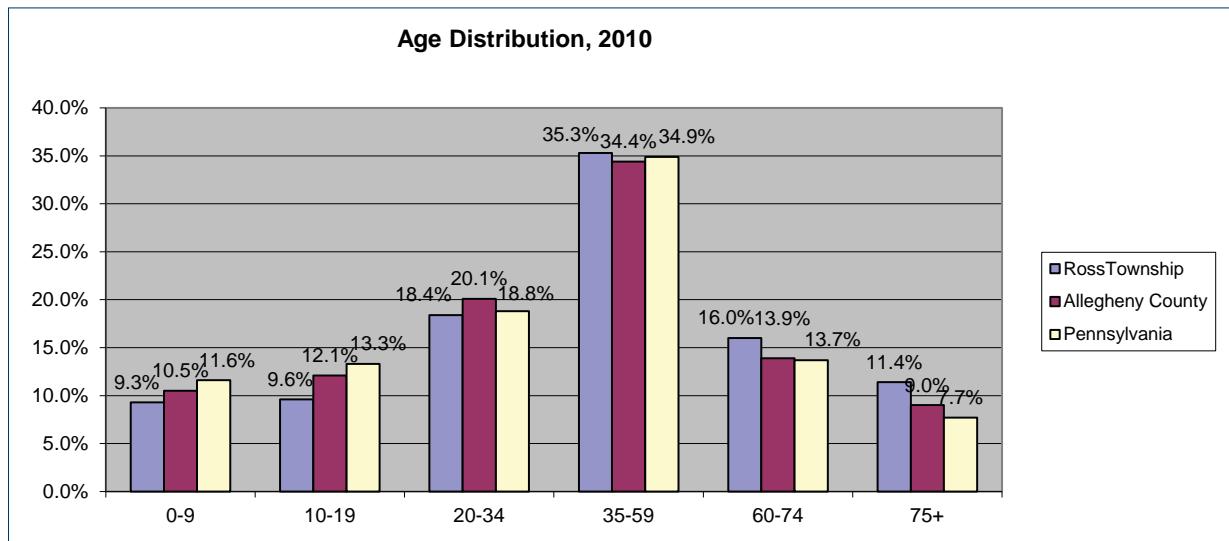
- As depicted in the accompanying chart, the three younger age groups, ranging from zero to 34, all have lower populations than either the County or the state. Conversely, in the three older age groups, ages 35 and older, Ross shows a higher population in each.
- Just 18.9% of Ross Township residents were under the age of 20, compared to 22.6% for the County and 24.9% for State residents.
- Moreover, in Ross Township, 27.4% of population is over 65 years of age, compared to 22.9% in the County and 21.4 in the State.



- Ross Township residents had the highest median age in 2010 at 45.4 years. This is above the County's and State's median ages of 41.3 and 40.1, respectively.
- The percentage of adults age 20 to 59 is very similar in Ross Township to that of both the County and the State. All fall within a percentage point of one another.



The smaller youth population does necessarily indicate a need for fewer facilities or programs for those ages but certainly shows the need to plan for programs and facilities to meet the needs of an older population for the future.



## HOUSEHOLD DATA

In 2010, there were 14,125 households in Ross Township. The average household size was 2.15 persons per household. The average household size for Ross was slightly lower than that of the County (2.23) and the State (2.45).

## INCOME COMPARISONS

An analysis of income levels is informative when determining the level of recreational service and facility improvements that a region can support. Median household income, per capita income, and poverty rates in the municipality have been compared to corresponding values for the County and the Commonwealth.

In general, Ross Township residents earned more than residents of the County and State. In 2010, median household income in the Township was \$57,364. By comparison, State households made an average of \$50,398, while those in the County earned \$47,961. Similarly, per capita income in Ross Township was higher at \$33,121 in 2010. The County per capita was lower at \$29,549, and State wage earners held at \$27,049.

Income Comparison		
	Median Household Income	Per Capita Income
Ross Township	\$57,354	\$33,121
Allegheny County	\$47,961	\$29,549
Pennsylvania	\$50,398	\$27,049

In 2010, 8.3% of Ross Township families were living below the poverty line. This is more than five percentage points lower than Allegheny County at 12.7% and the State at 12.8% families living in poverty.

The higher income levels reflected in Ross Township indicate a stronger ability for its residents to pay for a variety of

recreational activities. Typically, persons with higher incomes demand, and are willing to pay for, a greater number of recreational opportunities.

Sources: The US Census Bureau

## COMMUNITY RESOURCES

The community resources of Ross Township play an important role in the community's parks, recreation, and open space system. Historic sites, public facilities, transportation corridors, and development patterns influence the character, culture, and recreational needs of residents. School facilities and historic sites may provide opportunities for active or passive recreation facilities or programming; transportation corridors influence access to and character of facilities; and land uses impact locations for recreational facilities.

The following pages describe a variety of the cultural resources such as government, schools, community facilities, recreation facilities, and transportation.

### GOVERNMENT

As a First Class Township, Ross is governed by a nine-person Board of Commissioners, with one representing each of the Township's wards. The Board serves as legislative body in the overall governance of the township. They oversee policy-making, enacting ordinances and resolutions, as well as managing the finances of the township through the development of an annual budget and tax levying.

The Board appoints the Township Manager to carry out the daily functions of its government and operations. To perform the administrative responsibilities of the township, the Board appoints all department heads in the township as well as board members for the various department boards and commissions.

### SCHOOLS

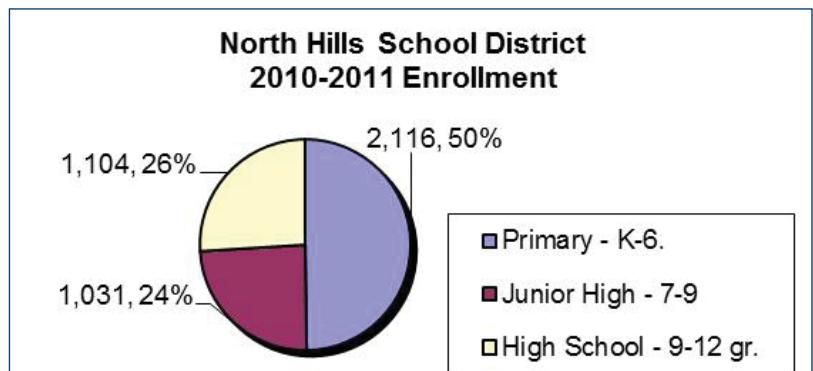
#### North Hills School District

The North Hills School District serves Ross Township and West View Borough. The district supports one high school, one junior high school, four elementary schools, and a career center that serve the student population. The facilities are:

- North Hills Senior High School
- North Hills Junior High School
- Highcliff Elementary
- McIntyre Elementary
- Ross Elementary
- West View Elementary
- A.W. Beattie Career

The student population includes 1,104 high school students, 1,031 junior high students, and 2,116 elementary students.

Source: PA Department of Education



## MUNICIPAL FACILITIES

Municipal facilities in Ross Township include:

**Ross Township Community Center** that houses the Township's administrative offices, police station, building and planning offices, public meeting room offices and the 16,000 square foot Community Recreation Center. The Community Recreation Center provides class room spaces, active and quite lounge spaces, a catering kitchen and a gymnasium. The gymnasium also functions as an auditorium and banquet space. The Center is located at 1000 Ross Municipal Drive.

**Ross Township Public Works Building** located at 225 Cemetery Lane.

**Community Building** located in Evergreen Park.

## TRANSPORTATION

Major transportation routes include:

- Interstate 279 cuts across the southwest corner of the township, travelling from northwest to southeast.
- US Route 19 travels north from the City of Pittsburgh through West View Borough into McCandless Township. It is located just west of the centerline of the Township.
- McKnight Road, also known as Business Route 19, travels approximately parallel to Route 19 about a mile east of it.
- Other major roadways include Babcock Boulevard, Rochester Road, Peoples Road, Thompson Run Road, Bellevue Road, Union Avenue, Jacks Run Road, and Lowries Run Road.

## HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION OF PARKS & RECREATION FUNCTIONS

Ross Township has been known for its vast array of parks for decades. The current parks system is comprises 19 neighborhood parks and three community parks. Some of the parks have been in existence for nearly a century while others have been developed in recent years. The Township has always been committed to providing for the recreational needs of its residents by building picnic areas, ballfields, sports courts, and gathering areas in their first parks. Throughout the years, as neighborhoods developed, parks were created close by. This commitment to the residents' recreational needs has created an extensive system of parks throughout the Township with an extensive variety of recreational facilities.

The township's four elementary schools also provide neighborhood recreational facilities for local residents. The three community parks, Evergreen, Denny, and Ross, are located from north to south near the central axis of the Township.

The Parks and Recreation Department is operated by a full-time staff consisting of the Director of Parks and Recreation and the Parks and Recreation Assistant. The staff's responsibility is to manage, operate, and administer all activities and functions of the Department.

The Ross Parks and Recreation Department offers over 200 programs annually that provide nearly every type of recreational offering imaginable. Programs are held for pre-school age through senior citizens. A balance of active and passive, indoor and outdoor, sports and non-sports, educational and recreational, large group and small group activities are available year-round.

Organized sports are provided for both youth and adults. The biggest sports organizations are the West View Athletic Association and the North Hills Athletic Association, which both focus on youth baseball and softball; the North Hills Soccer Club; and the North Hills Youth Football Association. A number of other organizations offer activities such as hockey, basketball, disc golf, tennis, adult sports, swimming, and much more.

# Chapter 2: Inventory & Assessment

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# Chapter 2: Inventory & Assessment

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In the development of a comprehensive recreation plan such as this, it is important to establish a baseline of existing conditions. This entails conducting an inventory and analysis of all park and recreation resources that impact the residents of Ross Township. This inventory and analysis describes in great detail the recreation facilities and programs available to Township residents. It also analyzes how these resources are managed, maintained, operated, and funded and compares Ross Township to established standards and to other municipalities. This baseline establishes an indicator from which to work; it allows the community to know and understand what the current conditions are as they lay plans for the future.

## RECREATION FACILITIES

This section provides an overview of the park, recreation, and open space classifications defined by the National Recreation and Parks Association. Also included is an inventory of parks and recreation facilities found in the Ross Township region, with particular emphasis on facilities located within the Township. Each park site was visited and evaluated noting the type, quantity, and condition of equipment, playing fields, and playgrounds. Factors such as site access, general condition, and conformance with American with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines and the National Playground Safety Institute safety standards were assessed.

### HIERARCHY OF PARKS

The recommendations of this study, with regard to parks, are based on the premise that in order to provide the optimal level of service to area residents, recreation providers must understand and take into consideration the different ways in which people use recreation facilities. The function or use of a park depends on its size, location, and available facilities.

Parks can be organized into a “hierarchy”, which defines their functions and the types of activities they should be expected to accommodate. The National Recreation and Park Association’s 1995 “Park, Recreation, Open Space, and Greenway Guidelines” offers facility classifications to be used as a guide when planning for the future of recreation and open space systems. The classifications identified in the tables on the following pages provide the parameters that are necessary for any planning effort, while establishing a common terminology that defines facility functions and the kinds of recreation activities they can be expected to accommodate.

Given the unique qualities of every community due to geographical, cultural, social, economic, and environmental characteristics, each community must develop and adopt recreation and open space guidelines unique to its community setting. These guidelines are important because they provide a common framework for the planning of future recreation and open space efforts, allowing for orderly development of a parks system that fulfills all community needs.

Controlled flexibility is an important part of successful guidelines, given the potential for unique circumstances and situations that may arise. A community should not limit its resources by relying on rigid standards. This may prematurely thwart creative efforts to enhance the community’s recreation and open space system. A flexible-use policy may allow for accommodation of a non-typical use of a facility on an interim basis to accommodate short-term demand. Such a policy should not be used to fulfill a long-term community need.

It should be noted that there are not specific standards for the amount of community conservation lands. The desired acreage of conserved land is dependent on the number and quality of natural resources in the area, public desire to preserve these resources, and the availability of funds for their conservation.

## NRPA Parks and Open Space Classifications

Classification	General Description	Location Criteria	Site Criteria
Mini-Park	Used to address limited, isolated, or unique recreational needs.	Less than a 1/4 mile in distance in residential setting.	Between 2,500 sq. ft. and one acre in size.
Neighborhood Park	Neighborhood remains the basic unit of the park system and serves as the recreational and social focus of the neighborhood. Focus is on the informal and active and passive recreation.	1/4 to 1/2 mile distance and uninterrupted by non-residential roads and other physical barriers.	5 acres is considered minimum size; 5 to 10 acres is optimal.
School Park	Depending on the circumstances, combining parks with school sites can fulfill the space requirements for other classes of parks, such as neighborhood, community, sports complex, and special use.	Determined by location of school district property.	Variable - depends on function.
Community Park	Serves broader purpose than neighborhood park. Focus is on meeting community-based recreational needs, as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces.	Determined by the quality and suitability of the site. Usually serves two or more neighborhoods and 1/2 to 3 miles distance.	As needed to accommodate desired uses. Usually a minimum of 30 and 50 acres.
Large Urban Park	Large urban parks serve a broader purpose than community parks and are used when community and neighborhood parks are not adequate to serve the needs of the community. Focus is on meeting community based recreational needs, as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces.	Determined by the quality and suitability of the site. Usually serves the entire community.	As needed to accommodate desired uses. Usually a minimum of 50 acres, with 75 or more acres being optimal.
Natural Resource Areas	Land set aside for the preservation of significant natural resources, remnant landscapes, open space, and visual/aesthetics/ buffering.	Resource availability and opportunity.	Variable
Greenways	Effectively tie park systems together to form a continuous park environment.	Resource availability and opportunity.	Variable
Sports Complex	Consolidates heavily programmed athletic facilities to larger and fewer sites strategically located throughout the community.	Strategically located community-wide facilities.	Determined by project demand. Usually a minimum of 25 acres, with 40 to 80 acres being optimal.
Special Use	Used to address limited, isolated or unique recreational needs.	Variable - dependent on specific use.	Variable
Private Party/ Recreational Facility	Parks and recreation facilities that are privately owned yet contribute to the public park and recreation system.	Variable - dependent on specific use.	Variable

## NRPA Trail Classifications

Classification	General Description	Location Criteria
Park Trail	Multipurpose trails located within greenways, parks, and natural areas. Focus is on recreational value and harmony with the natural environment.	Type I: Separate/single-purpose hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians or bicyclists/in-line skaters. Type II: Multipurpose hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians and bicyclists/in-line skaters. Type III: Nature trails for pedestrians. May be hard- or soft-surfaced.
Connector Trails	Multipurpose trails that emphasize safe travel for pedestrians to and from parks and around the community. Focus is as much on transportation as it is on recreation.	Type I: Separate/single-purpose hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians or bicyclists/in-line skaters located in independent right-of-way (r.o.w.). Type II: Separate/single-purpose hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians or bicyclists/in-line skaters. Typically located within road r.o.w.
On-street Bikeways	Paved segments of roadways that serve as a means to safely separate bicyclists from vehicular traffic.	Bike Route: Designated portions of the roadway for the preferential or exclusive use of bicyclists. Bike Lane: Shared portions of the roadway, such as paved shoulders, that provide separation between motor vehicles and bicyclists.
All-terrain Bike Trail	Off road trail for all-terrain (mountain) bikes.	Single-purpose use trails usually located in larger parks and natural resource areas.
Cross-country Ski Trail	Trails developed for traditional and skate-style cross-country skiing.	Loop trails usually located in larger parks and natural resource areas.
Equestrian Trail	Trails developed for horseback riding.	Loop trails usually located in larger parks and natural resource areas. Sometimes developed as multipurpose with hiking and all-terrain biking where conflicts can be controlled.

## REGIONAL RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

Municipal boundary lines do not limit the destinations to which residents will travel to use recreation facilities. It is important to consider the regional recreation opportunities beyond Ross Township borders when taking an inventory of recreation facilities used by residents. The following describes some of these facilities. These facilities are also displayed on a map at the end of this section.

These regional facilities are classified as: Large Urban Parks, Natural Resource Areas, and Greenways in the park classifications described earlier in this chapter; and as Park Trails in the trail classifications.

Within about twenty to twenty-five miles of Ross Township lie many of these types of facilities. These include nine Allegheny County Parks; three Beaver County Parks; Butler County's Alameda Park; five Pennsylvania State Parks; the Rachel Carson, Montour, North Country, and Butler-Freeport Trails; PennDOT Bike Route A; and Jennings Environmental Center.

### ALLEGHENY COUNTY PARKS

The nine Allegheny County Parks are well distributed across the County. North Park, Settlers Cabin, and Hartwood Acres are the closest to Ross Township. The Parks showcase some of the finest natural features in western Pennsylvania. The parks include a number of lakes, streams, woodlands, and meadows, as well as a number of unique natural features. White Oak Park has plants that exist nowhere else in the state; its Trillium wildflowers and particular types of groundcover have attracted the attention of many botanists. Some of the County Parks' natural features are protected and preserved at the North Park's Marshall Island Waterfowl Reserve and at the Settlers Cabin's arboretum.

Facilities to meet many recreational interests can be found across the park system. Typical facilities such as ballfields, picnic groves and shelters, sport courts, and trails are offered in most parks. Beyond these basics, the Allegheny County Parks include a number of more regional facilities such as nature centers, golf courses, swimming pools, bridle trails, and mountain bike trails. Several more specialized facilities include two wave pools located in Boyce and Settlers Cabin Parks; ice rinks at North and South Parks; Deer Lakes' Wagman Observatory; a ski lodge at Boyce; an action park for boards, bikes and blades in South Park; and a working farm in Round Hill Park.

According to their stated operating philosophy, the County Parks Department "... acts as the manager of County owned properties designed for use as park sites. The Department is charged by the County Executive to guarantee the integrity of the parks property through thoughtful planning and management of resources and promoting programs, activities, services and facilities."

Their mission is to enhance the quality of life and wellbeing of Allegheny County residents through a regional parks system that:

- Provides quality landscapes, facilities, programs, and special events that meet county-wide needs for leisure and recreation on behalf of the diverse segments of the community;
- Conserves natural and cultural resources while offering educational programs and opportunities for hands on experience;
- Forms an integral part of a county-wide system of open spaces, greenways, and trails; and
- Contributes to the economic vitality of the County.

## REGIONAL TRAILS

A regional trail system presents recreational and alternative transportation opportunities for nearly any desired trail use. Hiking trails include the 35.7 mile Rachel Carson Trail and the 4,600 mile North Country Trail. The Rachel Carson Trail travels through Allegheny, Armstrong, and Butler Counties while the closest points of the North Country Trail are in Beaver, Lawrence and Butler Counties.

Regional multi-use trails provide for a diversity of users including bikers, hikers, equestrians, rollerbladers, cross-country skiers, and disabled users. The local sections of the Montour, Panhandle, and the Butler-Freeport Trails offer great opportunities for local users with connections to regional Trails. Together, the three sections total ninety miles of trail. The Great Allegheny Passage, which comprises several local trails, spans 150 miles from Pittsburgh, PA to Cumberland, MD where it joins the C&O Tow Path Trail that connects to Washington DC. The two trails total nearly 350 miles, connecting to a host of other trails along the way.

Finally, PennDOT Bike Route A is one of the PA Department of Transportation's nine share-the-road bike routes. These bike routes are intended as transportation routes for cyclists wanting to travel across the state. Bike Rout A travels through Allegheny County on its way from the PA/West Virginia border to Presque Isle State Park in Erie.

## Allegheny County Parks

- Boyce Park
- Deer Lakes Park
- Harrison Hills Park
- Hartwood Acres Park
- North Park
- Round Hill Park
- Settlers Cabin Park
- South Park
- White Oak Park



## PENNSYLVANIA STATE PARKS

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has 120 State Parks across the state. The State has deemed that the parks are intended to provide opportunities for enjoying healthful outdoor recreation and to serve as outdoor classrooms for environmental education. Their primary purpose is to provide conservation of the natural, scenic, aesthetic, and historical values of their lands and to protect the natural outdoor experience for the enjoyment of current and future generations.



Of the five State Parks identified in the region, two of them are in Allegheny County: Allegheny Islands and Point State Park. Allegheny Islands State Park is composed of three islands in the Allegheny River located near the Borough of Cheswick. The islands are accessible only by boats and are undeveloped.

Point State Park, locally known as “The Point”, is a 36 acre intercity park at the tip of Pittsburgh’s three-river confluence. It commemorates and preserves the historic heritage of the area during the French and Indian War and houses Fort Pitt Museum. The park has paved walkways on the riverfront which provide views of Pittsburgh, its busy waterways, scenic hillsides, and many bridges.

Other State Parks that surround Ross Township are Raccoon, Hillman, McConnell’s Mill, Moraine, and the Jennings Environmental Education Center.

## REGIONAL COUNTY PARKS OUTSIDE ALLEGHENY COUNTY

Some of the County Parks located outside of Allegheny County may serve Ross residents but to a lesser degree. The closest of these parks are:

**Alameda Park** – Butler, Butler County

**Old Economy Park** – Economy Borough, Beaver County

**Brush Creek Park** – Northeast Beaver County

**Bradys Run Park** – Beaver Borough, Beaver County

**Cross Creek County Park** – Washington, Washington County

A more detailed description of the Allegheny County Parks, the regional trails, and the Pennsylvania State Parks is located in the appendices.

## LOCAL RECREATION FACILITIES

One of the basic needs of any community is for adequate recreational facilities that are appropriately located for citizen use. Facilities are often provided by municipalities, school districts, counties, states, private businesses, and non-profit organizations.

This section of this chapter identifies outdoor recreation facilities in great detail, noting the number, type, and condition of existing facilities. It includes a map showing the locations of each recreation facility.

The Township's parks system is very typical of many older municipalities. This system provides one or more community parks supplemented by smaller playgrounds, parks, or school facilities. Local schools extend the parks system by providing additional playground and sports facilities.



Regional parks such as those in Beaver, Butler, and Allegheny Counties, as well the Pennsylvania State Parks, complement the local system by providing a variety of facilities and activities not otherwise available. They serve a much broader area than just the individual municipalities. Regional trails, such as the Montour Trail, the Rachel Carson Trail, and other developed and proposed trails, all provide part of a trail system for the entire region, bringing recreational opportunities to area residents.

Local residents also make use of a number of public and private recreation facilities available to the Township residents.

The following chart summarizes the inventory of local outdoor recreation facilities. It is followed by a more detailed analysis of Ross Township Parks.

Ross Township Parks					
Park Name	Ward Location	Acres	Classification	Service Radius (miles)	Facilities
Amity Park	9	0.54	Small Neighborhood	1/4	Playground, basketball court
Ann Allison Hoover Memorial Park	3	0.76	Small Neighborhood	1/4	Picnic area, walking trail
Brethauer Park (White Park)	7	0.45	Small Neighborhood	1/4	Playground, basketball court
Denny Park	7	33.94	Neighborhood/Community	1 1/2	Playground, basketball court, tennis courts, ballfields, picnic area, multi-use field
Evergreen Community Park	8	34.55	Neighborhood/Community	1 1/2	Playground, basketball court, picnic area, trails, indoor facility, lake
Herge Park	4	4.33	Neighborhood	1/2	Playground, basketball court, tennis courts, ballfields, picnic area
Johanna Memorial Field*	2	1	Sports Complex	-	Ballfields
John Herb Field**	8		Sports Complex	-	Ballfields
Main Boulevard Park	9	1.27	Small Neighborhood	1/4	Playground, basketball court
Maple Park	6	0.17	Small Neighborhood	1/4	Playground, basketball court

Mayer Park	4	10.66	Neighborhood	1/2	Playground, ballfields, picnic area, multi-use field
Osterle Park	7	17.92	Neighborhood	1/2	Ballfields, picnic area, trails
Quaill Park	6	0.6	Small Neighborhood	1/4	Playground, basketball court, picnic area, trails, indoor facility, lake
Rosecliff Park	1	3.91	Neighborhood	1/2	Playground, basketball court, ballfields, picnic area, trails, multi-use field
Ross Community Park*	8	10	Neighborhood/Community	1 1/2	Playground, basketball court, ballfields, picnic area, trails, multi-use field, indoor facility
Sangree Park	2	9.33	Neighborhood	1/2	Playground, basketball court, ballfields, picnic area, multi-use field
Scharmyn Park	5	11.59	Neighborhood	1/2	Playground, basketball court, tennis courts, ballfields, multi-use field
Second Avenue Park	3	0.25	Small Neighborhood	1/4	Playground, basketball court
Seville Park	6	18.92	Neighborhood	1/2	Playground, basketball court, ballfields, picnic area, multi-use field
Ted Bartlett Memorial Park	2	3.07	Sports Complex	-	Ballfields, picnic area
Tyler Park	2	3.12	Small Neighborhood	1/4	Playground, picnic area multi-use field
Windhurst Field	8	4.2	Sports Complex	-	Ballfields, picnic area, multi-use field

### North Hills School District Outdoor Recreation Facilities

School Name	Ward Location	Acres	Classification	Service Radius (miles)	Outdoor Facilities
McIntyre Elementary	9		School Park	1/2	Ballfield, playground, school sport courts
Ross Elementary	1		School Park	1/2	Ballfield, playground, track, multi-use field, school sport courts
Highcliffe Elementary	4		School Park	1/2	Playground, school sport courts
West View Elementary	West View Borough		School Park	1/2	Playground, school sport courts
Senior High	3		School Sports	N/A	Baseball field, tennis courts
Junior High	3		School Sports	N/A	Nature trail
Martorelli Stadium	West View Borough		School Sports	N/A	Multi-use stadium, track and field, associated indoor support facilities
Reis Run Soccer Complex	4	27.76	Sports Complex	N/A	Soccer fields

## West View Borough

Park Name	Ward Location	Acres	Classification	Service Radius (miles)	Facilities
4 Parklets - Farley, Carlisle, Powell. The other is unnamed	N/A		Neighborhood Playgrounds	N/A	Playgrounds
Bronx Field	N/A		Sports Field	N/A	Ballfield

## Other Outdoor Recreation Facilities

Facility Name	Ward Location	Acres	Classification	Service Radius (miles)	Facilities
Bellevue Park	6		Community Park	N/A	Swimming pool, ballfield, volleyball court, basketball court, playground, picnic shelters
Valley Brook Swim Club	1		Private	N/A	Swimming pool, tennis courts

## MUNICIPAL FACILITIES

### Ross Community Center

The Ross Township Community Center is located between Evergreen Road and McKnight Road. The center houses the Township's Administration Offices, Police Station, Building & Planning Offices, Public Meeting Room and a 16,000 square foot Community Recreation Center. The Community Center is surrounded by Ross Community Park that contains a large playground, picnic facilities and John Herb Field.

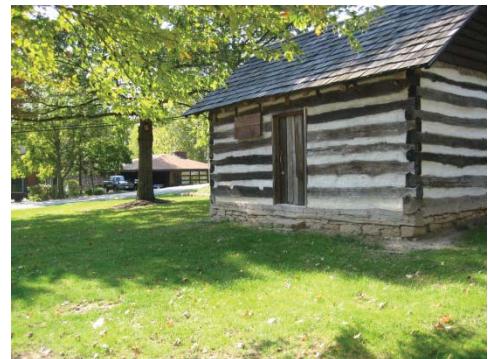
The Community Recreation Center provides class room spaces, active and quiet lounge spaces, a catering kitchen and a gymnasium. The gymnasium also functions as an auditorium and banquet space. The Township's Parks and Recreation Department programs the facility, offering a variety of senior, youth, and preschool programs, special events, and indoor sports activities.

The Township's Parks and Recreation offices are located at the Center.



### Evergreen Community Building

Located in Evergreen Community Park, the community building is a converted house that is available for rental by community organizations and individuals. It includes a kitchen, small banquet hall, and restrooms indoors, as well as an outdoor grass plaza. Immediately adjacent to the building is an historic log cabin reminding residents of Ross Township history. Views of the pond and the remainder of the Park make this an attractive facility for Ross residents and guests.



## Amity Park

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### Description

- Beautiful neighborhood park
- No parking available. Access is limited to pedestrians or drop-offs
- Equipment is relatively new and in good condition
- No ADA compliant parking or accessible pathway

### Facilities

- Playground equipment for 2-12 year olds
- Basketball court
- Ravine with stream is located outside the play area

### Recommendations

- Install a higher fence (8'-10') along both sides of the basketball court
- Seal and line the basketball court
- Install one ADA compliant parking space on the adjacent road and an accessible pathway into the park

## Ann Allison Park

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### Description

- Beautiful passive park area
- Very limited parking available. Most access is limited to pedestrians
- Beautiful views in the park and/or the ravine below
- All facilities are ADA compliant

### Facilities

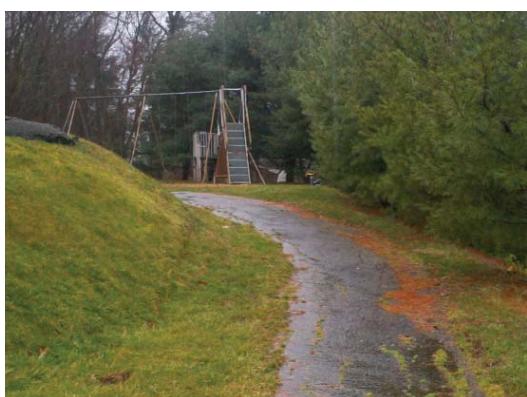
- Gazebo and decorative fountain
- Short walking path
- Flower and shrub gardens

### Recommendations

- Enhance maintenance to ensure the quality and beauty of existing facilities

## Brethauer/Nelson/White

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### Description

- Located at the end of a cul-de-sac
- Entrance to the park is not obvious
- No designated parking available. Most access is limited to pedestrians
- Equipment is aging and in need of upgrades and repairs
- The park is not handicap accessible

### Facilities

- Playground
- Basketball court

## **Playground Safety**

### *Immediate needs:*

- Remove the existing wooden play structure within a year
- Remove the slide
- Extend the safety surface under the swings to a minimum of 20' front and back and 6' to the sides of the frame
- Install rubber bumpers under the seesaw and create a safety surface that extends a minimum of 6' in all directions from the edge of the structure

### *Long-term recommendations:*

- Replace equipment with new modular play unit

## **Recommendations**

- Bring the park into compliance with ADA standards by installing a compliant parking space and pathway into the park
- Ensure all equipment meets ADA standards

## ***Denny Park***

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## **Description**

- One of the Township's three community parks
- Ballfields are located in an extremely wet area
- Extensive stormwater drainage flows into the park and is channeled into an underground culvert through the main part of the park
- Park facilities are located on two distinct levels – sports courts and playground on the upper level and the ballfields, pavilion, and parking on the lower level
- There is insufficient parking for existing uses
- As part of this planning process, a Master Site Plan was prepared for this park

## **Facilities**

- Baseball fields
- Picnic shelters
- Horseshoe courts
- Tennis courts
- Basketball court
- Playground
- Trails

## **Recommendations**

- See the Master Site Plan for the park, located in Chapter 5
- Recommendations for playground safety and ADA compliance are made as part of the Master Site Plan

## ***Evergreen Park***

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### **Description**

- Beautiful community park featuring a small lake
- Parking is very limited in comparison to the use of the park
- A very large part of the park is undeveloped woodlands with a series of trails traversing the hillsides
- The forested areas are facing significant degradation of both larger trees and the undergrowth
- A large picnic shelter and community building are available for rental

### **Facilities**

- Small lake
- Historic log cabin
- Large picnic shelter
- Community building
- Playground
- Trails

### **Recommendations**

- See the Master Site Plan for the park, located in Chapter 5
- Recommendations for playground safety and ADA compliance are made as part of the Master Site Plan

## ***Herge Park***

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### **Description**

- Nice neighborhood park located next to Highcliff Elementary School
- The playground is often used by the school for outdoor recess
- The ball field is used extensively in the spring and summer for league play
- This is a two level park with the baseball field on the lower level and all other facilities on the upper level

### **Facilities**

- Baseball field
- Picnic shelter
- Tennis courts
- Basketball court
- Playground
- Trails

### **Recommendations**

- See the Master Site Plan for the park, located in Chapter 5
- Recommendations for playground safety and ADA compliance are made as part of the Master Site Plan

## ***Johnanna Memorial Field***

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### **Description**

- A single softball field with no amenities on the property
- Although there is an ADA designated parking space, it is located in the lower parking lot well away from the entrance to the field. There is no compliant access to the field itself.

### **Facilities**

- Softball field

### **Recommendations**

- Create two ADA compliant parking spaces at the upper maintenance entrance to the field; develop a compliant access route from the parking space to the field and appropriate seating
- Improve the landscape plantings on the hillside behind home plate and the left baseline
- Paint a mural on the cement retaining wall facing the field

## ***Main Boulevard Park***

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### **Description**

- Small neighborhood Park
- Very Limited parking available. Most access is limited to pedestrians
- Nice stream runs along one edge of the park
- None of the park is ADA compliant

### **Facilities**

- Swing sets
- Sliding board
- Basketball court
- Open grassy area and stream

### **Recommendations**

- Maintain the passive atmosphere of the park by limiting further development
- Provide ADA compliant access from the parking area to all park facilities
- Upgrade the play area to meet playground safety standards

## ***Maple Park***

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### **Description**

- Very nice neighborhood park
- Equipment is relatively new
- Limited parking; mostly pedestrian access
- All facilities are ADA compliant

### **Facilities**

- Playground
- Picnic shelter

### **Recommendations**

- Ensure the park is adequately maintained for long-term sustainability

## ***Mayer Park***

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### **Description**

- Very nice neighborhood park
- Good parking accessibility
- Surrounded on three sides by woodlands
- Facilities are not ADA compliant

### **Facilities**

- Playground
- Picnic shelter
- Baseball field
- Trails
- Woodlands
- Two parking areas

### **Recommendations**

- Upgrade the ballfield
- Make all facilities ADA compliant
- Improve the trails for long-term sustainability

## ***Osterle Park***

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### **Description**

- Two-tiered park
- Parking is available only on the lower tier, while the fields are located on the top tier
- Surrounded by woodlands
- Facilities are not ADA compliant

### **Facilities**

- Two baseball fields (upper level)
- Picnic shelter (lower level)
- Parking (lower level)
- Trails
- Woodlands

### **Recommendations**

- Upgrade the ballfield
- Make all facilities ADA compliant
- Improve the trails for long-term sustainability

## ***Quail Park***

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### **Description**

- Two-tiered park
- Parking is available only on the lower tier, while the fields are located on the top tier
- Surrounded by woodlands
- Facilities are not ADA compliant

### **Facilities**

- Play equipment
- Picnic shelter
- Basketball court

## **Recommendations**

- Implement recommendations of the playground safety audit
- Make all facilities ADA compliant
- Plan for installation of a modular play unit in the future

## ***Reis Run Soccer Complex***

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### **Description**

- Soccer complex
- Owned by the North Hills School District
- Until June 2012, Ross Township leased a small section of the property for use as a neighborhood park. As a recommendation of this plan, due to significant safety issues with the playground, the Township has removed its equipment has withdrawn from its lease of the property.
- Facilities are not ADA compliant

### **Facilities**

- Multiple soccer fields
- Parking lots
- Concession building

## ***Rosecliffe Park***

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### **Description**

- Nice multi-use park for a variety of uses
- Inadequate parking for its multiple uses
- Facilities are not ADA compliant

### **Facilities**

- Two baseball fields
- Picnic shelter
- Parking(small)
- Playground
- Basketball court

### **Recommendations**

- Upgrade the ballfield
- Upgrade the playground according to the safety audit
- Make all facilities ADA compliant
- Upgrade the basketball court and horseshoe pits

## ***Ross Community Park***

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### **Description**

- One of Ross Township's three community parks
- The Township's newest park
- Located adjacent to the Ross Community Center
- Facilities are all ADA compliant

### **Facilities**

- Baseball field with grandstand
- Rectangular practice field
- Concession stand with restrooms

- Basketball court
- Playground area
- Picnic shelters (2)
- Parking
- Community Center

### **Recommendations**

- Maintain this complex to high standards of safety, functionality, and appearance
- Improve the rectangular field
- Install a decorative fence between the play area and the parking lot

## ***Sangree Park***

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### **Description**

- Large neighborhood park
- Good variety of facilities
- Good parking
- Facilities are not ADA compliant

### **Facilities**

- Baseball/softball field
- Rectangular field overlays the baseball field
- Picnic shelter
- Basketball court
- Playground
- Parking lot
- Grassy play areas
- Woodlands

### **Recommendations**

- Upgrade the ballfield
- Upgrade the rectangular field
- Create walking paths to connect the neighborhood to the park
- Make all facilities ADA compliant
- Upgrade the playground according to the safety audit
- Develop a master site plan for the park

## ***Scharmyn Park***

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### **Description**

- Neighborhood park that is used mostly as a sports complex
- Not all residents appreciate the sports focus of the park
- Many facilities are developed on this small property
- It is the only park with more than two sports fields
- Well cared for by sports organizations
- Some but not all facilities are ADA compliant

### **Facilities**

- Baseball fields (3)
- Concession stand

- Spectator pavilion
- Batting cages
- Picnic shelter
- Tennis courts
- Parking

### **Recommendations**

- Relocate the 2-5 year old playground to the same area as the older children's playground
- Make all facilities ADA compliant
- Upgrade the playground according to the safety audit
- Improve tennis courts – consider an alternate use for them

## ***Second Avenue Park***

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### **Description**

- Small neighborhood park
- Primarily pedestrian access; very limited parking
- Facilities are not ADA compliant

### **Facilities**

- Basketball court
- Playground
- Picnic shelter

### **Recommendations**

- Make all facilities ADA compliant

## ***Seville Park***

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### **Description**

- Two-tiered park
- Parking is available only on the lower tier, while the fields are located on the top tier
- Surrounded by woodlands
- Facilities are not ADA compliant

### **Facilities**

- Two baseball fields (upper level)
- Picnic shelter (lower level)
- Parking (lower level)
- Trails
- Woodlands

### **Recommendations**

- Upgrade the ballfield
- Make all facilities ADA compliant
- Improve the trails for long-term sustainability

## ***Tyler Park***

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### **Description**

- Neighborhood park
- Insufficient parking for use of the soccer field
- Facilities are not ADA compliant

### **Facilities**

- Soccer field
- Picnic shelter
- Playground
- Parking

### **Recommendations**

- Upgrade playground according to the playground safety audit
- Make all facilities ADA compliant
- Grade the soccer field
- Install a concrete floor in the picnic shelter
- Expand the parking lot and define parking spaces

## ***Windhurst Park***

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### **Description**

- Ballfield complex only
- Facilities are not ADA compliant

### **Facilities**

- Combined baseball and soccer field
- Picnic shelter
- Parking
- Woodlands

### **Recommendations**

- Grade the soccer field
- Install a concrete floor in the picnic shelter
- Improve the parking area and define parking spaces
- Make all facilities ADA compliant

## **Full Inventory and Analysis**

A full inventory and analysis of Township facilities is located in the Appendices.

# SPATIAL ANALYSIS

Following the inventory of recreation facilities within Ross Township, a Spatial Analysis was conducted. This analysis brings together the conceptual information described in the Hierarchy of Parks with the specific information on existing recreation facilities. The Spatial Analysis gives an assessment of how current parks meet the recreational needs of Ross residents. The following factors were considered during the analysis:

- location of all municipally-owned recreation facilities
- location and types of all School District recreation facilities within the Township
- service areas of the above facilities as determined by park type
- comparison of existing facilities with the National Recreation and Parks Association's standard
- transportation systems and physical barriers, which may impede access to parks

For the purpose of this plan, each municipal and school district facility was categorized during the facility inventory as a community park, neighborhood park, school park, or sports complex. The Spatial Analysis map shows the location of existing recreation facilities and their corresponding service areas.

Community parks typically serve up to a three-mile radius and sometimes serve the entire municipality they are within. However, even using a 1 ½ mile radius, Ross, Evergreen, and Denny provide service to the entire Township. The facilities within community parks often fill neighborhood park needs of nearby residents as well. Sports complexes have no defined service radii. They may serve all or part of the community.

According to the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA), the typical service area for a neighborhood park ranges from ¼ to ½ mile. The greater the level of pedestrian accessibility, the greater the service area will be. In Ross, the size of the service area has been determined by the size and number of facilities within each neighborhood park. The smaller parks are assumed to service a ¼ mile radius while the larger ones serve a ½ mile area. In some cases, major traffic arteries limit access to the park; therefore, the service area is limited.

By taking into consideration observations made during the cultural resources and recreation facilities inventories, analyzing the results of the various public input opportunities, and comparing existing recreation needs with current trends, the Spatial Analysis provides a general picture of how well the parks are meeting the needs of Ross Township residents.

The Spatial Analysis map on the next page shows the following.

- Even using the 1½ mile radius, the three community parks provide adequate service to 95% of the Township's residents. This is supported by public comment gathered through the planning process.
- The review of the neighborhood parks suggests that nearly all Township residents live within a half mile of a park. Once again, public comment supports this conclusion as there was no demand for additional neighborhood parks.

## Ross Township Parks Classifications

### Community Parks

Ross Community

Evergreen

Denny

### Neighborhood Parks

Amity

Ann Allison

Brethauer/Nelson/White

Herge

Main Boulevard

Maple

Mayer

Osterle

Quaill

Rosecliffe

Sangree

Scharmyn

Second Avenue

Seville

Tyler

### School Parks

McIntyre Elementary

Ross Elementary

Highcliff Elementary

### Sports Complexes

Johnanna Field

John Herb Field

Reis Run Soccer Complex\*

Ted Bartlett Memorial Field

\*owned by North Hill School District

# COMPARISON OF ROSS TOWNSHIP AREA PARKS AND OPEN SPACE TO NRPA STANDARDS

Determining the appropriate acreage, type, and number of recreation facilities for a community is a function of analyzing a variety of data. There are many factors unique to Ross Township that the Consultant considered: natural resources located within the Township; existing land use; the wooded hillsides located within the view shed along Interstate 279; existing parks and their current uses; recreation trends in the region; and the input received through the public participation process.

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), no longer provides a specified standard to identify the number of recreational facilities needed per 1000 residents. Instead, in the 1995 NRPA publication “Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines”, authors James D. Mertes and James H. Hall recommend a “level of service” approach to determining what facilities and space are needed. That is, park and facility development should be based on local demand rather than national standards. The demand analysis is based on factors such as sports league participation, public input, population trends, socioeconomic conditions, and even location. Mertes and Hall state, “Each community must decide what type of parks to include, what facilities and spaces commonly comprise these parks, and what the appropriate balance between active and passive areas is in these parks.”

For the purposes of this study, we have taken the level of service approach a step further to determine the need for sports fields. In doing so, we have:

- interviewed representatives of various sports organizations; gathered detailed data concerning participation rates and ages; inventoried available fields and analyzed their specific usage; and projected future growth potential in youth sports
- listened to residents as they expressed their desires at public meetings
- inventoried all recreational facilities in the Township parks and evaluated their condition
- talked with parks and recreation staff concerning the demands residents are placing on the parks
- questioned stakeholders about their views on parks and recreation facilities

## New Recreation Facilities required meeting current demand

- Deck hockey courts
- Dog park or dog access to existing parks
- A multi-use sports complex
- A large community park
- Sled riding area
- Swimming Pool or spray park

Based on this analysis, the boxed list to above describes the needs for recreation facilities in the Township.

## ADMINISTRATION, RECREATION PROGRAMMING, MAINTENANCE, AND FINANCES

Appropriate administration is critical to the management and implementation of the parks and recreation system. The analysis considers four areas of administration - general administration, maintenance, programming, and finances.

The general administration analysis reviews the current organizational structure of parks and recreation, general operations, planning efforts, and intergovernmental cooperation. The maintenance analysis summarizes current maintenance practices such as management, staffing levels, risk management, training, and equipment. The personnel analysis reviews personnel systems, staffing levels, expectations of current staff, and the use of volunteers. The financial analysis evaluates past and current financial trends and support.

This Plan's recommendations are based on this administrative analysis. They are intended to provide a structure that will allow for appropriate management and development of parks and recreation in Ross Township.

As we look at Ross Township Parks and Recreation, it is important to understand that it is an expansive system. The system includes 22 parks on about 200 acres of land that is distributed throughout every portion of the Township. These parks include at least ten rectangular fields, 17 baseball or softball fields, 17 playgrounds, 25 sport courts, 18 picnic shelters, 14 parking areas, a community building and the Ross Community Center.

The department holds four major special events each year along with over 200 recreational programs; and they schedule hundreds of field times for baseball, softball, football and soccer. In addition to the extensive outdoor programming and scheduling, they manage use of the Ross Community Center for up to 80 hours each week.

## ADMINISTRATION

### Legal Structure

The First Class Township Code allows for the creation of a Park and Recreation Board by ordinance of the Commissioners. The Parks and Recreation Board may supervise, regulate, equip, and maintain Township funded recreation facilities and programs. However, the Board has only those powers specifically delegated to it by the Commissioners.

Article XXX of the First Class Township Code describes the rights of the Township Commissioners in parks and recreation. The Code gives Commissioners the right to:

- acquire, own, lease, set aside or control land and facilities for recreational purposes
- construct and equip new park and recreation facilities
- levy taxes to support these facilities
- raise through special taxation and tax for the purpose of maintaining and operating the recreation areas and facilities and programs
- employ persons to maintain and/or supervise the use of recreation facilities and programs
- create a Parks and Recreation Board
- join with other municipalities to acquire, create, equip, maintain, and operate any park or recreation area for the benefit of its residents
- pay expenses related to parks and recreation from its general fund
- acquire, hold, and use forested lands

### Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee

The Township does not utilize a park or recreation board but operates all recreation facilities and programs through a Township department.

If at any time, the Board would choose to create such a board, Article XXX of the First Class Township Code establishes enabling legislation to do so and describes the authority of the Boards, its composition, powers and duties as well as organization and funding.

## A Snapshot of Ross Parks and Recreation

### Parks

- 22 parks
- 199 acres
- 10 rectangular fields
- 17 baseball/softball fields
- 17 playgrounds
- 25 sport courts
- 18 picnic shelters
- 14 parking lots
- Community room at Evergreen Park
- Ross Community Center

### Recreation

- 4 major community-wide special events
- 200 recreational programs annually
- Coordinate hundreds of field times for softball, baseball, soccer, football
- Provide cooperative programming with Marshall, and Ohio Townships and Franklin Park Borough
- Manage the Community Center use for up to 80 hours each week

## **Philosophy toward Funding Parks and Recreation**

Historically, Ross Township has been committed to providing general funding to acquire, develop, and maintain its Township parks. Additionally, it provides financial support for operation of the Township Parks and Recreation Department. In 2002, Township Commissioners took a big step in funding parks and recreation as they opened the Ross Community Center and hired their first full-time recreation Director.

Commissioners have been committed to providing multiple parks in each of the Township's nine wards. Funding of maintenance, operations, and upgrades of the parks has not kept pace with these parks' use. Many parks currently face use, appearance, and safety issues that need to be addressed. Commissioners took the initiative to complete this Plan with the intent that it would provide a road map for bringing all parks into safe, usable condition.

There are no specific policies that guide the allocation of funds. Rather, the Commissioners annually evaluate parks and recreation needs along with other priorities of the Township and make decisions accordingly.

## **Recreation Staffing**

The Parks and Recreation Department is led by the Director of Parks and Recreation. The Director is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Department including general administration, programming, financial management, planning, and recreational oversight of the Township's parks and the Community Center. The Township also has an Assistant Recreation Director whose primary focus is programming and office administration. Part-time building staff is used to manage evening and weekend use of the Community Center.

At the current staffing level, individuals in both full-time positions are pushed beyond what should be expected to effectively accomplish the work required for their respective positions. The Parks and Recreation Director often spends hours each week entering program registrations into the computer and other typical clerical tasks. These tasks take away from time for program development, staff supervision, short and long-range planning, and financial oversight of the department. The assistant director manages and oversees over 200 programs, most of which take place during evening and week-end hours and at multiple locations.

The current demand for recreational programming by Ross Township residents will continue to push the department towards growth and expansion. Township Commissioners should proactively plan for this growth by planning ahead for the hiring of additional staff to handle the additional workload.

The Recreation Director is immediately responsible to the Township Manager and the Assistant Recreation Director is responsible to the Director.

The Consultant conducted an analysis of the salaries of each of these two positions. In 2002 the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the PA Recreation and Park Society jointly conducted a Budget and Salary Survey for Pennsylvania Park and Recreation Agencies. The Survey is categorized by municipal population. In the category for municipalities with populations between 25,000 and 49,000, the median annual salary of a parks and recreation director in 2002 was \$54,157. Assuming a conservative annual increase of 2%, the median salary in 2012 would be \$66,017. The current salary of the Ross Township Parks and Recreation Director is approximately ten thousand dollars below the median.

For an Assistant Recreation Director, the 2002 median salary was \$36,944. Again, projecting the salary with a 2% annual increase means the 2012 median salary would be \$45,334. The current salary of the Assistant Recreation Director is significantly lower than the projected mean salary.

Program staff members are not employees of the department but are contracted as independent contractors to provide specific programs. The department also contracts for sports league umpires and other occasional staff. Maintenance staffing is described in the maintenance section of this chapter.

The Township has developed an Employee Policy and Procedure Manual covering Employment, Employee Relations, Attendance, Compensation, Benefits, Discipline and Rules of Conduct, and General Information.

## **Intergovernmental or Multi-municipal Cooperation**

Ross Township does not currently have any intergovernmental arrangements with other municipalities for recreational purposes. In the past they have had a mutual agreement with Bellevue Borough to allow Township residents to use the Bellevue swimming pool, which is located within the Township, without paying non-resident rates. They also have both written and verbal agreements with the North Hills School District for shared use of facilities. These arrangements work both ways, whereby the school district utilizes some Township recreation facilities and the Township uses School District facilities.

Once again, Chapter XXX of the First Class Township Code allows the Township to enter into such shared agreements with both municipalities and school districts.

## **Regional Recreation Efforts**

Ross Township Parks and Recreation is part of a group of regional municipalities that have come together to provide programming that would not be successful if offered by any one of the municipalities by itself. In addition to Ross Township, those participating include Franklin Park Borough and Marshall, Ohio, Richland, Pine, and Cranberry Townships.

Through eight years of partnership, the Parks and Recreation Departments have jointly provided a series of recreational programming open to residents of all communities. This cooperative venture originated to provide the communities with a wide variety of affordable recreational group trips and tours that none of the municipalities could provide individually. Over the years, it expanded from trips and tours to community cooperative programs such as Hershey Track and Field; NFL Punt, Pass and Kick; Pepsi Pitch, Hit and Run; the award winning summer Series, "Movies in the Park"; and Special Needs Family Fun Days.

This alliance also enabled them to receive several community cooperative grants. In 2012, the communities reorganized as the Recreation Alliance of North Pittsburgh (RANP.) At that time they developed a new mission statement and by-laws and are in the process of incorporating as a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. This will enable them more options in programming and additional opportunities for grant funding.

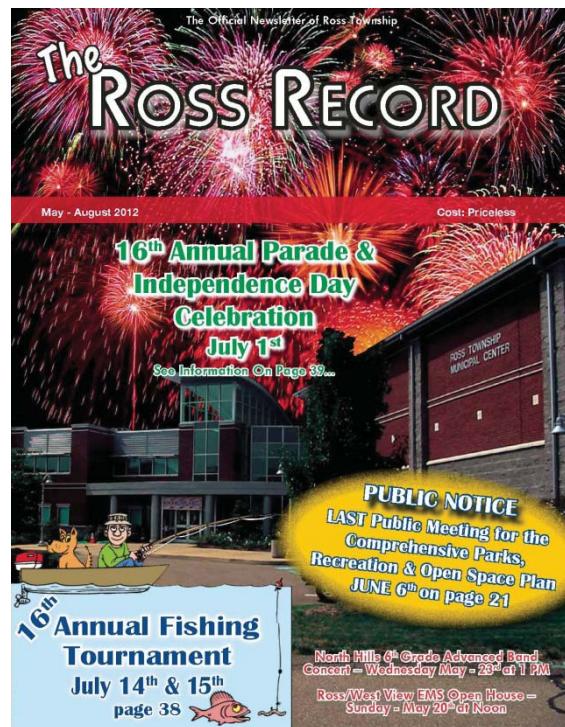
This joint venture has been extremely profitable to the residents of each municipality.

## **Publicity**

Publicizing Ross Township recreation and park opportunities currently occurs using multiple venues.

The Township's seasonal brochure, *The Ross Record*, is published three times each year. While *The Ross Record* provides updates and information about all operations of the Township government, its biggest focus is on recreation and parks opportunities. The sixty-page brochure includes contact information for local, state and national elected officials, features of Township municipal services, news and updates about the Township, a description of the location of all Township parks, a listing of recreational programming offered by or in partnership with the Township Parks and Recreation Department. The brochure is one of the primary information sources for Township residents. The brochure has reached a point where its \$50,000 cost is completely paid for through the sale of advertising in the publication.

The Ross Township website ([www.ross.pa.us/parks/parks.html?genInfo.html](http://www.ross.pa.us/parks/parks.html?genInfo.html)) includes several pages of information about its recreation programs and facilities, access to a digital copy of *The Ross Record*, program registration information, and various forms required for use of Township



recreation facilities. The website is not particularly attractive or user friendly, and does not offer as much information as residents may be looking for in an online source. Simple upgrades to the webpage can make it a more useful tool for residents use.

A third primary source of publicity is email, flyer, and announcements through the North Hills School District. The Township Recreation Department has a strong relationship with the District to provide such services.

The Township also publicizes programming through the local news media, which, according to the general public, serves as a good source of information.

### **Recordkeeping and Annual Report**

There is currently no comprehensive system for tracking program registration or attendance. While registration sheets are kept, the figures are not compiled into a summary of overall program attendance. Although this has not been an issue of concern, such records can provide statistical validation for the Department to use in supporting its successes. The records also help the Department in planning from year-to-year. In times of staff turn-over, such a system provides a good basis for new staff to understand the success of the past.

Many departments use this type of information to produce an annual report to the elected body and to other supporters and stakeholders. The report may also display a compilation of significant data for funders, grants agencies, and the general public. This report usually describes the department's goals and objectives for the coming year, current year's accomplishments, challenges, programs, marketing, budgets, training programs, DCNR Assistance, program participation rates, program guides, and an auditor's report.

### **Americans with Disabilities Act Compliance**

There is no ADA policy specific to parks and recreation. However, the Township has met ADA guidelines in the development of new recreation facilities related to parks and recreation. The facility inventory identifies facilities that still need to be brought into compliance.

## **RECREATION PROGRAMMING**

Recreation programming is one of the primary functions of the parks and recreation department in most communities. However, we see in most communities that many other organizations and agencies provide recreational programming as well. Ross Township is no different. While the Department has an exceptionally broad-based offering of programs with over 200 available to Ross residents, local youth sports organizations, public and private non-profit recreation providers, and private businesses provide for the community's recreational needs as well.

An analysis of these programming opportunities and services offers a good understanding of how well the community's needs are being met.

Programs are provided by the Department in a wide variety of categories including programs for preschoolers, elementary, junior and senior high students, as well as programs for adults and senior citizens. Across the age spectrum are offerings for sports, education, special events, family style programs, nature programs, and others. Other program categories include health and safety, nature and garden, education and technology, and community tours.

Sports programs span from competitive and instructional team sports to individualized instruction. There is also a blend of arts, cultural, nature, and leisure program

Perhaps the strongest asset in Ross Township recreation programming is its variety and its balance. While major special events are perhaps the most visible of programming, equally important are the smaller, broad-based programs and activities that provide for specialized interests.

*Across the age spectrum are program offerings for sports, education, special events, family style activities, health and safety, nature and garden, education and technology, and community tours.*

*An exceptional balance of both active and passive programs is provided.*

This is a sampling of programs offered for various age groups in Ross Township:

#### Preschool and Youth

- Lego programs
- Ice Cream Social
- Animal Adventure
- Ross Rompers
- Tap and Ballet
- Kids in the Kitchen
- Cheerleading

#### Youth and Teens

- Hershey Track and Field
- Babysitter Training
- Hunter and Trapper Safety Training
- Pepsi Pitch, Hit, and Run
- NFL Punt, Pass, and Kick

#### Adults:

- Computer education classes
- Photo Journaling
- Flower Arranging
- Line Dancing
- Zumba
- Tai Chi
- Yoga
- Pilates

#### Seniors

- All adult programs listed above
- Movie Matinee's
- Senior Strutters walking program
- Senior Fitness
- Computer Classes
- Bus Tours

#### Family

- Movies in the Park
- Bus Tours
- Special Needs Family Fun Day
- Family Campout
- Recreational Game and Equipment Swap Meet

Ross Township is partnering with the other communities in the region through the Recreation Alliance of North Pittsburgh to offer sports programs sponsored through the National Recreation and Park Association. There are a host of these programs available including Hershey Track and Field; Take Me Fishing; NFL Punt, Pass, and Kick; MLB Pitch, Hit, and Run; USTA Youth Tennis Program; and others. A staple of these cooperative programs is "Movies in the Park", where the Alliance has acquired the movie equipment to hold three or four movies throughout the summer in each of the participating municipalities. In 2012, Ross Township hosted four family friendly movies.

#### Senior Advisory Council

*In an effort to strengthen Senior Programming, the Department has created the Senior Advisory Council that meets monthly to share ideas, offer suggestions, and recommend future programming. The monthly meetings also serve to keep the senior population informed of program offerings throughout the Township. Most meetings include a guest speaker and fellowship time.*



As well, the Township has forged strong partnerships with private enterprise, youth sports organizations, and local non-profits to enhance recreational program offerings.

## **Special Events**

Ross Township Special Events are among the most well-known programs in the Township. Each year Ross Township holds four special events: Easter Egg Hunt; Fishing Tournament; Community Day; Independence Day Celebration.

### **Easter Eggstravaganza**

The event, which includes an Easter Egg hunt, games, activities, and snacks, has recently been sponsored by MedExpress, which allows the program to continue at little cost to the municipality and to be free for the participants. This affair draws hundreds of children up to age ten. And of, course, the Easter Bunny makes a special appearance.

### **Fishing Tournament**

Having been held each summer for sixteen years, the fishing tournament is co-sponsored by the Ross Police and the Parks and Recreation Departments. Financial and volunteer support for the program is provided by the Ross Township business community and local residents. Accommodating seven age categories, the tournament is held over two days. The first day focuses on youth ages five to fourteen while the second day is open to older teens, adults, seniors and those with special needs. The free event is held at Evergreen Park.

### **Community Day**

Ross Township Community Day is a fun-filled day that is free to the public. Held annually in September, it continues to grow each year. The event is paid for through financial sponsorships. It is one of the biggest one-day events in the region.

Crafter, vendors, and displayers offer a wide variety of arts, crafts, foods, fair games, and giveaways.

Performances by local and regional talent are always an attraction. The 2012 event included Radio Disney, Ross Township's Police Ceremonial Unit, Ross Township's Police K-9 Units, Lynchburg Hollow Band, North Hills Jazz Band, and Dancing Queen. The 2012 major sponsor, Allegheny Regional Hospital, hosted its own activities and attractions, including landing its well-known Lifeflight Helicopter on Herb Field.

Activities vary from year to year but always offer fun times for all ages. The 2012 event included the Ultimate Gaming Trailer, inflatable rides, North Hills Hockey Skills Competition, bingo, kid's crafts, games, face painting, petting zoo, pony rides, raffle prizes, and a major display by the Ross Township Historical Society.

Appearances by clowns, Ronald McDonald, Ms. Pennsylvania America 2012, and Ms. Pennsylvania Junior Pre-Teen added to the excitement for 2012

The event closes with a huge fireworks display and a movie in the park.

Attendance at Community Day continues to grow as well, with as many as 5,000 to 8,000 people in attendance.

### **Independence Day Celebration**

The annual Independence Day Celebration features a Car Cruise, parade, festival, and fireworks. Held at the North Hills High School, the Car Cruise showcases a host of antique and classic cars offering trophies in a number of categories. It also offers plenty of refreshments, door prizes, and music, along with a raffle and door prizes. Cars from the Cruise become a part of the parade that follows.

The parade has become a feature event of the Celebration drawing thousands of spectators. It begins at St. John's Evangelical Church and ends at Lindley Lane. Included in the parade are



the North Hills cheerleaders and marching band, emergency and fire vehicles, antique and classic cars, floats, organizations, and much more.

The celebration culminates with a spectacular fireworks display at Ross Community Center Park.

The Ross Township Parks and Recreation should continually add new recreation programming to expand on existing opportunities. The results of the recreation questionnaire conducted as part of this plan suggest the need for enhancement and/or expansion of the following program areas.

- Concerts in the parks for teens, adults and seniors
- Indoor and outdoor sports for elementary, middle school, and teens
- Nature and environmental programs for elementary and middle school ages
- Swimming lessons, primarily for elementary ages but for preschoolers and middle school ages too
- Arts and crafts for elementary ages
- Sports camps for elementary and middle school ages
- Summer day camps particularly for elementary ages
- Aerobic exercise for adults
- Summer playground programs for elementary ages
- After school programs for elementary school ages
- Pre-school programs
- Senior programs



Seniors are looking particularly for walking opportunities, bus tours to attractions within the region, exercise programs, computer access and/or instructional classes. Some would also like to have opportunities to socialize and to volunteer.

## ***Other Recreation Providers***

In addition to the Township Parks and Recreation Department, recreation programming is provided by several youth sports organizations in and around the Township. The most significant amount of programming is provided by the North Hills Athletic Association, West View Ross Athletic Association, North Hills High School Hockey Club, North Hills Soccer Club, and the North Hills School District.

The following provides a more detailed description of each of these organizations.

**North Hills Athletic Association** provides baseball and softball opportunities including clinics, spring and fall season league play, inter-league play, travel teams, and tournaments. They utilize multiple Township and School District fields as well as some privately owned fields.

**2011 registrations are:**

Activity	Participants
Spring league baseball	427
Fall league baseball	105
Spring league girls' fast pitch softball	105
Spring league girls' slow pitch softball	310
Fall league girls' fast pitch softball	48
Spring league girls' slow pitch softball	39

*Statistics were not available for other league activities.*

An interview with league officials indicated that their biggest needs are for adequate restroom facilities with flush toilets at Ted Bartlett Memorial Field; additional parking space at Rosecliffe Park; better maintenance of portable restrooms; and at least one or two larger fields for older boys' baseball teams.

**West View Ross Athletic Association** also offers both baseball and softball. Baseball leagues include T-ball, Minor League, Little League, Colt League, and Pony Leagues in baseball. Various age groupings are offered for girls' softball as well. Games and practices are held mostly on Township and School District fields.

**2011 registrations are:**

Activity	Participants
Spring Baseball League	389
Fall Baseball League	30
Girls' Spring Softball League	70
Girls' Fall Softball	45

An interview with league officials indicated that their biggest need is for additional parking at Scharmyn Park.

**North Hills Hockey Club** provides ice hockey and Deck Hockey instruction and league play for youth ages five through 18. This includes high school teams for freshmen, Junior Varsity, and Varsity. Their season generally runs from September through March. The Club uses the main ice rink at Robert Morris University Island Sports Center. They also utilize the Deck Hockey rink on Mt. Nebo Road.

**2011 registrations are:**

Activity	Participants
Boys' Ice Hockey League	82
PA Interscholastic Roller Hockey League	30

An interview with league officials indicated that their biggest need is for additional ice time for the varsity team.

**North Hills Soccer Club** offers spring and fall travel and in-house leagues for boys and girls ages five to eighteen. Most games and practices are held at the Reis Run Soccer Complex but three Township parks are used to supplement the Complex.

**2011 spring registrations are:**

Activity	Participants
Little Kickers ages 4 and up	100
U-8 Boys' in-house	48
U-8 Girls' in-house	48
U-10 Boys' in-house	36
U-10 Girls' in-house	84
Boys' travel teams U-9 through U-18	171
Girls' travel teams U-11 through U-17	64

An interview with league officials indicated that their biggest need is for improved drainage on the Reis Run fields.

**North Hills Youth Football Association** offers football and cheerleading for boys and girls ages seven to thirteen. Boys play football in five age divisions: Tomahawks (ages 7/8), Braves (9), Warriors (10), Redskins (11), and Chiefs (12/13). The pre-season begins in early August and the regular season finishes by the end of October. Home games are played at North Hills School District's Martorelli Stadium.

**2011 spring registrations are as follows:**

Activity	Football	Cheerleading
Tomahawks	29	25
Braves	16	18
Warriors	28	11
Redskins	25	18
Chiefs	38	35

**North Hills School District** offers a number of sports programs to community residents. Recent programs include:

Adult Aquatics Fitness – Water exercise for adults, offered in the fall and spring

Adult Basketball – Competitive pick up teams weekly from October through February

Adult Boot Camp – Offered three days per week October through March offers strength and conditioning exercise

Athens and Athena – Training program about sports nutrition; strength training; effects of steroids, alcohol, supplements, and illicit drugs on performance

Community Swimming – All levels of swimming and diving classes as well as open recreational swimming

Pilates – Offered in the fall and spring

Speed and Agility Training – Summer training program for junior and high school students

Summer Camps – Basketball, soccer, tennis and baseball for various ages of students

### **Valley Brook Swim and Tennis Club**

Of particular note is the Valley Brook Swim and Tennis Club that provides one of the two outdoor swimming pools in the township. Valley Brook is a membership-based club. Membership is available for purchase by the general public. Guests may accompany club members on a limited basis.

Tennis clinics are held in two age groups: 10 and under and over 10. Leagues and tournaments are offered throughout the summer. Except during scheduled times for lessons, leagues, and tournaments, the courts are available for general use.

The Club hosts its own swim team known as the Barracudas. They compete in a regional league with teams at Chapel Gate, North Boroughs, Avonworth, Adams Ridge (Adams Township), Zelienople, and Oxford. In addition to the swim team, the club offers both group and private swim lessons and several special events throughout the summer. The pool is generally available for recreational swimming from noon to 8:15 pm daily throughout the summer.

### **Bellevue Park**

The Borough of Bellevue's municipal park is located in Ross Township. The park includes tennis courts, a baseball field, three picnic groves, hiking and fitness trails, a large playground, a swimming pool with a slide, diving boards, and kids' pool. Bellevue charges both resident and non-resident fees for use of the pool. Ross residents are usually considered as resident, although there have been years where they have been charged non-resident rates.



## **MAINTENANCE**

In recent years there has been a triad of Township Departments involved in various aspects of park maintenance and development. Park maintenance has been conducted by the Ross **Public Works Department**. They assign both full-time and seasonal staff to work in the parks. Daily maintenance has consisted of general cleaning, mowing, facility maintenance and preparation, and general repairs. These tasks are based

primarily on apparent needs and visual observations. The Public Works department checks the parks regularly to determine chores that need to be addressed. Sports organizations that use Ted Bartlett Memorial Field and Scharfyn Park fields provide most of the maintenance on these fields.

In the past, Public Works has assigned its one person from the department to manage and direct park maintenance during the peak season. This person was responsible for day-to-day maintenance. Additional staff worked under his direction. Recently, the Township hired a new Public Works Superintendent. He is in the process of re-structuring how maintenance staff is assigned to the park.

The **Township Engineer** has been primarily responsible for deciding on major park improvements, making recommendations to the Commissioners, and carrying them out. This Department conducted its own evaluation and analysis of Township parks in 2006 and developed a long-term plan for improvements. Recommendations and decisions have sometimes conflicted with the Public Works and Parks and Recreation Department's priorities and needs. During the course of this study, Township Commissioners chose to eliminate the Township Engineer's staff position in favor of contracting with an engineering firm to provide these services. With this change, the engineering firm is responsible for specific engineering and planning tasks assigned by the commissioners rather than for overall management of park upgrades.

The **Parks and Recreation Department** is responsible for management and operations of programs within the parks. They are not responsible for any direct maintenance of the parks but are certainly affected by the care and condition of facilities. When residents have concerns and complaints about park facilities, they are received by the Parks and Recreation staff and then passed on to Public Works to address.

For the future, there needs to be a single township department that is responsible for regular maintenance as well as long-range management and planning for the parks. In Ross Township, the most appropriate for that role is the Public Works Department. Public works has the staff, equipment, and tools to manage the parks as they do other Township maintenance. As the Public Works Department fulfills that role, it will be imperative that they work closely with the Parks and Recreation Department that uses and schedules the facilities within the parks. Because the Parks and Recreation Department has limited control over maintenance or repairs in the parks, it would be best that concerns and complaints go directly to Public Works.

Park maintenance requires specialized skills and knowledge. While the current staff is good at what they do, none is specifically trained in park maintenance. The National Recreation and Park Association, Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society, and other similar organizations provide workshops, schools, and conferences to provide training in maintenance of ball fields, turf grass, equipment, playgrounds, and other park equipment and facilities. Additional sessions provide education in maintenance planning, staff management, dealing with the public, working within financial constraints, budgeting, and working in a municipal setting. Such training enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of maintenance staff. The staff charged with park maintenance management and those performing primary tasks in the parks should attend one or more of these training sessions annually.

One of the most significant issues identified from the public input portion of this study is the need to set a higher standard of design, development, and care for Township parks. Residents want their parks to be among the best in Allegheny County. As the Study Committee reviewed this need, they determined that all parks should meet the same high level of design, development, and sustainable maintenance standards as were used for Ross Community Park. They also agreed that Ross Community Park, as the example, needs to be maintained to the same level with which it was built and designed.

Sustainability of parks and their facilities was another of the themes identified by the Study Committee. That is, all parks need to be planned, designed, and constructed to be maintained and used for many years to come. The investment in these practices will provide for easier maintenance, a greater life-span, and better quality facilities. In the end, they will be more cost-effective and provide better recreational opportunities for Ross residents.

## **Safety and Risk Management**

The Consultant's analysis of the park shows that some of the parks have a number of safety deficiencies. A playground safety audit revealed several safety issues at the playgrounds that need to be addressed. They are detailed in the Recommendations section of this report.

There is no risk management plan for the parks. Safety inspections are conducted as part of the regular maintenance visits, but there are no written safety standards or a system to track the identification and repair of such hazards. Details of inspections should be tracked and records of repairs should be kept. A risk management plan should be developed for the entire park system and its facilities. The lack of a risk management plan often results in both immediate and long term potential for dangerous situations as well as undue liability exposure for the Township.

## **FINANCES**

Finances impact on nearly every area of parks and recreation. They affect staffing, maintenance, programming, park development, and facilities. In order to understand the current state of the parks and recreation system and to lay plans for the future, it is essential to understand the financing. Financing levels and sources indicate existing priorities within the parks and recreation system. They also indicate how parks and recreation rank with other municipal services. The analysis of all financial aspects of the community, including those that impact parks and recreation, provide an indicator as to how the municipality can proceed in meeting its other priorities.

During the five-year period from 2006 to 2010 Ross Township has spent an annual average of \$567,048 on parks and recreation. They have received related revenues of \$148,343. These revenues have come from fees for programs and services, grants, fundraising, and other miscellaneous sources. These revenues offset an average of 25.1% of the total expenses, bringing the actual annual outlay for parks and recreation to an average of \$418,705.

Expenditures are tracked through the typical municipal chart of accounts. The Township further breaks down the expense categories to show expenses for staff, recreation programming, consulting and engineering, and administration.

A comparison of the Township's expenditures for parks and recreation with the total general fund expenditures shows that the Township spends an average of 2.7% of the general fund for parks and recreation. This percentage has remained steady over the recent four-year period from 2007-2010 ranging from a high of 2.83% to a low of 2.47%.

An additional comparison shows that during the same period Ross Township spent an average of \$13.18 per capita on parks and recreation. A four-year detail of per capita expenditures is shown in the accompanying chart.

The following chart compares Ross Township to other municipalities of similar size and nature. Data for this chart comes from the DCED Annual Municipal Reporting Statistics. The most recent data available for all municipalities is from 2009.

The chart shows that Ross Township spends more per capita than McCandless Township and Bethel Park but less than Mt. Lebanon, Shaler

Ross Township Parks and Recreation Annual Revenue vs. Expenses				
Year	Parks and Recreation Expenses	Parks and Recreation Revenue	Net Expense	Percent of Cost Recovery through Fees
2006	\$560,955	\$127,300	\$433,655	22.69%
2007	\$562,146	\$132,518	\$429,628	23.57%
2008	\$611,874	\$171,918	\$439,956	28.10%
2009	\$624,181	\$162,518	\$461,663	26.04%
2010	\$476,086	\$147,461	\$328,625	30.97%
Average	\$567,048	\$148,343	\$418,705	26.27%

Source: Ross Township Financial Audits 2006-2010

Ross Township Park and Recreation Expenditures vs. Total General Fund Expenditures and Population				
Year	Total General Fund Expenditures*	Parks and Recreation Net Expenditures	Percent of General Fund	Per Capita Expenditure
2007	\$15,198,349	\$429,628	2.83%	\$13.81
2008	\$15,659,779	\$439,956	2.81%	\$14.14
2009	\$16,375,432	\$461,663	2.82%	\$14.84
2010	\$13,283,275	\$328,625	2.47%	\$10.57
Average	\$15,106,162	\$410,081	2.70%	\$13.18

\*Source: Ross Twp. Annual Audits 2007 - 2010

Township, and Monroeville. One notable difference is that Ross has more than twice as many municipal parks as any other municipality in the comparison. The average per capita parks and recreation expenditures among the five municipalities is \$41.44 compared to Ross' \$14.84.

Comparison to Municipalities of Similar Size and Nature in Allegheny County 2009 Parks and Recreation Comparisons						
Municipality	County	2010 Population	2009 Parks/Rec Expenditure	2009 Parks/Rec Revenue	Net Expense	Per Capita Expense
Mt. Lebanon	Allegheny	33,137	\$4,278,618	\$3,075,790	\$1,202,828	\$36.30
Bethel Park	Allegheny	32,313	\$951,148	\$512,600	\$438,548	\$13.57
Shaler Township	Allegheny	28,757	\$659,027	\$141,729	\$517,298	\$17.99
McCandless Twp.	Allegheny	28,457	\$422,877	\$52,374	\$370,503	\$13.02
Monroeville	Allegheny	28,386	\$2,548,347	\$565,371	\$1,982,976	\$69.86
Average		28,422	\$1,485,612			\$41.44
Ross Twp.	Allegheny	31,105	\$624,181	\$162,581	\$461,600	\$14.84

Source: DCED Municipal Statistics 2009 <http://munstatspa.dced.state.pa.us/Reports.aspx>

Analysis of Per Capita Spending on Parks and Recreation Communities of Similar Size In Allegheny County			
Measure	Municipality	Population	Per Capita Expense
Mean		28,422	\$41.44
Median	Shaler Township	28,757	\$17.99
High	Monroeville	28,386	\$69.86
Low	McCandless	28,457	\$13.02
Ross Twp.		31,105	\$14.84
Per Capita Expenditure Comparison to Ross Township Parks and Recreation	Communities that spend more than Ross	3	
	Communities that spend less than Ross	2	

### Adequacy of Funding

The comparison of Ross Township with other municipalities simply allows Township officials to see how they stack up against their neighbors in providing for parks and recreation. The real question to ask is "How are we doing at funding our parks and recreation opportunities in Ross Township?" The analysis of this plan indicates that there are areas where the Township is doing well, and there are some deficiencies in certain areas. The Township has established a well-balanced system of fee-based programming. For the most part, fees are expected to, and do, cover the direct cost of programming. The Township supplements the program offerings by providing financial support for the overhead and indirect costs. These costs include the maintenance and upkeep of facilities; provision of administrative and clerical staff; overall management; and supply of equipment and materials.

Other programs, particularly community-wide special events and major youth programs, are being subsidized by sponsorships from local businesses. Once again, the Township is covering the cost of staff time, provision of facilities, security, and supporting other basic needs of the programs.

This system works well for Ross Township and its residents as there is a shared system of meeting the financial needs of recreational opportunities.

One place that is struggling financially for recreational programming is in the Parks and Recreation Department staffing. It is evident that the Department is pushed to its limit in being able to provide recreational programming. The previous staffing section of this chapter describes staffing needs for the future. These will require an additional financial investment to allow the Township to maintain its high level of recreational programming. Not only can programming not expand with the current level of staffing, but also it is likely that it cannot be sustained to the quality that residents expect.

The second financial deficiency is in the support of park maintenance. In recent years, park maintenance has been conducted at a rather basic level. While the parks are attractive and clean, many of the amenities are wearing out and becoming difficult to maintain. Many of the ballfields are in need of backstop repairs, infield upgrades, and turf improvements. Trails in various parks are eroding and are not well maintained or sustainable. Sport court surfaces are in need of sealing and lines need to be repainted. Playgrounds need to be updated and safety surfaces need to be replenished. Two playgrounds are in need of immediate repairs or removal. While many of these upgrades are simple and easy to accomplish, when you consider them over the Township's entire twenty-two park system, their magnitude becomes daunting and expensive.

Most of the needed repairs are the result of a limited budget in past years that did not account for on-going upgrades and replacement of equipment and amenities on a regular basis. As the Township moves forward, it should allocate funds sufficient to annually maintain the park system as well as plan for long-term care, maintenance, upgrades and replacements. A capital budget should be created with an annual allotment of funds to ensure long-term care of the parks system. Facility development, upgrades, and planning should be done in ways that limit ongoing maintenance. For instance, asphalt floors in picnic shelters cost significantly less to maintain than gravel floors; high quality, commercial-grade, coated fencing needs less maintenance over its life-cycle than standard fencing; sustainable trail design and development will significantly reduce the cost of on-going maintenance.

Chapter 4 of this Plan makes specific recommendations for addressing financial issues including the establishment of a schedule to bring all parks back into appropriate condition.

In all financial efforts, the Township should work for both efficiency and effectiveness. This will accomplish the work of parks and recreation with a minimum of time, effort and money while meeting the recreational needs of the community.

# Chapter 3: Public Input

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# Chapter 3: Public Input

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Public participation was a key component to the development of Ross Township's Comprehensive Recreation, Parks, and Open Space Plan. Six venues were used to collect input from Township residents. A Study Committee was used throughout the process to represent the community in meetings with the Consultant; two public meetings were held; a focus group meeting was held with Township and School District officials; two recreation questionnaires were used, one for the general public and one for teens; and key person interviews were conducted. Each sought to collect input that related to the Comprehensive Recreation, Park, and Open Space Plan.

The public input was used throughout the planning process to understand the needs, desires, concerns and issues of Ross Township residents. This process allows the final analysis and recommendations of these plans to be responsive to community needs.

This chapter describes the public participation process and results for each venue. Details of public input venue are in the Appendices.

### STUDY COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Study Committee was involved throughout the entire planning process assisting the Consultant in understanding community characteristics and to provide community interaction at each step of the Plan. The seventeen-member Study Committee met seven times throughout the fifteen-month planning process. The committee comprised Township residents representing senior citizens, educators, sports organizations, Township Commissioners, environmental concerns, recreation volunteers, members of the former recreation advisory committee, and staff. The varied interests of the Committee provided a balanced outlook at recreation, parks, and open space in the Township.

Committee members' functions included:

- acting as a sounding board for ideas as the plan was developed
- representing the community throughout the process
- assisting in the development of the public input forums
- providing feedback as existing recreation facilities and programs were inventoried
- identifying issues and concerns about parks and recreation
- discussing vision, goals, and strategies for implementation of the Plan

As part of the first study committee meeting, members discussed parks and recreation issues that they believed were important for the committee and Township to consider. After brainstorming, the committee came up with a list of parks and recreation issues they identified as essential and important for the Township. They ranked them according to their importance. This list shows the twenty-three issues and their rankings. Several issues were tied in the ranking process.

**Parks, Recreation, & Open Space  
Public Meeting**

**Ross Township**  
**Come and tell us what you think**  
**About our parks, recreation,  
and open space**



Find our Recreation Survey at  
[www.ross.pa.us](http://www.ross.pa.us)  
Just click on the link

OR COMMENT ON OUR BLOG AT  
[WWW.ROSSRECREATIONBLOGSPOT.COM](http://WWW.ROSSRECREATIONBLOGSPOT.COM)

Wednesday  
June 15, 2011  
6:30 P.M.  
Ross Community Center  
1000 Ross Municipal Drive

For more info, call the Ross Parks and Recreation Department at 412-931-7055 ext. 233

Rank	Issue	Point Value
1.	Develop new and creative revenue sources.	28
2.	The final plan needs a Wow!! Factor. The plan should end with a significant recommendation that will wow the community – splash park, artificial turf, or other.	16
3.	Need appropriate staff to achieve the goals and recommendations of the plan.	13
4.	Need a trail system in the community. One that connects the community and provides multiple walking opportunities.	10
5.	Need park maintenance and safety upgrades.	9
6.	Improve communications about parks and recreation. Need to let people know what is available and how to get to the Community Center. More press about the positive.	8
7.	Combine community resources including the North Hills School District, library, Bellevue Trail to connect in Ross Twp. Avoid duplication of services.	7
	Collaborate with local businesses. Ask them how the parks and recreation can benefit them.	7
8.	Need more recreational tennis courts.	4
	Develop a map of available greenspace in the Township. Provide to new residents and the real estate agents.	4
	Transportation is a concern to get to the Community Services. It is not on a bus route. Groups impacted include youth teams, seniors, and youth.	4
9.	More activities and opportunities for seniors – walking, games, activities, and programs. This is a bigger issue since St. Benedict's Senior Center closed.	3
	Improve park security. Protect neighbors from intruders in parks; provide safe access to parks; improve safety within the parks.	3
	Need to have opportunities that will serve young families. The demographics seem to be changing. As seniors move to other types of homes, young families are filling single-family homes.	3
	Expand and improve program offerings for all ages and interests. Include students in the survey	3
10.	Upgrade playground equipment.	2
	Make parks more attractive – use Master Gardeners and volunteers.	2
11.	Keep undesignated open spaces within local parks for picnicking, Frisbee, pick-up games, band concerts.	1
	Manage conflicting uses of parks – greenspace/timbering, logging roads/trails.	1
12.	Boy and girl scouts need places to meet and to do outdoor projects in natural areas.	0
	Need a dog park.	0
	Improved communication between the recreation department, public works, and engineering.	0
	School District has an indoor swimming program for all ages. The classes are usually full and turning people away.	0

## PUBLIC MEETINGS

The public meetings provided input opportunities for all residents of the Township. Extensive publicity was used to inform local residents of their chances to share their thoughts and feelings about recreation, parks, and open space in the Township. These public meetings were made available for the general public to provide input toward the plan; as a result, valuable input was gathered through two public meetings. At the first meeting, the Consultant gave an overview of the planning process and held brainstorming sessions to provide residents with an opportunity to voice their opinions and identify key issues. At the second meeting, the Consultant presented the findings of the study and the key recommendations. Attendees were given the opportunity to ask questions and/or provide comment.



At the first meeting, held June 15, 2011 at the Community Center, fifty-two people were in attendance. Top issues that were identified were:

**Playgrounds need to be made safe;** provide annual safety inspections; improve playgrounds so they have an extended life; provide shade and benches; the tot lot at Scharmy needs to be improved and made safer

**Develop partnerships for both funding and volunteer initiatives** including connections to local businesses, healthcare providers, the school district (large land holder in the Township) and nearby municipalities; create a “Friends” group to manage volunteers including the girl/boy scouts

**Funding parks, recreation and open space is a key issue,** funding should focus on what we have first; consider rentals, membership fees, concessions, 50/50 raffles, naming rights, sponsorships, festivals, adopt a park/trail/facility; provide opportunities for purchasing for memorials; understand what existing programs are revenue producers and replicate

**Evergreen Park** is a wonderful park with great trails but there seems to be poor maintenance, including broken fitness equipment and lots of poison ivy; there is an opportunity for nature trails and trails to walk dogs; the fishing pond needs to be maintained and stocked

The Township needs a **long term maintenance and capital improvement plan** for the parks; the image of the parks creates an impression that the Township cares and is a good community to live in; consider creating a parks’ designated maintenance crew separate from public works

The Township needs for **Walking /Running/Bike paths**, – connecting parks (many of the parks are small and do not provide enough room to meet needs for exercising); think about linking neighborhoods to parks and schools so kids can safely ride to a friend’s house, a nearby park or school; link Township trails to the City of Pittsburgh for work and recreational benefits

**A large community park** with lots of facilities and the capability for tournaments; many parks with single fields but not enough clusters of fields; consider the intersection of McKnight and Siebert as a centralized location for a larger complex – create an attractive space

**A Spray park and/or a swimming pool** are needed

We need to **improve public awareness** of what we have; to enhance our communication system to let people know what we have, provide a new resident packet with maps and programs for the parks

**Identify where the parks are and provide consistent park signs;** provide a wayfinding system with directional signs and maps, especially for the smaller parks;

We need to incorporate a **“Wow” factor** in the parks

The second public meeting, which was held June 6, 2012 at the Ross Community Center, was attended by thirteen people. At this meeting, the Consultant described the findings and key recommendations of the Plan. Attendees expressed a number of thoughts and concerns.

A contingent of residents that live near Scharmy Park voiced their concerns about that park in particular.

They objected to the recommendation to remove all playground equipment from the tot lot and relocate the play area to near the main playground. The consultant’s recommendation is made based on non-compliance with the National Playground Safety Standards. Residents prefer the existing location. Not following the consultant’s recommendation will leave the Township liable for all safety concerns identified in the Playground Safety Audit.

The same group objected to consideration of the existing tennis courts at the park to be converted to deck hockey courts. They feel the park is overused already and adding another high-volume activity would create additional traffic, parking problems, and over-use of facilities. This Plan does not recommend the conversion.

They also recommended the use of video surveillance to deter unlawful activity at the park and installing a sidewalk from the entrance of the Park to the playground.

The group suggested that excessive sports activity at the park has taken away the neighborhood park atmosphere. It is difficult to walk in the park, play in the playground, picnic, or have unstructured family fun because sports leagues are always there. The sports activities sometimes charge an admission fee and participants often park illegally on surrounding streets.

Others at the meeting recommended that the Township:

- Add programming for children age 4 and under
- Utilize a computerized program registration process
- Improve the Township's web site
- Consider more than just aesthetics and involve nearby residents when upgrading neighborhood parks
- Develop paved trails throughout the Township
- Expand the swimming lesson program
- Address vandalism in the parks
- Expand parking; this is an issue in many Township parks
- Improve public restrooms at all parks

A local disc golf enthusiast proposed that the Township include a disc golf course in the Master Site Plan for Denny Park. He said there is a large contingent of disc golfers in the Pittsburgh area and there is no course in Ross Township; disc golf courses are low maintenance and can be used by people of all ages. He proposed that at Denny Park such a course would help to control invasive vegetation and deter ATV activity.

Another resident was interested in receiving information garnered from the plan related to deck hockey. He suggested that the information may be helpful in attracting private business to this activity.

## COMMUNITY RECREATION QUESTIONNAIRE

The Consultant and Study Committee worked together to develop a fifteen question on-line survey to allow residents to express their thoughts and concerns about a number of recreation, parks and open space issues. Four hundred eighty households responded to the questionnaire. The following summary describes the findings of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire respondents were demographically comparable to the make-up of the Township. The 460 responses represented 1,479 Township residents. The following summary does not address every question in the survey but summarizes its highlights.

Over ninety-three percent of the respondents live in Ross Township while 99% live within the North Hills School District. The oldest respondent was 85 and the youngest 11. Seventy-one percent of the respondents were female.

Ninety-three percent of the respondents indicated that parks and recreation are important to them and nearly 83% said there are sufficient parks in the Township. Although over 77% said that Ross Township parks are well maintained, they also identified maintenance deficiencies in nearly every park in the Township.

Over 54% of the respondents indicated that the Township's financial commitment to parks and recreation should be about the same as it is currently. Almost 44% said it should be increased.

Residents are most often attracted to local parks by their playgrounds, picnic facilities, athletic fields, open space, and water features.

The most desired programs by age breakdown are:

- Pre-school age – generalized pre-school activities
- Elementary students – swimming lessons, summer playground program, summer day camps, sports camps, and special events
- Middle-school age – indoor sports, sports camps, swimming lessons, summer day camps
- Teens – special events, concerts in the parks, sports
- Adult – Special events, concerts in the parks, aerobic exercise classes
- Seniors – walking areas, bus tours to regional attractions, exercise classes, computer access and classes

Among the top requested recreational facilities are hiking, biking, and walking trails; a dog park; and additional picnic shelters. Many respondents indicated the Township does not need any additional baseball, softball, soccer, or football fields; nor bocce courts or equestrian trails.

Finally, a large majority of respondents indicated that creation of trails and protection of open space are important to them.

Although not specifically asked in the questionnaire, many residents cited the need to improve existing parks, provide a swimming pool or spray park, a dog park, and deck hockey courts.

Questionnaire respondents wrote 380 other comments as part of their responses. These comments are listed in the Appendices.

## TEEN QUESTIONNAIRE

Similar to the community questionnaire, the teen questionnaire was made available in an internet-based format; however, the student survey had two fewer questions and several of the questions and answers were modified for the teenage population. One hundred fifty six students at the North Hills Junior and Senior High schools were asked to complete the survey in several school classes. The greatest majority of the respondents were 14 or 15 years old.

All but one of the respondents to the survey live in the North Hills School District. The response by gender was nearly equal. Teens tend to use the Ross Community Center; Scharmyn, Denny, and Evergreen parks and Reis Run Soccer Complex most. Most teens play sports or spend time with friends in the parks. Like with the community questionnaire, teens said that parks are important to them; that there are sufficient parks in the Township; and that parks tend to be well cared for.

Programs and activities of greatest interest to teens include sports and concerts in the parks. Facilities they cited as most needed are a sled riding hill, deck hockey courts, skateboard areas, and bike trails. Facilities that teens believed no more were needed are baseball and softball fields, playgrounds, football fields, soccer fields, and tennis courts.

Again, like the community questionnaire respondents, a large majority of teens indicated that creation of trails was important to them.

Students indicated that either their parents or friends provide most of their transportation to programs, and that transportation to and from programs is not a problem.

## INTERNET BLOG

An internet blog was made available for residents to offer written comments concerning recreation, parks, and open space in Ross Township. As part of the blog, a five-question survey asked, "What is the most pressing need for Ross Township Parks and Recreation?" The following identifies the responses to the five available choices.



Improved park maintenance	25%
More recreation programs for youth and teens	40%
A trail system in the Township	55%
Protected green space in the Township	19%
Senior citizen recreation programs	8%

In addition to the survey responses, forty written comments were given. Common themes among the responses included:

- Deck Hockey courts are desired
- A community swimming pool and/or spray park is desired
- Maintenance at most parks is a concern. Many comments identified a host of maintenance deficiencies.
- Ballfields need to be upgraded and improved.
- Trails are needed throughout the Township
- A dog park or allowance for dogs in existing parks is desired
- Making better use of Bellevue Swimming Pool. Not having to pay non-resident rates to use the pool.
- Girls' softball fields are desired
- A multi-field sports complex is desired
- There needs to be a better way to get information about parks and recreation to Township residents

## KEY PERSON INTERVIEWS

Key Person Interviews were conducted with seventeen individuals who could provide valuable input regarding parks and recreation issues. Each person was questioned related to his/her particular interest or expertise in Ross Township parks, recreation, and open space. Interviews were conducted in one of four ways: in person, via telephone, via email or as part of the group meeting among the school district, Township, and the Consultant.

The following is a list of the interviewees and topics discussed with each.

1. Pete Geis, Ross Township Parks and Recreation Director  
Discussed all aspects of recreation and park operations – multiple interviews
2. Vickey Trader, Ross Township Assistant Parks and Recreation Director  
Discussed her perspective on recreation programming and operations – multiple interviews
3. Mike Funk, Ross Township Public Works Superintendent  
Talked about his perspective on park maintenance and how to move forward with improving maintenance in the parks
4. Wayne Jones, Ross Township Manager  
Discussed the Township's general operating philosophy, politics, significant issues, growth potential, demographics, staffing, and recreation
5. Lana Mazur, Ross Township, Fourth Ward Commissioner  
Considered ways to improve the safety of parks in the 4<sup>th</sup> ward; specifically Reis Run and Scharmyn
6. Art Gazdik, Former Ross Township Engineer  
Discussed park history, the 2006 Parks Evaluation, and needed park improvements
7. Pete Castellano, Former Park Maintenance Manager  
Talked about daily park maintenance operations
8. Tim Burnett, West View/Ross Athletic Association  
Gathered details of the programming, facilities, operations and needs of the West View/Ross Athletic Association
9. Brandon Dut-Mulzet, Youth Hockey  
Gathered details of the programming, facilities, operations and needs of the Hockey League
10. Tim Scherling, North Hills Athletic Association  
Gathered details of the programming, facilities, operations and needs of the North Hills Athletic Association

11. Wayne Carney, North Hills Youth Soccer  
Gathered details of the programming, facilities, operations and needs of the North Hills Youth Soccer Association
12. David Hall, North Hills School District, Director of Finance and Operations  
As part of a meeting with the Township and the Consultant, discussed changes to Reis Run Playground and cooperative upgrades at Herge Park and Highcliff Elementary School
13. Kevin Swindell, North Hills School District, Director of Facilities  
As part of a meeting with the Township and the Consultant, discussed changes to Reis Run Playground and cooperative upgrades at Herge Park and Highcliff Elementary School
14. Karla Maruca, Deer Management  
Discussed the deer management plan that was developed by Michael DiRinaldo, PA Service Forester for Allegheny County as well as anecdotal evidence concerning the deer population in Ross Township.
15. Paul Harkins, Disc Golf enthusiast  
Discussed local desires for a disc golf course in Ross Township and the possibility of locating one in Denny Park
16. Charlie Richey, Playground safety advocate  
Discussed playground safety concerns in light of the school playground fatality in Ross Township some years ago

Information gathered from these interviews is interspersed throughout this report as part of the analysis and recommendations.

## COMMON THEMES AMONG PUBLIC INPUT VENUES

The Study Committee and the Consultant worked together to identify common themes that occurred in multiple venues of public participation. To be considered a common theme, an issue needed to be included in at least three of the input venues. The following eighteen items were identified.

1. Maintain and upgrade existing parks
2. Expand programming options
3. Further develop the Community Center use and programming
4. Improve ballfields
5. Provide a swimming pool or spray park
6. Work with Bellevue Borough to develop an agreement for Township residents to use their pool at non-resident rates
7. Develop a trail system throughout the Township for walking, running, biking, connecting Township facilities and other regional trails
8. Protect natural features in the Township
9. Develop deck hockey facilities
10. Provide a dog park or access to local parks for dogs
11. Develop a multi-field sports complex
12. Provide a large community park
13. Ensure safe playgrounds
14. Improve community awareness of facilities and programs
15. Provide sled riding areas in local parks
16. Finish the plan with a WOW! Factor
17. Manage finances well, finding new sources of revenue
18. Ensure adequate staffing for administration, programming, and maintenance

These common themes were used as the basis to develop the vision, goals, and strategies which are detailed in Chapter Four.

# Chapter 4: Vision, Goals, & Implementation Strategies

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# Chapter 4: Vision, Goals, & Implementation Strategies

## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Implementation of this plan is based on the developed mission statement, vision statement, goals, and implementation strategies. Each plays a significant role in ensuring that this plan becomes a useful tool in moving the Township towards meeting the current and future recreational needs of Township residents.

### MISSION STATEMENT

The mission statement describes what the Ross Township Parks and Recreation Department is all about. It identifies its purpose, its reason for being. Going into this planning process, Ross Township Parks and Recreation Department already had a mission statement in place. This same mission statement is carried through in this Plan.

### VISION STATEMENT

The vision statement paints a picture of where the Township wants its recreation, parks, and open space to be five to ten years down the road. The vision statement anticipates what Ross Township would like to achieve or accomplish in parks and recreation in the long-term. It is intended to be more visionary than specific. Some of the thoughts and ideas described in the vision statement will be easy to accomplish in a relatively short amount of time. Other parts of it will require greater effort to achieve.

The vision statement has been created based primarily on the public input and inventory and analysis of recreational resources. The Study Committee played a key role in identifying the Township's vision for the future.

It was developed as the consultant worked with the study committee to analyze the results of the public participation process, including study and focus group meetings, public input sessions, key person interviews, and the results of the recreation questionnaire. During the course of this analysis, the committee and the consultant identified common elements that were consistently mentioned in various forms of public participation as well as through the inventory and analysis process. These issues and ideas were developed into the narrative that describes the vision for the future of Ross Township recreation, parks, and open space.

### GOALS

The key issues that were used to develop the vision statement have been refined into a series of goals that are intended to move the Township toward fulfilling their vision. The goals are broad in nature, designed to be all-encompassing, and based upon community ideas and issues raised through the planning process. The goals reflect the themes that were identified through the public input process and illustrated in the vision statement. These goals also provide the organizational structure for the implementation of the recommendations and direction for the future of recreation, parks, and open space in Ross Township. The implementation strategies of this plan are organized according to the goal statements developed following the visioning process.

### IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES/RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations are detailed implementation strategies that are described under individual goals. Information collected through both the public participation process and the professional assessment was utilized to develop these implementation strategies, which sets forth a step-by-step plan for accomplishing each goal and ultimately fulfilling the community's vision for the future of recreation, parks, and open space.

# MISSION STATEMENT OF THE ROSS TOWNSHIP PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

The mission of the Ross Township Parks & Recreation Department is to provide a variety of comprehensive leisure activities and facilities that will develop and satisfy your recreational needs. This mission includes forming positive, strong and lasting relationships with those organizations that share this idea. Services and facilities are available to all citizens, regardless of race, religion, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability.

This department is committed to giving all citizens equal access to recreational opportunities. In keeping with that policy, reasonable accommodations and support will be provided to people with disabilities so that they make take advantage of these opportunities.

## ROSS TOWNSHIP PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE VISION STATEMENT

It is the Vision of Ross Township to provide superb parks and recreation opportunities to its residents and to protect and preserve the natural features within the Township.

## GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

The following describes the seven goals for fulfilling the Ross Township Vision for the Future of Parks, Recreation, and Open Space. With each goal is a listing of strategies for implementation, along with supporting information. The narrative description is followed by implementation strategy charts that depict the strategy, its priority, projected cost, and likely funding source.

**GOAL #1:** Sustain a parks system that provides recreational opportunities throughout the Township. Develop Evergreen, Ross, and Denny parks as the recreational gems of the Township. Maintain neighborhood parks and ballfields that meet local recreational needs. Focus on upgrading and maintaining existing parks. Provide parks that offer a balance of both active and passive opportunities.

### IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES:

1. Upgrade Evergreen and Denny Parks by implementing the recommendations of the Site Development Drawings for each.
2. Maintain Ross Community Park in a way that preserves the level of quality with which it was designed and built.
3. Establish, for all Township parks, the same high level design, development, and sustainable maintenance standards as were used for Ross Community Park.
4. Rehabilitate and maintain the neighborhood parks to the newly established standards.
5. Renovate all Township ballfields to improve infields, turf areas, drainage, fencing, backstops, player areas, and other related amenities as described later in this chapter.
6. Improve walking trials in all parks to be environmentally sustainable and simply maintained.
7. Pursue options for cooperation and/or coordination with owners of existing local swimming pools i.e. Bellevue Borough Pool, Valley Brook, and North Park.

## **Site Development Plans**

As an addendum to this Plan, Ross Township chose to have site development drawings completed for Evergreen, Denny, and Herge Parks. These drawings are included in Chapter 6 of this report.

## **Park Rehabilitation Plan**

The Ross Township Park Rehabilitation Plan is located at the end of this chapter.

## **Quality of Parks Maintenance**

One of the top priorities of the Study Committee was to establish a plan that would maintain Ross Township Parks to a high standard of care.

The quality and kind of materials used are essential to the long-term maintainability, repair, and upkeep of the Township's recreation facilities. Investments in the key areas of facilities such as turf, hard surfaces, playground apparatus, lighting, electric, plumbing, fencing, and court and field amenities could yield long-term savings and reduce vandalism.

Quality in construction, maintenance, appearance, management, and operation has a great effect on the overall budget. It is imperative that good quality and high standards are a part of all aspects of the maintenance. A lack of top quality in any one of these areas can have a dramatically negative effect on the budget. This does not mean that every product must be the most expensive. Quality must be balanced with a reasonable budget. An investment in quality materials will certainly reduce the facilities' long-term maintenance costs.

The maintenance and repairs should reflect the same quality as the standards of construction. As facilities are constructed or rehabilitated to high standards, they should be maintained to those same standards.

## **Trail Sustainability Practices**

### **Design Requirements for Sustainable Trails**

Long-term sustainability is critical to the success of Ross Township trails. To accomplish this, all trails must be designed and upgraded to be physically, ecologically, and economically sustainable.

Trails must be able to retain their structure and form over years of use and under forces of humans and nature. Trail use promotes change, so trails must be designed in anticipation of change to ensure that they remain physically stable with appropriate maintenance and management.

Minimizing the ecological impacts of trails and protecting sensitive natural and cultural resources is fundamental in sustainable trail design and development.

For all trails, the Township must have the capacity to economically support them over their life cycle. Developing and committing to a long-term maintenance strategy is critical.

While there are many factors that can influence the sustainability of trails, when you get to actually putting them or managing trails on the ground, they should achieve the following objectives.

### ***New Facilities Requested by Ross residents***

- Deck Hockey Courts – potential locations: Denny Park; Private development.
- Dog Park – Designate specific parks to allow dogs. Establish rules for use. Evergreen, Denny, Osterle, and Seville Park trails.
- Multi-use sports complex – unable to accommodate for this need at this time.
- Large Community Park – Promote Ross, Evergreen, and Denny to meet this need.
- Sled riding area – proposed at Herge Park (see the Herge Park Master plan.)
- Swimming pool and/or spray park – cooperate with existing swimming pools in and around the Township to provide swimming opportunities.

*Ultimately, a sustainable trail design will most often be a trail that connects desired control points by roughly contouring along the sides of slopes.*

## **Connect Positive Control Points and Avoid Negative**

Sustainable trails lead users to desired destinations such as water features, historic sites, vistas, interesting landforms and user facilities; while avoiding wet areas, steep slopes, critical habitats, and other culturally or environmentally sensitive areas.

### **Keep Water off the Trail**

Erosion is the number one problem for sustainable trails. It damages trails, is expensive to repair and diminishes the user experiences. Water is the primary erosive force. Trails that collect water or channel water will be both environmentally and economically un-sustainable.

### **Follow Natural Contours**

Trails lie on the land in three ways – along a fall-line (in the direction of the slope), on flat ground, or along the contour (perpendicular to the slope). Of these types of trails, only the contour trail on the side-slope easily sheds water and is thus sustainable.

### **Keep Users on the Trail**

When users leave the designated trail surface, they widen it or create new undesired trails. These can cause environmental damage and raise maintenance costs. Users leave the trail when it becomes eroded or wet, or when the trail does not meet their needs or expectations.

### **Meet Desired User Experiences**

Sustainable trails and trail systems must meet different users' needs and expectations. If they do not, users may abandon the trails and / or create their own, less sustainable trails.

Ultimately, a sustainable trail design will most often be a trail that connects desired control points by roughly contouring along the sides of slopes.

## **Swimming Pool Analysis**

The public input from this plan showed a high interest in having the Township provide an outdoor swimming pool for Township residents. However, based on the consultant's analysis of the Ross Township community, it is the recommendation of this Plan that the Ross Township Parks and Recreation Department direct residents to existing swimming pools in the area rather than constructing one of their own.

Although a complete swimming pool feasibility study was not conducted in the preparation of this plan, the consultant evaluated a number of factors that impact the success of swimming pools in western Pennsylvania. The first of these is population. Recreation facility standards suggest that a typical community pool requires about 20,000 residents for it to be successful. The 2010 census shows the population of Ross Township to be 31,105. The population therefore meets the threshold.

A second factor considered is the location of other swimming pools in relation to Township residents. Bellevue Community Swimming Pool, although it is owned and operated by Bellevue Borough, is located in Ross Township. Bellevue Borough welcomes Ross residents at the pool. Often, the Borough has permitted Ross residents to pay the Borough resident rate for admission rather than having to pay a higher non-resident admission fee. Bellevue is located in the southwest area of the Township.

Valley Brook Swim and Tennis Club also has a pool in Ross Township. Although it is a private pool, membership is open to the general public. Ross residents only need to purchase pool membership to use it. It is located in the eastern central part of the Township. A number of other pools are located in various neighborhoods throughout the Township. Nearby swimming pools in surrounding municipalities also offer swimming opportunities to Ross residents. Crawford Community pool is located in Shaler Township's Kiwanis Park; and North Park Pool is located in Hampton Township.

A third factor that was evaluated is cost. The total cost of a swimming pool is analyzed by considering costs for land acquisition, site development, facility construction, and operations. The cost of land acquisition is difficult to project unless

a specific site has already been selected. It is safe to suggest that a swimming pool will need at least six to eight acres of land, and maybe as much as fifteen or more. Site development is also difficult to project as it is completely dependent on the specific parcel of property being used. The construction cost of a new swimming pool for a community the size of Ross Township would likely be about \$2.5 to \$3.5 million depending of the type of pool, location, and amenities. Finally, it is estimated that the operation of the swimming pool would run between \$150,000 and \$200,000 annually, depending on the size and amenities of the pool.

A less expensive option would be to partner with one of the existing swimming pools to expand and enhance it, and to negotiate a use agreement for Ross Township residents. One of the trends in swimming features in recent years is the development of spray parks. Spray parks are most successful when connected with a swimming pool, but there are certainly options to build one as a stand-alone feature. The Township's Sangree Park would be a good location to consider for a spray park.

If there is sufficient interest in developing either a spray park or an outdoor swimming pool in Ross Township, the Commissioners should have a complete feasibility study conducted. This type of study will provide a much more detailed analysis and will be able to project anticipated costs with more accuracy.

### **WOW, a Water Spray Park!**

One of the top requests from the Committee was to create a WOW! Factor in the final recommendations of the Plan. The WOW Factor of the Plan is to improve all Township parks to a point where, when they walk into any park, they will say, "WOW, this is a Township park?"

The exclamation point at the end of the WOW would be to have a water spray park located in one of the Township facilities. A water spray park, also known as a spray or splash pad or water play area, is a recreation area with one or more water features that spray, dump, or spew water so that users can play in it. The water can emanate from the ground surface or a piece of play equipment. With the rapid growth of such parks, a host of new water play equipment is now available to enhance any site.

There are many benefits in using a water play area rather than a swimming pool. The water play area has no standing water, and therefore reduces many of the related hazards, such as water borne disease, accessibility, and drowning. They require less supervision (life guards are not required for splash pad areas that don't include open water), less maintenance, less water, and less piping for circulation and filtration systems. Construction and operating costs of a splash pad are considerably lower than that of a typical public swimming pool. Further, a splash park can be repaired, updated, or expanded more easily and less expensively than a swimming pool.

Water play areas are generally colorful, attractive, and inviting. They draw users of all ages and swimming abilities. And they allow communities to provide recreational water activities at a fraction of the cost of a swimming pool.

A splash pad in Ross Township would provide the park with a unique water play facility that cannot be found elsewhere in the region. Sangree Park would be a good location to consider for such a park.



## GOAL #2: Establish a park maintenance system that ensures a high standard of safety and care in all Township parks.

### IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES:

1. Create a maintenance management plan that is customized to Ross Township parks. This plan should establish maintenance standards that ensure all parks will be maintained to a high level of quality and safety.
2. Retain a sufficient maintenance staff that is trained in methods of caring for parks and facilities. Staffing should, at a minimum, include a Park Maintenance Manager; 3-4 full-time, year-round staff; 3-5 supplemental staff from PW crew or hired as seasonal workers. Additional staff will be needed for maintenance and custodial care of the community center.
3. Address current maintenance concerns identified in the parks analysis portion of this plan.
4. Construct and upgrade facilities in ways that reduce on-going maintenance.
5. Develop a safety and risk management plan for the parks.
6. Provide appropriate training for park maintenance staff in areas such as turf management, athletic field maintenance, playground safety, maintenance management, fleet/equipment maintenance, woodland management, etc.
7. Bring all facilities into compliance with the standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

### **Maintenance and Risk Management Plans**

To ensure an appropriate standard of care, the Township should develop a Park Maintenance and Risk Management Plan that establishes maintenance standards for all parks. Maintaining to these standards will keep recreation facilities attractive, useable, and safe. It will also reduce liability risks and plan for prevention of accidents. All facilities should be scheduled for regular inspection and assessment. In the spring and summer, these inspections may be performed when a site is visited for mowing. A written inspection form should be completed, and minor repairs should be made immediately. Areas or equipment needing major repairs or having parts missing should be posted as unsafe, reported in writing, and repaired as soon as possible.

Projects should be prioritized according to existing condition and usage. Work on these projects should be scheduled around the regular mowing, inspection, and repair schedule.



Routine equipment maintenance and servicing must be scheduled and performed on a regular basis. Maintenance equipment is expensive and should last a long time. With proper care, replacement of maintenance equipment can be kept to a minimum. An equipment and tool inventory should be kept accurate and up-to-date to assure the availability of proper tools when they are needed. A fund should be established to provide for new maintenance equipment and a regular replacement program.

Regular review of legal requirements and inspections for conformance to sanitary regulations, criteria for licensing, fire laws, building codes, pesticide applications, and safety procedures should be a priority for the maintenance staff. The municipality should keep up-to-date with safety standards such as those published by the American Society for Testing Materials and the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

Maintenance staff should be trained in play equipment safety assessment and in the operation of hazardous maintenance equipment. At least one person should maintain certification as a certified playground safety inspector. The Township should obtain a playground equipment safety kit (such as the one manufactured by Little Tikes Commercial Playground Equipment for the National Playground Safety Institute) and use it on an ongoing basis to monitor playground safety. An alternative would be to contract with a Certified Playground Safety Inspector to conduct a playground safety audit whenever playground equipment is changed or damaged.

In addition to planning for risk management, a maintenance plan will set standards of care for all facilities. This allows for a measure of productivity in park and facility maintenance.

Park maintenance should be monitored and compared to the “Park Maintenance Standards” published by the National Recreation and Parks Association. This publication assists in determining the appropriate level of maintenance of park facilities, based on size and usage, and provides productivity standards which are useful in determining the efficiency of park maintenance staff. This publication is also a valuable tool for estimating maintenance requirements of proposed projects and, with current cost estimating guides, can assist one in establishing park maintenance budgets.

A set of sample maintenance standards is in the appendices.

## **Maintenance Staffing**

Maintaining parks to the desired level of care requires the appropriate number and types of staff. Ross Township has chosen to manage park maintenance through their Public Works Department. This system can certainly produce appropriate results. It will be important for the Public Works Department to coordinate with the Parks and Recreation Department to ensure facilities are maintained to meet the recreational demands of Township residents. As the Parks and Recreation Department programs and schedules use of the parks, it will also be important for them to have good communication with the Public Works Department. The two will have to work together to ensure well maintained safe facilities that are useable for scheduled programs, leagues, and other activities.

The Township Engineer should support the parks thorough planning and engineering services.

The number of needed maintenance staff will be determined by the level of care established in the Maintenance Management Plan. From the analysis conducted through this study, it is recommended that current staffing should, at a minimum, include a Park Maintenance Manager; 3-4 full-time, year-round staff; 3-5 supplemental staff from PW crew or hired as seasonal workers. Additional staff will be needed for maintenance and custodial care of the community center.

## **Staff Training**

The Public Works person responsible for overseeing park maintenance should be well trained in all aspects of park maintenance. Attendance at a park maintenance management school is highly recommended. The National Recreation and Park Association sponsors several such schools across the country. The closest is held at Olgebay Park in Wheeling, West Virginia in January or February each year.

The same person should be a member of the National Recreation and Park Association and the Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society. These organizations provide regular, one- and two-day training sessions in most areas of park maintenance. The National Recreation and Park Association also provides publications dealing with current maintenance issues in parks and recreation.

He or she should be well trained in ball field maintenance, turf care, vehicle and equipment maintenance, and building and facility maintenance. Other training for specific programs and facilities may also be necessary.

## **PROPOSED PARK MANAGEMENT**

***Public Works Superintendent*** – Supervise, manage, conduct, and perform all facets of maintenance in all Township parks. Coordinate with the Parks and Recreation Director for issues related to programming of facilities, i.e. ballfields, playgrounds, courts, shelters, buildings, scheduling, etc.

***Parks and Recreation Director*** – Consult with the Public Works Superintendent concerning programmatic activity in the parks to ensure all facilities are designed, constructed, and maintained to meet all programmatic needs.

***Township Engineer*** – Provide design and engineering services as needed.

## **Examples of preventative maintenance practices that reduce continual labor intensive tasks**

- Conduct annual or semi-annual application of herbicide to reduce string trimming
- Perform spring maintenance on seasonal facilities to reduce time spent during the summer months
- Limit deferred maintenance to avoid major repairs and upgrades
- Replace gravel floors in picnic shelters with concrete or asphalt to reduce weekly maintenance time
- Perform regular preventative maintenance of machinery to reduce down-time
- Repair and re-build picnic tables and other summer items during the off-season to limit repair time during the busy season

It is also recommended that one or more of the maintenance staff receive a Pesticide Applicator Certification from the PA Department of Agriculture in category 23 for parks. Other staff should be certified as pesticide technicians to allow them to apply pesticides under the direction of the Park Maintenance Manager.

## **ADA Compliance**

Ensuring accessibility to all facilities not only accommodates those with disabilities, but also makes it easier for the general public to use the facilities. It is imperative that Ross Township take steps to provide accessibility for all park users.

Accessibility, in design terms, is described by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which guarantees equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities to participate in the mainstream of public life. To do so, the ADA sets requirements for facilities to prevent physical barriers that keep people with disabilities from participating.

Ross Township should move to bring all recreational facilities into compliance with these standards. When recreational facilities are built or altered, they must comply with the ADA standards. This includes providing an accessible route to the area of use and to spectator areas. With regards to complying with ADA, the following standards must be taken into consideration.

- *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design*, enforced by the Department of Justice. Title II defines the requirements for providing accessible buildings, accessible routes, parking, playgrounds, drinking fountains, seating areas, and many other items associated with the recreation environment. [www.ada.gov](http://www.ada.gov)
- *Draft Final Accessibility Guidelines for Outdoor Developed Areas*, October 19, 2009, [www.access-board.gov](http://www.access-board.gov) sets minimum requirements for accessible trails, access routes, resting opportunities, benches, trash receptacles, and other outdoor recreation opportunities. To date these guidelines have not been incorporated in the Department of Justice accessibility standards and are, therefore, not enforceable.
- *American Society of Testing Materials (ASTM) “Standard Specification for Determination of Accessibility of Surface Systems Under and Around Playground Equipment” (ASTM F 1951)* - defines minimum requirements for accessible protective surfacing materials.

## **Playground Safety**

According the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), an estimated 200,000 injuries that require some type of medical care occur each year on public playgrounds across the US. While the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania does not have mandatory laws governing playground safety, the CPSC and the American Society of Testing Materials (ASTM) have established voluntary standards that have been generally accepted around the globe. National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) through the National Playground Safety Institute (NPSI) works to ensure that communities are constructing and maintaining safe public playgrounds. As part of their commitment to playground safety, NRPA in conjunction with the NPSI provides playground inspector training and certification.

National Playground Safety Inspectors help communities to ensure compliance with these CPSC, ASTM, and other playground safety

## **Playground Standards and Guidelines used to Audit Ross Township Parks**

- Consumer Product Safety Commission’s “*Handbook for Public Playground Safety*” – establishes recommendations for equipment, use zones, and protective safety surfacing.
- American Society of Testing Materials “*Standard Consumer Safety Performance Specification for Public Playground Safety*” (ASTM F 1487) - establishes access route, equipment, use zones, and protective safety surfacing requirements.
- American Society of Testing Materials “*Standard Specification for Determination of Accessibility of Surface Systems Under and Around Playground Equipment*” (ASTM F 1951) - defines minimum requirements for accessible protective surfacing materials.
- American Society of Testing Materials “*Standard Specification for Impact Attenuation of Surface Systems Under and Around Playground Equipment*” (ASTM F 1292) – defines minimum requirements for impact attenuation of protective surfacing materials.

standards. As a Certified National Playground Safety Inspector, the Consultant conducted an audit of all Ross Township playgrounds to determine the level of safety at each. The results of the audits have been provided to Ross Township under separate cover.

## **GOAL #3: Offer a balance of recreational programming that meets the needs of all residents of Ross Township.**

### **IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES:**

1. Add a new Program Specialist staff position to assist with programming.
2. Strengthen and expand recreational programming to better meet the needs of Ross Township residents.
3. Acquire and implement a computerized program registration system.
4. Create a database of program users. Track participant interests; ages; history of participation; family information; addresses; and other useful information. Utilize the database to improve publicity about programs, facilities, and services.
5. Track attendance statistics for all recreational programming.

#### **Program Specialist Staff Position**

As described in the staffing analysis in Chapter 2, at the current staffing level, both the Director and Assistant Director are pushed beyond what should reasonably be expected to effectively accomplish the work required for their respective positions. The current demand for recreational programming by Ross Township residents will continue to push the department towards growth and expansion.

Perhaps the greatest downfall of the Department at this point is that the Director of Parks and Recreation spends much of his time dealing with clerical, programmatic, and operational tasks. This leaves insufficient time for adequate financial management, long-range planning, fundraising, soliciting for grants, and public relations. At the same time, the Assistant Director does not have time to pick up any additional work to alleviate the load on the Director.

Based on this analysis, the Department is not able to function at an optimal level, and recreational programming cannot effectively expand without an additional staff person to pick up the added work load. It is the recommendation of this plan that the Township hire a program specialist who helps the Assistant Director with programming, particularly in the evenings and on weekends.

#### **Program Development**

Ross Township has an exceptional recreational program. In order to continually provide for the interests and expectations of residents, the program needs to continually change.

In the public input portion of this study process, residents indicated a number of areas where they feel recreational programming needs to be expanded or improved. These should be the basis for new programming in the Township.

The public input showed the following needs.

- a. Concerts in the park for seniors, adults, teens
- b. Community special events for all ages
- c. Outdoor sports for elementary, middle school, teens
- d. Indoor sports for elementary, middle school, teens
- e. Swimming lessons for elementary, pre-school, middle school
- f. Nature/environmental programs for elementary, pre-school
- g. Sports camps for elementary, middle school
- h. Summer day camps for elementary school, middle school

- i. Summer playground program for elementary
- j. Aerobic exercise for adults
- k. Bus tours for seniors
- l. Computer classes and access for seniors

The Department should experiment with these program options to see what works and what doesn't. Maintain and expand upon successful programs, and eliminate programs that do not show potential for success.

### **Computerized Registration and Management**

The use of a computerized registration and management system can dramatically improve the Township's efficiency and effectiveness in parks and recreation operations. There are a number of computerized recreation registration systems on the market. Most integrate a number of management features such as program registration, facility scheduling, inventory control, coordination of instructors and officials, maintenance management, and much more. Once a system is up and running, the Department can expect to save time and money, be more organized, reduce scheduling errors, and improve staff efficiency.

With the limited staff in the Ross Parks and Recreation Department, such a system will boost productivity and improve efficiency. Registrations will be easier and quicker, a benefit to both the staff and the customer. Some systems accept online registrations and payment. Some will also accept payment by credit card, debit card or PayPal.

Most programs contain complete financial accounting and point-of-sale capabilities, as well as full integration with municipal accounting systems.

One of the other benefits of such a program is the creation of a database as described below.

### **Database of Program Users**

The Ross Township Parks and Recreation Department should create a database of program and facility users. Such a database can provide many benefits to the community.

While the mass distribution of brochures conducted seasonally informs residents of program offerings, many people simply do not respond readily to such advertising or they need to receive more than one notification of a program before they will respond. Tracking users in a database allows the Department to do selective mailings according to a person's interest, age, gender, or previous participation. For instance, persons who register for an art class would likely be interested in other similar programs. Children who attend after school programs will likely be interested in summer day camps. The database allows special interest mailings to be sent to individuals who are most likely to register for programs.

Marketing strategists tell us that it is easier to keep current users coming back than it is to recruit new users. Through the use of a user database the Department can encourage users to continue in other programs by offering incentives such as reduced rates, early bird registration, coupons, or even "bring a friend for free." Marketing possibilities are endless if the right information is available to track users.

Additionally, a user database can make the registration process easier. Many registration programs utilize a database to maintain information that is collected each time a user registers. By having that information already on file, the registration process operates more quickly and efficiently.

Frequent program participants can be used to solicit support for new programs or facilities. When the Department wants to know how many people really support development of a specific facility, the database can provide information about how many people currently register for programs that utilize the facility. It can also provide a means of contacting users to notify them that the Parks and Recreation Department is interested in their opinion or to invite them to a public meeting.

The opportunities provided by tracking users are endless and provide tremendous benefit to both the resident and the Department.

## GOAL #4: Maintain an organizational structure that has sufficient resources to administer, program, maintain, and operate the Ross Township parks and recreation system and Community Center.

### IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES:

1. Planning
  - a. Adopt this Plan as the blueprint for maintaining, developing, and planning for parks, recreation and open space in Ross Township.
  - b. Utilize the proposed three-tier process for implementation of this Plan.
  - c. Utilize future planning efforts to support implementation of this Plan, i.e. master site plans, design plans, and feasibility studies.
2. Recreation Staffing
  - a. Develop staffing to consist of the Director of Parks and Recreation; Assistant Director; Program Specialist; Clerical Worker; evening/weekend supervisors; program staff.
  - b. Adopt job descriptions for each position.
  - c. See Goal #2 for park maintenance staffing and for administrative coordination between the Parks and Recreation Department and Public Works.
  - d. Provide continual training for parks and recreation staff - PRPS, NRPA.
3. Finances
  - a. Maintain an appropriate Recreation Operating Budget – administration, programming, operations.
  - b. Allocate annual capital funds for park maintenance and improvement.
  - c. Develop and adopt an on-going 10-year capital budget. A partial plan will be provided in the report.
4. Policies
  - a. Adopt the policies already created by the parks and recreation department.
  - b. Develop a program fee policy that establishes financial expectations of each programs type.
5. Facilities
  - a. See Goal #1 for park facilities.
  - b. Provide sufficient maintenance/custodial staff and financing to maintain the community center to the highest level of cleanliness, functionality, and safety.
6. Publicity
  - a. Better utilize electronic media outlets to publicize programs and parks: Utilize email, website Facebook, Twitter, You Tube, Instagram, Blog, Four Square, and others.
  - b. Improve the parks and recreation website to make it more visually appealing, accessible to the public, informational, and interactive.



## **Social Media**

Programs are publicized through the Recreation Department's website, seasonal brochures, newspaper releases, and program flyers through the area school district. While these will continue to be important publicity venues, web-based social media will become the market of the future.

In recent years, the social media has begun to have a significant impact on how people find out about parks and recreation opportunities. Many recreation departments are using multiple social media outlets to get the word out about programming, facilities, special events, and more. The number and types of social media outlets has grown significantly and so has the number of users.

According to a new report from Forrester Research, "The Broad Reach of Social Technologies," takes a look at the growth of social media over the last three years. And guess what? It's growing!

The demographic data follows the trend we see overall— younger people are more heavily involved, but over-35s and over-55s are becoming more and more active in social networking. While 10% or less of online adults aged 18-34 are "socially inactive," the older age ranges are showing high growth. Among adults 35-54, participation grew 60% over last year:

Now more than half of adults ages 35 to 44 are in social networks. Adults ages 45 to 54 grew their Joiner behavior nearly as much, but still lag behind the 35- to 44-year-olds; 38% of those ages 45 to 54 use social network sites regularly. These consumers also increased their Creator activities to the point where one in five produce social content. With this age group including nearly 70% Spectators, marketers can now safely create social media marketing for people ages 35 and older.

And in the 55+ category, 70% of online adults use social tools monthly, while 26% use social networks.

Marketers from all sectors of business are using these opportunities as tools to reach their customers. Community recreation programs should be no different. Facebook, Twitter, You Tube, Instagram, Blogs, Four Square, Issu, and many other sites will keep the department in touch with potential users. The department should start out using just a few of these opportunities and grow as they see results.

## **Website Design**

The website is a critical public relations tool. It may be the first and only perception potential visitors get of the Department. It needs to be attractive, well organized, and inviting. A poorly designed website can deter potential visitors looking any further to find out what the Township has to offer. It is best to have the website professionally designed.

Here are a few tips to keep the website attractive and usable:

### **Home Page**

The home pages should be simple, easy to read, and attractive. Only pertinent and urgent information should be found on the home page. It should not be too busy.

- Prominently display the Ross Parks and Recreation logo
- Include a simple and brief description of the parks and recreation system
- Use photos and graphics that complement the narrative descriptions
- Highlight upcoming activities, events and news
- Create an slide show of the park and its activities
- Use buttons down the side and/or across the top to take the viewer to other pages
- Display contact info at the top of the page including name address and phone number

- Provide links to additional pages for more information
  - Park locations – provide a street address for each park that can be used in a GPS; provide directions and/or a link to get map directions (MapQuest, Google maps, etc.)
  - Program information
  - Registration information
  - Policies

## **Color Scheme**

Develop a color scheme and template that will be carried throughout the entire web site.

- Colors should be light or bright
- Avoid dark colors
- Provide balance with white
- Clearly define items on each page using columns, buttons, and boxes
- Visit other websites to see what the possibilities are

## **General Information**

- Secondary pages should have a complementary color scheme and style to the Home Page
- Don't let the pages become too busy. Keep them clean, crisp, and easy to read.
- Be sure all graphics and pictures are clear and legible. It is better not to use graphics if they are blurry or illegible.
- Ensure that lettering is not camouflaged by background colors.

## **GOAL #5: Provide a system of multi-use, non-motorized, trails that provide for exercise, alternative transportation, and recreation.**

### **IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES:**

1. Upgrade the trails within various parks including Denny, Evergreen, Herge, Mayer, Osterle, and Seville.
2. Design new trails and upgrade existing trails to meet sustainable trail standards.
3. Develop walking, hiking, and biking trails to be ADA compliant.
4. Create trails that connect neighborhoods, parks, schools, commercial centers, and more – Active Allegheny Plan; Rosecliffe Park to McIntyre School
5. Create dedicated trails, share the road trails, sidewalks – Active Allegheny Plan, Regional Natural Infrastructures Plan.

See “Chapter 5: Greenways” for detailed analysis and implementation strategies.

## **GOAL #6: Protect and preserve the natural features of Ross Township in a way that provides for their long-term sustainability.**

### **IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES:**

1. Adopt the Natural Systems Greenways Map as the basis for sustainability of major natural systems.
  - a. Maintain a system of ordinances intended to preserve and protect natural features. Amend and/or add to the current Township Ordinances per recommendations in Chapter 5: Greenways for Ross Township.



- b. Acquire critical parcels either by the Township or a non-profit organization such as Allegheny Land Trust or a local conservancy
- c. Encourage private landowners to adopt conservation efforts on their own properties.

2. Create and adopt a forest management plan for all Township owned properties.

### **Preserving Natural Features**

Chapter 5 provides an inventory and analysis of natural features that are important to Township residents. It also includes recommended ordinance revisions and updates. The Appendices includes a listing of methods for protecting open space.

### **Forest Management Plans**

The Pennsylvania Bureau of Forestry offers help to municipalities in developing local forest management plans. Ross Township should contact the PA Service Forester for Allegheny County to conduct an inventory and analysis of forest areas of the Township. The inventory would include identification of species, size classification, height, site quality, age, and defects of all trees on specific sites. The forester would work with the Township to identify the community's goals for forest management. Based on the inventory and community identified goals, the forester would make recommendations to maintain, enhance, and improve the Township's forest resources. There is typically no cost to the municipality for this service.

## **GOAL #7: Secure funding for operations, planning, developments, acquisition, and preservation through a variety of sources.**

### **IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES:**

1. Develop a balanced approach to funding parks and recreation in Ross Township.
2. Seek funding through a variety of sources for the development of facilities. Work to leverage funds from one funding source against another to lower the municipality's cost for development.
3. Create a Ross Township Parks and Recreation Foundation to raise money for future development.

### **Funding Strategies**

A balanced approach to funding parks and recreation offers the greatest opportunities to local residents while reducing the financial burden to the municipality. While municipal support and will continues to be the staple of funding on-going operations, many other options are available to assist with a variety of needs.

It is important to consider multiple funding sources for most major projects. Identify the possible groups, organizations, or grants agencies that may have an interest in a specific project. Consider the following potential sources of funding.

- ❖ *Grants Agencies* – These may include foundations, state and federal agencies, community groups, and private entities. A list of potential grant sources is provided in Chapter 7 of this report. It is wise to consider more than one grant source for multifaceted projects. Different agencies may be willing to provide funding for different portions of your project. For example, if a project includes construction of trails and development of a neighborhood park, there are agencies that will fund trails and others who will fund parks. Applying to both types of agencies for funding that meets their specific criteria enhances the likelihood of receiving a grant.
- ❖ *Community Parks Foundation* – While this is a foundation, it warrants a description of its own. Many local parks and recreation departments are creating their own Community Foundation that raises funds specifically for parks and recreation. One of the primary advantages of this funding is its specific designation for parks and recreation. Funds raised through this source cannot be used for other activities.



- ❖ *Surrounding Municipalities* - In some cases surrounding municipalities have a specific interest in park facilities located within the Township. In these cases there may be interest in making a financial contribution toward the project.
- ❖ *Local Organizations* - Often, local recreation organizations are willing to raise funds to be used for upgrades to their facilities. These funds should be considered as part of the local match for grant funding. For example, if a football organization is already investing \$10,000 to \$15,000 annually into upgrading of facilities, they may be willing to utilize several years' worth of that investment toward a major renovation of the football facility. This could mean as much as fifty or seventy-five thousand dollars available to be used as matching funds for a grant.
- ❖ *Funds Already Planned for Use* - It is also helpful to consider funds that may already be allocated for use in or near a park that may be used as a source of matching funds. For instance, if a water or sewer line is being planned to run through a park, tapping into that line could make the money spent for its installation an eligible match for a park project. The same could be true of parking areas, roads, trails, trailheads, and other projects.
- ❖ *Fundraising events* – Often, municipal parks and recreation departments hold fundraising events to support specific programs or projects.
- ❖ *Private gifts* – These can include the sale of advertising in brochures or on display boards; sponsorship of specific events; or contributions toward facility development. These gifts may come from personal, business or commercial contributions.
- ❖ *Creativity* - Creativity is key to finding and leveraging funding sources with one another. The intent is to reduce the local share as low as possible, while accomplishing the goals of the project. Consider as many options as you can identify. Then contact the funding agencies to determine whether or not your plan meets their requirements.

## IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES TABLES

The implementation strategies are organized into tables. The information provided in each table includes categories for strategy, priority, responsible party, cost estimate, and additional comments or description. These strategies will provide guidance to the decision-makers of the Township and those organizations and staff designated to implement portions of the Plan. The successful implementation of these strategies will depend upon the fiscal and political climate in any given year. Therefore, it is essential that Township officials monitor, review, and prioritize the strategies on an annual basis, prior to the budgeting process.

Each implementation strategy is assigned a ranking of short-term, mid-term, or long-term. A short-term (S) ranking suggests that the strategy be implemented in the first one to three years following the adoption of this Plan. Mid-term (M) ranked strategies are to be implemented in the fourth to eighth year, and long-term (L) ranked strategies are to be implemented in the ninth year and beyond.

Cost estimates are included for each strategy, where appropriate. It should be noted that the cost estimates are wide-ranging and should only serve as a starting point for project evaluation. Detailed costs will be developed as a particular project or strategy is selected for implementation. Potential funding sources for the completion of the recommendations are indicated, where appropriate. The funding opportunities identified do not constitute an exhaustive list and other possible resources should be continually sought. It will be important for the Township to stay current on potential funding sources. The Appendix of this report provides an extensive list of potential funding sources that should be considered.

## ROSS PARKS REHABILITATION PLAN

As part of this Plan, the Consultant completed a thorough assessment of all Ross Township Parks. The following charts and descriptions are intended to establish guidelines from which Township officials can proceed with upgrading the Township's parks system. While the recommendations are comprehensive, they are likely not all-inclusive. The park system consists of twenty-two parks with dozens of ballfields, shelters, playgrounds, sport courts, and other facilities. The assessment and recommendations are those of the consultant with input from sports leagues, community residents, and Township staff. The perspective of the persons reading these recommendations may be very different than that of the consultant. Therefore, the reader may identify additional needs, different priorities, or dissimilar expectations.

As the Township proceeds with implementing these recommendations, other perspectives may need to be considered in establishing final priorities and supplementing the identified projects. The purpose of these recommendations is not to guarantee that every detail is addressed but to give Township officials a good viable plan from which to proceed.

The rehabilitation needs of Ross Township Parks can be divided into the three categories:

1. Parks that need major rehabilitation for which master plans have been prepared. These master plans are provided in Chapter 6 of this report.
  - Herge Park
  - Denny Park
  - Evergreen Park
2. Parks for which no significant upgrades are required.
  - Ann Allison Park
  - John Herb Field
  - Maple Park
3. Parks in need of various levels of rehabilitation.
  - Amity Park
  - Brethauer/Nelson/White
  - Johnanna Memorial Field
  - Main Boulevard Park
  - Mayer Park
  - Osterle Park
  - Quaill
  - Park
  - Rosecliff Park
  - Ross Community Park
  - Sangree Park
  - Scharmyn Park
  - Second Avenue Park
  - Seville Park
  - Ted Bartlett Memorial Field
  - Tyler Park
  - Windhurst Park

Recommendations for implementation of the park rehabilitation strategies are broken into three time frames. This should help the Township with planning and budgeting.

The first are immediate needs. These are identified separately in the first table and describe issues that need to be addressed before the opening of the parks for the 2013 spring/summer season. All but one of these recommendations should be able to be completed by the Township Public Works Department. The one that may need to be contracted is for the construction of the new playground at Scharmyn Park. The projected cost for these upgrades is just under \$100,000. The largest expense of \$75,000 in this category is for the installation of a new young children's playground at Scharmyn Park.

<b>Summary of Park Upgrade Estimated Costs</b>	
Immediate Costs	\$99,800
Short and Mid-term Costs	\$923,250
Long-term Costs	\$537,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,560,550</b>

The second time period for strategies is for those that should be completed over the next ten-year period. These strategies are identified as either short or mid-term recommendations based on the Consultant's perspective of the urgency of the need. However, when planning to implement these projects, the Township may find it more cost effective to complete all short and mid-term needs within a park as a single project. The short and mid-term classifications should be used if the Township needs to prioritize a project within a certain park or when determining which parks should be rehabilitated first. The projected cost for all short and mid-term projects combined \$923,250.

The third time period, long-term, is for those projects that can be done over a longer period of time. These long-term costs are projected at \$537,500.

The following chart depicts the projects of immediate concern.

Park Improvements needed before the 2013 Season begins		
Park and Description	Estimated Cost	Time Frame
<b>Nelson\Brethauer\White</b>		
Remove Existing wooden play structure	\$800	Immediate
<b>Quaill Park</b>		
Replenish the safety surface under and around all play equipment to meet playground safety standards	\$3,000	Immediate
<b>Rosecliff Park</b>		
Upgrade the playground safety surface to meet current standards	\$3,000	Immediate
Improve the playground to meet current safety standards	\$5,000	Immediate
<b>Scharmyn Park</b>		
Remove the current 2-5 year old playground and construct a new one in the same area as the older children's playground	\$75,000	Immediate
<b>Seville Park</b>		
Relocate the swing set that is currently near first base. Re-install it away from the ballfield and in compliance with current playground safety standards.	\$1,000	Immediate
<b>Tyler Park</b>		
Consult the playground manufacturer to correct the entanglement hazard on the free-standing slide. If no fix is available, replace the slide.	\$12,000	Immediate
<b>Total Estimated Costs</b>	<b>\$99,800</b>	

## PARK REHABILITATION STRATEGY CHARTS

The following charts identify upgrades needed in various Ross Township Parks.

Amity Park	Estimated Cost	Priority
Seal and line the basketball court	\$3,500	Short
Install one ADA compliant parking space on the adjacent road and an accessible pathway into the park	\$3,000	Short
Install a higher fence (8'-10' high) along both sides of the basketball court	\$15,000	Long
<b>Total Immediate, Short, and Mid-term Recommendations</b>	<b>\$6,500</b>	
<b>Total Long-term recommendations</b>	<b>\$0</b>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$6,500</b>	

Nelson\Brethauer\White	Estimated Cost	Priority
Remove the slide	\$200	Short
Extend the safety surface under the swings to a minimum of 20' front and back and 6' to the sides of the frame at 12" deep.	\$2,500	Short
Install rubber bumpers under the seesaw and create a safety surface that extends a minimum of 6' in all directions from the edge of the structure	\$500	Short

Seal and pint lines on the basketball half court	\$1,000	Mid
Install a new modular play structure	\$75,000	Mid
Bring the park into compliance with ADA standards by installing a compliant parking space and pathway into the park	\$2,500	Mid
As equipment is upgraded or replaced, ensure that it meets ADA standards		
Total Immediate, Short, and Mid-term Recommendations	\$81,700	
Total Long-term recommendations	\$0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$81,700</b>	

<b>Johanna Memorial Field</b>	<b>Estimated Cost</b>	<b>Priority</b>
Create two ADA compliant parking spaces at the upper maintenance entrance to the field; develop a compliant access route from the parking space to the field and appropriate seating	\$10,250	Short
Improve the landscape plantings on the hillside behind home plate and the left baseline	\$3,000	Long
Paint a mural on the cement retaining wall facing the field using volunteers.	\$500	Long
Total Immediate, Short, and Mid-term Recommendations	\$10,250	
Total Long-term recommendations	\$3,500	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$13,750</b>	

<b>Main Boulevard Park</b>	<b>Estimated Cost</b>	<b>Priority</b>
Remove the 10' high swing set and replace it with one that is 8' high.	\$3,000	Short
Upgrade all playground safety surfaces to meet current standards.	\$2,000	Short
Install a new modular play structure	\$50,000	Long
Total Immediate, Short, and Mid-term Recommendations	\$5,000	
Total Long-term recommendations	\$50,000	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$55,000</b>	

<b>Mayer Park</b>	<b>Estimated Cost</b>	<b>Priority</b>
Paint two ADA parking spaces in the existing lot near the picnic shelter	\$500	Short
Replace the existing backstop	\$8,500	Mid
Install 8' base line fencing	\$9,000	Mid
Install full distance foul line fencing along right field	\$12,500	Mid
Rehabilitate the infield	\$5,000	Mid
Install two new bleachers	\$5,000	Mid
Install two player benches	\$2,000	Mid
Install accessible pathways from the ADA parking spaces to the picnic shelter, play area, and ballfield play and spectator areas	\$7,500	Mid
Make sustainability upgrades to the trail system	\$25,000	Long
Total Immediate, Short, and Mid-term Recommendations	\$50,000	
Total Long-term recommendations	\$25,000	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$75,000</b>	

Osterle Park	Estimated Cost	Priority
Remove and replace the backstops on both fields	\$17,000	Short
Rehabilitate both infields	\$16,000	Short
Replace the 8' baseline fence on the north ballfield	\$9,000	Short
Replace full foul line fencing on the south field	\$25,000	Short
Create two handicap parking spaces on the ballfield level of the park	\$16,000	Short
Provide ADA accessible paths to each ballfield and spectator area	\$8,000	Short
Install 4 new sets of five row bleachers	\$10,000	Mid
Install a modular play structure on the upper level	\$100,000	Long
Total Immediate, Short, and Mid-term Recommendations	\$101,000	
Total Long-term recommendations	\$100,000	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$201,000</b>	

Quaill Park	Estimated Cost	Priority
Remove and re-install the wave climber at ground level. Install appropriate safety surface	\$2,000	Short
Paint an ADA compliant parking space near the sidewalk entrance to the park on Bellevue Terrace.	\$500	Short
Install ADA accessible pathways from the center walkway to all equipment	\$8,000	Short
Install a modular play structure	\$100,000	Long
Total Immediate, Short, and Mid-term Recommendations	\$10,500	
Total Long-term recommendations	\$100,000	
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$110,500</b>	

Rosecliff Park	Estimated Cost	Priority
Remove the asphalt curb around the basketball court; seal and line the court	\$4,500	Short
Install decorative fencing between the play area and both the basketball court and ballfield	\$4,000	Short
Remove the s hooks at the top of the swing chains	\$200	Short
Improve the handicap parking spaces to be ADA compliant	\$8,000	Short
Provide ADA accessible pathways from the compliant parking area to all facilities within the park	\$7,500	Short
Replace the gravel picnic shelter floor with concrete	\$6,000	Short
Re-roof the picnic shelter	\$4,000	Short
Replace the backstops on both ballfields	\$17,000	Short
Install full foul line fencing on both ballfields	\$25,000	Short
Rehabilitate both infields	\$10,000	Short
Replace existing bleachers with 4 five row bleachers with guide rails	\$10,000	Mid
Total Immediate, Short, and Mid-term Recommendations	\$96,200	
Total Long-term recommendations	\$0	
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$96,200</b>	

<b>Ross Community Park</b>	<b>Estimated Cost</b>	<b>Priority</b>
Install a 3'-4' decorative fence between the play area and the parking lot	\$12,000	Short
Upgrade the playing surface of the rectangular field by installing a minimum of 12" of topsoil. Grade the new surface for appropriate water run-off.	\$40,000	Mid
Total Immediate, Short, and Mid-term Recommendations	\$52,000	
Total Long-term recommendations	\$0	
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$52,000</b>	

<b>Sangree Park</b>	<b>Estimated Cost</b>	<b>Priority</b>
Install a fence with a vehicle gate at the maintenance entrance behind the swing sets	\$6,000	Short
Remove the swing set with the red top	\$600	Short
Relocate the other swing set so there is a minimum of 18' to the front and back of the swings. Install safety surface in compliance with current playground safety standards	\$2,000	Short
Extend the playground safety surface around all other play equipment to make it compliant with current safety standards	\$1,000	Short
Replace the gravel picnic shelter floor with concrete	\$6,000	Short
Replace the backstop on the ballfield	\$8,500	Short
Replace the play structure with a larger modular unit.	\$150,000	Mid
Improve the handicap parking spaces to be ADA compliant	\$8,000	Mid
Provide ADA accessible pathways from the compliant parking area to all facilities within the park	\$15,000	Mid
Re-roof the picnic shelter	\$4,000	Mid
Rehabilitate the infield	\$8,000	Mid
Replace existing bleachers with 4 five row bleachers with guide rails	\$10,000	Mid
Replace and relocate the player benches	\$3,000	Mid
Seal and line the basketball court	\$3,500	Mid
Create walking paths to connect the neighborhood to the park	TBD	Long
Consider this as a location for a water spray park. Conduct a feasibility study.	\$12,000	Long
Total Immediate, Short, and Mid-term Recommendations	\$225,600	
Total Long-term recommendations	\$12,000	
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$237,600</b>	

<b>Scharmyn Park</b>	<b>Estimated Cost</b>	<b>Priority</b>
Make all facilities ADA compliant	\$30,000	Short
Remove the wooden horizontal ladder play structure located near the picnic shelter and expand the main playground by adding additional equipment	\$20,000	Mid
Seal and line the basketball court	\$3,500	Mid
Convert the tennis court are to a parking lot	\$60,000	Mid
Total Immediate, Short, and Mid-term Recommendations	\$113,500	
Total Long-term recommendations	\$0	
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$113,500</b>	

Second Avenue Park	Estimated Cost	Priority
Remove the tree that is located near the road and behind the swing set. Block access from the play area to the street in this same location.	\$500	Short
Extend the safety surface around the swing set so that it extends a minimum of 16' to the front and back of the swings and 6' from the frame	\$1,000	Short
Paint two ADA compliant parking spaces on the adjacent road and create accessible connections from the main walkway in the park to each piece of equipment.	\$3,000	Short
Seal and line the basketball court	\$3,500	Mid
Total Immediate, Short, and Mid-term Recommendations	\$8,000	
Total Long-term recommendations	\$0	
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$8,000</b>	

Seville Park	Estimated Cost	Priority
Extend the safety surface around the swing set so that it extends a minimum of 16' to the front and back of the swings and 6' from the frame	\$1,000	Short
Paint two ADA compliant parking spaces on the adjacent road and create accessible connections from the main walkway in the park to each piece of equipment.	\$9,000	Short
Install a new backstop	12,000	Mid
8' base line and full foul line fencing	24,000	Mid
Outfield fencing	35,000	Mid
Rehabilitate the dirt infield	8,000	Mid
Replace existing bleachers with two, five-row bleachers with guiderails	5,000	Mid
Seal and line the basketball court	\$3,500	Mid
Make sustainability upgrades to the trail system	\$30,000	Long
Install a new modular play structure	150,000	Long
Total Immediate, Short, and Mid-term Recommendations	\$97,500	
Total Long-term recommendations	\$180,000	
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$277,500</b>	

Ted Bartlett Memorial Field	Estimated Cost	Priority
Construct two ADA compliant parking spaces behind the third base bleachers and create accessible connections to the concession stand and seating area	\$17,500	Short
Construct an ADA accessible spectator pad near the third base bleachers	\$3,000	Short
Install a new backstop	12,000	Long
Improve the landscaping on the hillside	\$5,000	Long
Improve the roadway to the lower level of the park and make it ADA compliant	\$20,000	Long
Total Immediate, Short, and Mid-term Recommendations	\$20,500	
Total Long-term recommendations	\$37,000	
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$57,500</b>	

Tyler Park	Estimated Cost	Priority
Construct two ADA compliant parking spaces in the existing parking lot and create accessible connections from the parking lot to the playground, soccer field, and picnic shelter.	\$19,000	Short
Extend the safety surface around the swing set so that it extends a minimum of 16' to the front and back of the swings and 6' from the frame	\$1,000	Short
Replace the picnic shelter's gravel floor with concrete	\$6,000	Mid
Grade the soccer field to eliminate uneven terrain	\$15,000	Long
<b>Total Immediate, Short, and Mid-term Recommendations</b>	<b>\$26,000</b>	
<b>Total Long-term recommendations</b>	<b>\$15,000</b>	
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$41,000</b>	

Windhurst Park	Estimated Cost	Priority
Construct two ADA compliant parking spaces in the existing parking lot and create accessible connections from the parking lot to the sports fields, spectator areas, and picnic shelter.	\$19,000	Short
Grade the soccer field to eliminate uneven terrain and improve drainage	\$15,000	Long
<b>Total Immediate, Short, and Mid-term Recommendations</b>	<b>\$19,000</b>	
<b>Total Long-term recommendations</b>	<b>\$15,000</b>	
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$34,000</b>	

Prioritizing these projects can be based on a number of criteria. There is no magical system that removes all controversy or that implements perfectly. However, in order to ensure that the park upgrades are accomplished in an orderly and systematic fashion, a phasing plan was developed and is displayed below. The phasing plan has been designed to allow for the Township to budget a like amount annually throughout the rehabilitation process. In most years, the budget amount will be about \$125,000. The hope is that the Township will allocate the funds for these upgrades from their annual capital budget while using grant funding for implementation of the larger projects at Herge, Denny, and Evergreen Parks. The phasing plan schedules parks of the highest priority in the first three phases while ensuring that at least one park in each Ward is completed during that timeframe.

In planning for the larger rehabilitation projects, the highest priority is to upgrade Herge Park due to safety issues on its playground. Second priority should be Evergreen Park because of its extensive use. Upgrade to Denny Park, because the project needs to coordinate with a major stormwater rehabilitation project, will occur as that project comes to fruition.

# PARK REHABILITATION PHASING PLAN

## Phase 1

Park	Ward	Cost
Rosecliff	1	\$96,200
Quaill	6	\$10,500
Second Avenue	3	\$8,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$114,700</b>

## Phase 2

Park	Ward	Cost
Tyler	2	\$26,000
Osterle	7	\$101,000
Main Boulevard	9	\$5,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$132,000</b>

## Phase 3

Park	Ward	Cost
Mayer	4	\$50,000
Ross Community	8	\$52,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$102,000</b>

## Phase 4

Park	Ward	Cost
Scharmyn	5	\$113,000

## Phase 5

Park	Ward	Cost
Sangree	8	\$225,000

## Phase 6

Park	Ward	Cost
Seville	6	\$97,500
Ted Bartlett	2	\$20,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$117,500</b>

## Phase 7

Park	Ward	Cost
Nelson/Brethauer/White	7	\$81,700
Johnanna Field	2	\$10,250
Amity	9	\$6,500
Windhurst	8	\$19,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$117,450</b>

## Priorities for Implementation for the Park Master Plans

### Priority 1

Herge Park – \$301,955

### Priority 2

Evergreen Park – \$1.375 million

This project may be implemented in two or three phases.

### Priority 3

Denny Park – \$989,566

Redevelopment of parts Denny Park will be dependent on renovation of the underground stormwater culvert that runs through the park.

# Chapter 5: Greenways

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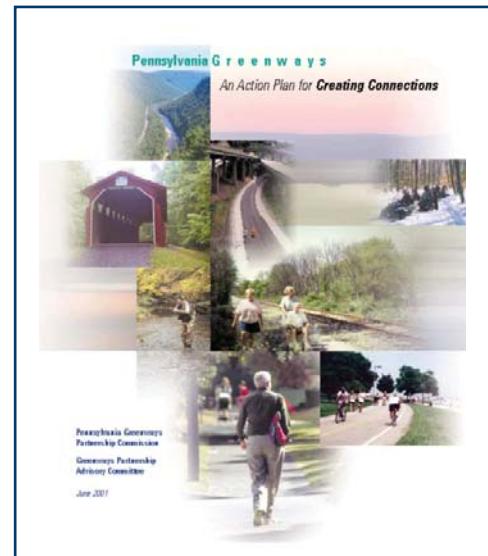
# Chapter 5: Greenways

## WHAT IS A GREENWAY?

Greenways have been defined in several ways since the term was first coined in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Ideally, greenways are corridors of land and water, including the networks of these corridors, which are designed and managed for multiple purposes. These purposes include many things such as natural infrastructure conservation, providing recreation opportunities, stormwater management, community and economy enhancement, and scenic character protection.

In Pennsylvania, greenway concepts are embraced by the following all-encompassing definition, which is adapted from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Greenways Plan: *Pennsylvania Greenways - An Action Plan for Creating Connections* and is embraced by this Greenways Plan:

A greenway is a corridor of open space, varying greatly in scale, and incorporating or linking diverse natural, cultural, and scenic resources. Some greenways are recreational corridors or scenic byways accommodating pedestrian and non-motorized vehicle traffic on both land and water; while others function almost exclusively for environmental protection and are not designed for human passage.



Many people think of greenways as primarily recreational corridors. They envision trails for hiking, biking, jogging or even horseback riding and snowmobiling. They also visualize waterways and lakes for canoeing and kayaking. For others, the purpose of greenways is for conservation of our undeveloped lands containing important natural and ecological assets like forests, wetlands, and stream banks along with the animals and plants that live there. Still, there are others who see greenways in aesthetic terms. They value conserving the rural countryside and protecting outstanding natural features such as stream valleys and gorges, forested ridgelines, and agricultural lands. All of these visions and definitions are embraced within this plan.

## WHY DEVELOP GREENWAYS IN ROSS TOWNSHIP?

Greenways in Ross Township will provide a blueprint for making decisions regarding greenway and trail corridor development that will *enhance the quality of life* for residents.

These corridors create a network of connections between Ross's natural assets, various community resources, recreation opportunities, and neighborhoods. These connections will help to preserve natural system functions and create recreation and alternative transportation opportunities that will foster active living and healthy lifestyles.

Wherever greenways are established, they provide numerous benefits to local municipalities and their residents. Some of the benefits provided through greenway development include:

## Benefits of Greenways to Ross Township

### Economic Benefits

- Increase value of adjacent properties
- Foster new & expanded business opportunities related to greenway use

### Recreation Benefits

- Foster public recreation, Active Living, and Healthy Lifestyles
- Provide opportunities to hike, bike, jog, or pursue other outdoor activities
- Provide connections between parks, trails, or other recreation resources

### Social Benefits

- Promote awareness of historical and cultural features
- Increase awareness of natural resources
- Improve general health and wellness through Active Living

### Transportation Benefits

- Provide safe alternative transportation opportunities for pedestrians & bicyclists
- Reduce roadway congestion through redistribution of would-be motorists to alternative transportation routes

### Ecological Benefits

- Protect habitat
- Absorb and filter flood waters
- Protect air and water quality

### Environmental Education Benefits

- Foster an awareness of and appreciation for the surrounding environment
- Explain environmental issues and best management practices to the public

## A VISION FOR GREENWAYS IN ROSS TOWNSHIP

Greenways development in Ross Township focuses on Natural Systems corridors and Recreation and Alternative Transportation corridors.

### NATURAL SYSTEMS GREENWAYS

Natural systems greenways are those corridors whose primary function is conservation of unique natural infrastructure including elements such as steep slopes, floodplains, and woodlands. These corridors consist of linear tracts of essentially undeveloped open space. Some low impact activity, such as trails or passive outdoor recreation, may be acceptable in these corridors, but intense development may not be appropriate.

The process of developing the natural systems greenways network utilizes a natural infrastructure approach in identifying the building blocks which provide essential environmental functions. It is important to note that this process will not take

away the rights of property owners, nor will it restrict development in the Township. Instead, natural systems greenways will promote sustainable development, lower development costs, and reduce the burden of providing public services on local, county, and state governments.

An inventory of natural infrastructure was conducted to identify natural systems building blocks within Ross Township. It is from these building blocks that natural system greenway corridors were identified.

#### Building Blocks Identified:

- Floodplains
- Wetlands
- Woodlands
- Slopes >25%
- Hydric Soils
- Trout Stocked Fishery Streams
- Warm Water Fishery Streams
- Parks



### THE PROCESS OF IDENTIFYING NATURAL SYSTEMS GREENWAYS

The proposed natural systems greenway corridors were defined by overlaying each building block on a map and utilizing a geographic information system (GIS) technology to identify where more than one building block overlapped. Within the GIS, building blocks were given a value of one (1). Where more than one building block overlapped the values for those building blocks were added together. Areas with the highest concentration of building blocks merited inclusion in the natural systems greenways network. Corridors were then defined and named based upon their stream association. Additionally, the resulting values from the GIS calculation were utilized to create a sensitivity level of each corridor and then used to establish a priority level for each greenway.

This analysis resulted in identifying 11 proposed natural systems greenway corridors within the Township.

#### **Proposed Lowries Run Natural Systems Greenway Corridor**

This corridor is located in the northeastern portion of the Township. Lowries Run headwaters are located north in McCandless Township and west in Franklin Park Borough. Lowries Run flows south into Ross Township paralleling Rochester Road until its intersection with Lowries Run Road. At this intersection Lowries Run changes course and flows west, paralleling Lowries Run Road as it flows into Ohio Township. Several unnamed tributaries drain into Lowries Run as it passes through the Township.

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP) classifies Lowries Run as a Trout Stocked Fishery. Lowries Run's 100-year floodplain is broad and situated along the Rochester Road and Lowries Run Road corridors. Generally, the steep slopes of the Lowries Run valley are undeveloped and wooded and the stream valley contains hydric soils. Recreation opportunities within this proposed natural systems greenway corridor includes the Reis Soccer Complex.

#### **Proposed Girty's Run Natural Systems Greenway Corridor**

This corridor begins in the center of Ross Township along its northern border with McCandless Township and bisects the entire Township as it extends to the southeast corner of the Township. The Girty's Run watershed covers the largest areas within Ross Township.

PA DEP classifies Girty's Run as a Warm Water Fishery. Like Lowries Run, the 100-year floodplain of Girty's Run is broad. It parallels Babcock Boulevard for its entire length through the Township. There are a few patches of wooded steep slopes located within this corridor. The stream valley contains hydric soils. Recreation opportunities within this proposed natural systems greenway corridor include Evergreen Park, Windhurst Park, John Herb Field, and Ross Community Park.

### **Proposed Harts Run Natural Systems Greenway Corridor**

The proposed Harts Run Natural Systems Greenway Corridor is located in the northwest portion of the Township, paralleling Sewickley Oakmont Road. Harts Run is tributary to Lowries Run, and is classified by the PA DEP Chapter 93 as a Trout Stocked Fishery. Natural infrastructure within this corridor consists of hydric soils, the 100 year floodplain, and wooded steep slopes along the stream's valley. There are no recreation opportunities within this corridor.

### **Proposed Rochester Road West Natural Systems Greenway Corridor**

This proposed natural systems greenway corridor is tributary to Lowries Run and the proposed Lowries Run Greenway corridor. It parallels Rochester Road, with the headwaters to the southeast in West View Borough and flowing to the northwest until it reaches Lowries Run near the intersection of Rochester Road and Lowries Run Road.

Natural infrastructure within this corridor consists of hydric soils and wooded steep slopes along the stream's valley. A portion of Highlands Country Club is located within this corridor.

### **Proposed Rochester Road East Natural Systems Greenway Corridor**

This proposed natural systems greenway corridor is tributary to Girty's Run, and the proposed Girty's Run Natural Systems Greenway Corridor. Like the proposed Rochester Road West Natural Systems Greenway this corridor also parallels Rochester Road. However, the tributary to Girty's Run flows from the north, above West View Borough to the south at its confluence with Girty's Run, just east of West View Borough, at the intersection of Rochester Road and Babcock Boulevard. PA DEP classifies Girty's Run and its tributaries as a Warm Water Fishery. Natural infrastructure within this corridor consists of steep wooded slopes.

Recreation opportunities within this proposed natural systems greenway corridor include Ann Allison Hoover Memorial Park, Second Avenue Park, Thompson Drive Park, North Hills Junior High School and North Hills Senior High School.

### **Proposed Thompson Run Natural Systems Greenway Corridor**

The proposed Thompson Run natural systems greenway crosses through the northeastern portion of the Township, extending from the Township's northern border with McCandless Township Shaler Township located along Ross Township's eastern border. This corridor is located within the Pine Creek watershed.

PA DEP classifies Thompson Run and its tributaries as a Trout Stocked Fishery. Thompson Run's 100 year floodplain is broad, paralleling Thompson Run Road. The 100 year flood plain is the major natural infrastructure component of this corridor. Recreation opportunities within this proposed natural systems greenway corridor include Sangree Park and Amity Park.

### **Proposed Nelson Run Natural Systems Greenway Corridor**

This natural systems greenway corridor is located in the southeastern corner of the Township in the vicinity of Peoples Road. PA DEP classifies Nelson Run and its tributaries as a Warm Water Fishery. The Natural infrastructure within this corridor consists of steep slopes. Recreation opportunities within the proposed corridor include Osterle Park.

### **Proposed Cemetery Land Natural Systems Greenway Corridor**

This proposed corridor begins in West View Borough and extends into Ross Township along the Borough's southern and eastern border until its confluence with Girty's Run. As a tributary to Girty's Run the PA DEP Chapter 93 Classification for this tributary is Warm Water Fishery. The Natural infrastructure within this corridor consists of hydric soils in the stream valley, and steep slopes along the valley's hillsides. There are no recreation opportunities within the proposed corridor.

### **Proposed Jacks Run Natural Systems Greenway Corridor**

The proposed Jacks Run Natural Systems Corridor is south of Interstate 279 along the Township's southern borders with Bellevue Borough and the City of Pittsburgh. Jacks Run is tributary to the Ohio River, and is classified by PA DEP Chapter 93 as a Warm Water Fishery. Hydric soils, steep slopes and woodlots are the natural infrastructure elements located in this proposed corridor. Recreation opportunities within this proposed corridor include Denny Park, Seville Park, and Maple Street Park.

### **Proposed Spruce Run Natural Systems Greenway Corridor**

This proposed corridor is located south of Interstate 279 along the Township's western border, paralleling Union Avenue. Spruce Run is tributary to the Ohio River, and is classified by PA DEP Chapter 93 as a Warm Water Fishery. Hydric soils, steep slopes, and wooded steep slopes are the natural infrastructure elements located in this proposed corridor. Recreation opportunities within this proposed corridor include Quail Park and Shannopin Country Club.

### **Proposed Interstate 279 North Natural Systems Greenway Corridor**

The proposed Interstate 279 North Natural Systems Greenway Corridor is located along the Township's western border with Ohio Township, immediately north of Interstate 279. The corridor encompasses an unnamed tributary to Lowries Run. This tributary is classified by PA DEP Chapter 93 as a Warm Water Fishery. Steep wooded slopes are the primary natural infrastructure elements associated with this corridor. Recreation opportunities within this proposed corridor include Herge Park.

## **NATURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION RECOMMENDATIONS**

Efforts should be taken to guide growth, development, and redevelopment in a manner which:

- maintains and enhances the stormwater capacity
- maintains and enhances water quality filtration functions
- maintains and enhances groundwater recharge
- maintains or lowers thermal temperatures of waterways
- reduces flooding
- maintains and increases streamside vegetative buffers
- protects steep slopes from erosion

These objectives can be obtained in multiple ways. Non-profit organizations within the region can assist with education, awareness, and implementation efforts related to the conservation of natural systems greenway corridors within Ross Township. These include:

- The North Area Environmental Advisory Council, <http://naecwpa.org>
- 3 Rivers Wet Weather Demonstration Program, [www.3riverswetweather.org](http://www.3riverswetweather.org)
- Allegheny CleanWays, [www.allegenycleanways.org](http://www.allegenycleanways.org)
- Allegheny County Conservation District, <http://accd.pghfree.net>
- Center for Healthy Environments & Communities, University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health, [www.chec.pitt.edu](http://www.chec.pitt.edu)
- Foundation for Pennsylvania's Watersheds, [www.pennsylvaniawatersheds.org](http://www.pennsylvaniawatersheds.org)
- Pennsylvania Environmental Council, [www.pecpa.org/region/southwest](http://www.pecpa.org/region/southwest)
- Pennsylvania Resources Council, [www.prc.org](http://www.prc.org)
- Sustainable Pittsburgh, [www.sustainablepittsburgh.org](http://www.sustainablepittsburgh.org)
- Pennsylvania Organization for Watersheds and Rivers, [www.pawatersheds.org](http://www.pawatersheds.org)

We recommend the Township or a qualified conservation organization obtain conservation easements from willing property owners to protect the natural infrastructure within the proposed natural systems greenway corridors.

From a regulatory perspective Ross Township's Zoning Ordinance; Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance; and Act 167 Stormwater Management Ordinance each have regulatory requirements that assist in achieving the stated greenway objectives.

The Township's Stormwater Management Ordinance was updated in 2008. This update is in accordance with the PA DEP recommendations and requirements for implementing best management practices related to stormwater management.

We recommend the Township consider reviewing and updating components of the Township's Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance to strengthen the conservation of natural infrastructure resources within the Township. Pocopson Township, in Chester County, has adopted a Natural Resource Protection Ordinance that was developed to conserve natural system greenway corridors, within their Township in the context of addressing the goals noted above. The table below provides a summary of their conservation requirements:

Resource Element	Maximum Disturbance
Floodplain Conservation District	0%
Very Steep Slopes	10%
Steep Slopes	25%
Steep Slope Margins	25%
Wetlands	0%
Inner Riparian Buffer	0%
Outer Riparian Buffer	15%
Seasonal High Water Table Soils	20%
Heritage Trees	0%
Rare Species Sites	0%
Exceptional Natural Areas	10%
Forest Interior Habitat	10%
Woodlands	5-25%, depending upon classification

Source: [www.pocopson.org](http://www.pocopson.org)

The Pocopson Township Natural Resource Protection Ordinance serves as a good model.

## NATURAL SYSTEMS GREENWAYS PROPOSED WOODED HILLSIDE OVERLAY

When driving through Ross Township heading south to Pittsburgh along 279, the wooden hillside along the winding interstate provides a backdrop of scenic character that those traveling into the city always seem to appreciate. The curve on 279 just south of Ross Township opens up the first view of the City skyline. This corridor provides a memorable experience with stunning scenic character when approaching the city. In completing the natural systems investigation for this Plan, it was evident that this viewshed through the Township had not been identified in previously conducted analyses.

To address the conservation of the character of this viewshed, we recommend the Township create a wooded overlay district. The recommended boundaries of this proposed overlay district were established by conducting a viewshed analysis along 279 through the Township. This was done using a spatial analysis tool in GIS by placing points along 279 every 50 feet. Once these points were generated, the elevation model for the Township was used to determine everything that could be seen from those points. Once that analysis was complete, we were able to identify and recommend the boundaries for the proposed wooded hillside overlay district.

## RECREATION & ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION GREENWAYS

It was noted during the planning processes that there are no solid pedestrian connections from the residential neighborhoods to destinations such as schools, parks, and commercial centers. Additionally, there is a lack of internal sidewalk networks

within the residential neighborhoods. This plan suggests that the Township's recreation greenways network be developed based on creating a hierarchy of recreation greenway corridors with sidewalks being the local routes; bicycle lanes and shared use paths being collector routes; and share-the-road routes being arterial routes for recreation and alternative modes of travel.

Following the recommendations of the Allegheny County Comprehensive Plan, Allegheny Places, the plan recommends the township work to provide "active transportation alternatives such as bikeways, sidewalks, and transit" options in lieu of attempting to construct and maintain trails.

Ross Township should encourage residents and visitors to walk and bike through incorporating sidewalks and bike lanes into all future roadway and transit projects.

## PROPOSED PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENTS

The priorities for pedestrian improvements in Ross Township are:

- Developing a standard for construction and maintenance of sidewalks, including repair of deteriorated sidewalks
- Writing the developed sidewalk standards into the local ordinances and enforcing them
- Connecting critical gaps in the existing sidewalk network
- Ensuring there are sidewalk connections to all schools and parks
- Ensuring that proper pavement markings, signage, and signalized crossing are in place.

The recommendations of this plan are to focus pedestrian efforts around ensuring that areas within half a mile of all schools are properly developed from a pedestrian infrastructure stand point to ensure safe routes to school for children of all ages.

## PROPOSED BICYCLE NETWORK

The recommended bicycle network for Ross Township proposes construction of a couple of new trails, designation of bike lanes and routes, improvements to existing facilities, and integration of the bicycle network with the rest of the City of Pittsburgh's multi-modal transportation system.

The recreation greenways detailed on the Recreation Greenway Network map include mainly a system of on-road routes that are suitable, or should be improved, for bicyclists to use for travel around and through the township. The roads selected serve as arterials for bicycles while low volume streets within neighborhoods can serve as collectors for the network.

The majority of the proposed network is a shared roadway network, not an exclusive bike lane network. Below is a brief description of the proposed routes:

**Siebert Road** – a traffic and engineering study should be done to determine the feasibility of constructing bike lanes on this road.

**Thompson Run Road** – a traffic and engineering study should be done to determine the feasibility of constructing bike lanes on this road from Thompson Run Road to McKnight Road.

**McIntyre Road** – a traffic and engineering study should be done to determine the feasibility of constructing bike lanes on this road.

**Sangree Road** – install Share the Road signage and pavement markings for Sharrows from Seibert Road to Thompson Run Road.

**Babcock Boulevard** – a traffic and engineering study should be done to determine the feasibility of constructing bike lanes on this road from Thompson Run Road to McKnight Road.

**Rochester Road** – a traffic and engineering study should be done to determine the feasibility of constructing bike lanes on this road from Thompson Run Road to McKnight Road.

**Lowries Run Road** – a traffic and engineering study should be done to determine the feasibility of constructing bike lanes on this road from Thompson Run Road to McKnight Road.

**3 Degree Road** – a traffic and engineering study should be done to determine the feasibility of constructing bike lanes on this road from Thompson Run Road to McKnight Road.

**Sewickley Oakmont Road** – a traffic and engineering study should be done to determine the feasibility of constructing bike lanes on this road from Thompson Run Road to McKnight Road.

**Cemetery Lane Shared Use Path** – adjacent to Cemetery Lane possibly along the creek corridor.

**Harmony Trail Shared Use Path** – north from intersection of Babcock Boulevard and 3 Degree Road.

## GREENWAY DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

*Babcock Boulevard Bike lanes*

*Walking/Biking 1 Mile neighborhood Routes*

*Sidewalk and Crosswalk Improvements around Schools*

*Evergreen Community Park Fitness/Activity Trail Enhancements*

*Thompson Drive Park Greenway/Walking Trail*

*Reis Run Road at Brookmeade Drive Intersection Improvements*

This intersection has an existing crosswalk from the neighborhood along Brookmeade Drive to the Reis Soccer Complex. This intersection should be made safer for pedestrians by installing a high visibility crosswalk treatment including advanced pedestrian warning signage, overhead flashers and ladder crosswalk in addition to existing treatment.

# Chapter 6: Master Plans

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# Chapter 6: Master Plans

## INTRODUCTION

Even as the Township's Comprehensive Recreation, Parks, and Open Space Plan got underway, Township officials recognized the need to have more detailed plans completed for some of their parks. Two of the Township's three community parks were identified as being in clear need of upgrades. It was recognized that facilities were deteriorating, the current park layouts were not useable, and new facilities were needed. As the study process moved ahead, the Consultant identified Herge Park as a neighborhood facility that had several safety issues that needed to be corrected. These could not be addressed simply by upgrading facilities but would require a re-design of the park.

As the Comprehensive Recreation, Park, and Open Space Plans was about half way through completion, the Township Commissioners decided to contract with Pashek Associates to develop Master Plans for each of these parks. These Master Plans would help to refine the "vision" that the Township had for each of these parks and make them more useable, attractive, and safe for Township residents. It also would enhance opportunities for funding their redevelopment.

A separate Master Plan was completed for each of the three parks. All proposed improvements fall within the bounds of Township-owned property at each location.

The Master Plans provide a framework from which Township officials can make decisions regarding the development of each park facility. Full development of the plans will help the Township meet the recreational programming needs of its residents.

It is important to note that the Master Plans are meant to be a flexible tool for planning.

Specific details of the design and the final locations of facilities may be modified through subsequent design.

## THE DESIGN PROCESS

Creating Master Plans begins by analyzing the property's natural features such as topography, hydrology, and vegetation and existing development; coordinating user groups; and gathering public input. This multi-layered approach results in a balanced plan that meets the needs of the community.

The process included the following critical steps.

- Establishing goals and objectives for park development
- Obtaining public input from township representatives and recreation interest groups (in this case, input was previously collected as part of the Township Recreation, Parks, and Open Space Plan)
- Conducting a site analysis of existing conditions
- Determining the community's needs for recreational facilities
- Preparing the Master Plans for each park
- Estimating construction costs

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Public participation in the project design process is important in ensuring that the Master Plans are supported by the township and are sensitive to the needs of the community. For these designs, the public input process began as part of the Comprehensive Recreation, Parks, and Open Space Plan. In fact, it was that public input that prompted the recommendation

to move ahead with these designs. Having a nice community park was high on the wish list among many respondents to various input opportunities. Evergreen and Denny Parks are two of the Township's three community parks and both need significant upgrades.

The Study Committee refined the public input, identifying the following needs or concerns for each park.

### **Evergreen Park**

1. Needs to be brought into compliance with ADA standards.
2. The south side of the pond is extremely wet.
3. There needs to be an aerator fountain in the pond. In times of low run-off, the pond becomes stagnant with a buildup of algae.
4. Parking is one of the biggest issues.
5. Any expansion of use will require additional parking.
6. Convert bocce courts to parking.
7. Improve and expand the walking trails.
8. Install interpretive signs along part of the trails.
9. Make part of the trail handicapped accessible.
10. Add another deck along the pond bank. Make the existing one and the new one ADA compliant.
11. Construct an overlook/picnic deck at the hillside to the south of the pond.
12. Renovate the restrooms.
13. Relocate the playground so it is more visible from the main use areas of the park.
14. Upgrade the picnic shelter.
15. Keep the quaint feel of the park with the old wooden shelter and the brick sidewalk.
16. A second shelter could be added if parking is available.
17. Improve the protection of the stream bank with gabion baskets. Repair existing baskets.
18. Consider alternate uses for the area inside the red oval on the site analysis map.
19. Improve the bridge across the stream.
20. Create a more defined trail access off the southeast entrance to the park.

### **Denny Park**

1. All parts of the park need to be made ADA compliant.

Upper level of the park

2. Steps to the upper level are a significant barrier to its use.
3. Consider alternate use for the tennis courts. Deck hockey would be nice but size could be an issue.
4. Only two parking places are available for the basketball courts, picnic shelter, and play area.
5. Playground needs to be upgraded.

Lower level of park

6. Drainage is a major issue. A storm water culvert runs north-south through the baseball fields. It has some potentially major deficiencies.
7. A sanitary sewer line runs along the west edge of the ballfield area. There are no major issues with it.
8. The entire lower level is flood prone.
9. Picnic shelter is nice and used often. Needs to be upgraded.
10. Eliminate the north ballfield. It is usually too wet to use, especially along the north and east.
11. Relocate the south ballfield. Needs sufficient space for Pony League teams.
12. Consider a playground on this level of the park.
13. Provide parking from the Eileen Drive side without allowing through-traffic in the parking lot.

Wooded areas

14. Steep slopes but still used for hiking.
15. ATVs are seen in the areas.
16. There is a section of dangerous drop offs along the north edge east of the main drainage way.
17. Conduct a select timber cut.

## **Herge Park**

1. Consider relocation or alternate uses of the playground, basketball court, and picnic shelter.
2. The school district has a long-term parking agreement with the church.
3. There is a large playground on the school property just across Peony Avenue from the Park.
4. Meet with School District representatives to discuss their needs at the park.

At the second public meeting for the Comprehensive Recreation, Parks, and Open Space Plan, it was recommended that a disc golf course be developed in Denny Park.

## **SITE ANALYSES**

### **Evergreen Park**

*Location:* 3430 Evergreen Road

*Size:* 34.55 acres

*Facilities:*

- fishing pond (catch and release rules)
- house with kitchen facilities
- large picnic pavilion with tables and grills
- fitness and nature trail
- ball field
- 2 open field areas
- park benches
- playground
- horseshoe pit
- 2 volleyball areas
- bocce court
- parking lot

Evergreen is a great passive style park featuring fishing, walking, picnicking, and more. With some additional development, it can become a beautiful community park. It is a jewel of the Township.

None of the facilities in the park are ADA compliant except for the two handicapped parking spots. There is a ramp to the community building, but it does not meet current ADA standards.

Miles of trails traverse the woodlands surrounding the developed areas of the park. The trails need to be re-designed and upgraded to become more sustainable. The trees near the developed areas of the park are deteriorating significantly. Many trees of significant size are down and there is virtually no undergrowth to replace them. This will become an ongoing concern for the long-term sustainability of the park.

The community building is located near the front of the park and is available for community rentals. It is fairly well maintained and useable for parties, receptions, weddings, reunions, meetings, and other community functions.

The bocce courts in front of the building do not appear to be used much. Their current location could be a potential site for other uses that support the community building.

Parking is perhaps the biggest issue in this park. There are only thirty-six spaces plus 2 ADA compliant. Two of the parking spots are used for the basketball hoop. This is insufficient when multiple facilities in the park are being used and when the community building has large groups.

The wooden fishing deck is in fair condition but is not ADA compliant. Making it compliant would provide a good handicapped fishing access point.

The brick walkway to the large picnic shelter is only about 24" wide. While it is attractive, it is not functional and does not meet ADA standards. The large wooden picnic shelter is beautiful but needs some upgrades. Such upgrades would make it ADA compliance and a focal point of the park. It seats over 125 people.

The waterway that runs through the park is protected by gabion baskets on both sides from the eastern woodlands to the upper pond. Some of the gabion baskets are deteriorating and others are being held in place by wooden posts. The upper pond collects sedimentation from the stream before the water travels through a culvert into the lower pond.

The larger pond is used a lot. Resident often fish in it. It is attractive and well maintained.

There is a bridge across this waterway that will need repairs or replacement. The concrete walkway between the two ponds is often very slippery creating an unsuspecting fall hazard.

Picnic tables and benches are distributed throughout the grassy areas south and east of the ponds. These are nice passive areas in the park.

Multiple trails run throughout the wooded areas of the park. They are well used but have not been well maintained. The trails need to be designated, re-designed, and re-built for accessibility and sustainability. There are potential connections to surrounding residential areas. The trails should be upgraded to meet the sustainability standards described earlier in the report.

The playground equipment is deteriorating and does not meet current safety standards. It must be removed and replaced with new equipment.

Plans on the following pages pictorially describe the existing conditions of each site.

## **Denny Park**

*Location:* Denny Park Road off of Jacks Jun Road. Eileen Drive also dead ends at the Park.

*Size:* 33.94 acres

### *Existing Facilities*

- ball fields
- tennis courts
- basketball court
- horseshoe pits
- playground
- 2 pavilions
- Parking lot

Denny Park is one of the Township's three community parks. Only a small portion of the nearly 34 acres is developed for active recreation. The remaining sections of the park are either steep slopes that do not lend themselves to development or are not accessible by road. Additional development of this park will allow it to provide a balance of sports facilities, passive spaces, and trails.

The park seems to be a little bit forgotten. Not much has been done in recent years to keep it well maintained. This may be due to the ongoing water issue on the fields and the limited accessibility to other areas of the park. The park is not compliant with ADA standards. There are two handicapped parking spaces with a sidewalk that leads into the park but not to any facilities.

An underground stormwater culvert runs the distance of the park from north to south carrying runoff that travels under Interstate 279 to the open run south of the park. The channel is open from the I279 right-of-way into the park where it enters the culvert. Two ballfields are located on top of this storm drain with steep slopes draining the hillsides to the east and west of the park onto the fields. Swales have been developed between the slopes and the fields but do not effectively carry the water away. This results in extremely wet ballfields. There is no easy or cost effective option to run water away from them.

A number of user-created trails traverse the woodlands in the park. They are not maintained as developed trails by the Township. There appears to be significant use of these trails by ATVs and motorcycles.

The park has been developed on two tiers. The lower tier has the ballfields, a picnic shelter, horseshoe pits, and the main parking lot. A steep set of steps provides access from the parking lot to the upper level of the park where the tennis courts are located. The upper tier has two tennis courts, a basketball court, playground, small picnic shelter, and a couple of parking spots.

The playground needs some upgrades but maybe not total replacement. The basketball court is in good condition. The tennis courts have good surfaces with almost no cracking but the fencing is in poor condition, leaning badly. The fence's concrete footings are loose allowing the fence to sway back and forth significantly.

There is no vehicular access to the park from Eileen Drive. It is barricaded with jersey barriers to prevent through-traffic. All traffic must enter the park via Denny Park Road. Small areas of mown spaces are located along the road. Some of these could be locations for picnic tables or a small shelter. The two existing picnic shelters are in fair condition and in need of simple upgrades.

## **Herge Park**

*Location:* Peony Ave. near Timberlane Drive

*Size:* 4.33 acres

### *Existing Facilities*

- ball field
- tennis courts
- basketball court
- playground
- pavilion

Herge is a nice neighborhood park. It is located in a mostly residential area across the street from Highcliff Elementary School. Christ Lutheran Church is located on the property immediately north of the park.

Herge sees a lot of baseball on its lone Little League size field. In addition to the park's community uses, Highcliff Elementary School students cross the street to the park for recess and outdoor activity. The school district has a new, young children's playground on school property but there is no playground for the older children who attend the school nor is there open space at the school.

The playground at the park needs to be relocated and upgraded to improve its safety. It is located on a small level pad along the grade of a steep slope. The pad is not sufficient for the size of the playground. Therefore the playground does not meet current safety standards. The playground must be re-located to a more level site and brought into compliance with all playground safety standards.

The ball field is surrounded on three sides by steep slopes. The backstop needs to be replaced, and the field needs to be graded to allow water to run off. The slopes around the field provide a great opportunity for sled riding.

The only available off-street parking is located at the adjacent church and in the school lot across the street. Although the church lot is privately owned, the owner has agreed to permit parking for field use.

The park has both tennis and basketball courts. The tennis courts are in fair condition. The court surfaces are cracked and need to be repaired and sealed. The basketball court is dangerous with a high asphalt curb surrounding the perimeter of the court. The court area was apparently intended to hold water for ice skating in the winter. It has turned into a maintenance problem as it collects water and debris throughout the year.

A small shelter is located in the back of the park where it is not visible from outside the park. This creates an undesirable situation where teens can hang out without being seen.

Behind the shelter is a trail that goes into the woods. There may be opportunities for the school to use the trail and the wooded area in the back of the park for environmental studies.

The park is not compliant with ADA standards.

The accompanying drawing shows that there are steep slopes around three sides of the park.

# RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION

Pashek Associates developed Master Plans for Evergreen, Denny, and Herge Parks based on the suggestions of township representatives and the information gathered from public input. In April 2012, Pashek Associates presented a draft version of the designs to the Study Committee for review. Based on the Committee's recommendations, the plans were modified slightly and prepared as final.

## RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENTS

### **Evergreen**

1. Improve and expand parking lot by constructing pervious parking surface, providing 45 parking spaces including two ADA accessible spaces.
2. No upgrades proposed for the log cabin.
3. Add a new nine-space, pervious surface parking area north of the existing lot with entrance and exit roads.
4. Improve the walkway from the community building to the picnic shelter making it ADA compliant.
5. Add a handicapped accessible fishing deck at the west end of the larger pond.
6. The existing community building needs only maintenance work. There are no significant upgrades proposed.
7. The existing garage and storage building only needs maintenance work. There are no significant upgrades proposed.
8. Maintain the existing handicapped parking spaces near the existing fishing deck.
9. Upgrade the fishing deck to make it ADA compliant.
10. Improve the existing picnic groves with upgraded tables and seating.
11. Install a pedestrian bridge over the existing spillway between the upper and lower ponds.
12. Install an aeration fountain on the larger pond.
13. Upgrade the existing picnic shelter by installing a new roof, rain gutters and downspouts, landscaping, bring the ground surface up to floor level, repair deteriorating wood, etc.
14. Install an ADA accessible walkway to the restrooms.
15. Improve the existing outdoor restrooms by installing new fixtures, surfaces, and handicapped accessibility.
16. Rebuild the existing foot bridges across the stream.
17. Install two new play structures; one for two to five year-olds and one for five to twelve year-olds.
18. Improve the existing trails by re-designing and re-building them for accessibility and sustainability. Make appropriate connections to surrounding residential areas. Upgrade to meet the sustainability standards described earlier in the report.
19. Prepare a forestry/habitat management plan through the PA DCNR Bureau of Forestry and the PSU Agriculture Extension Office.
20. Improve the loop trail within the parks developed area to become a natural surface accessible trail.
21. Naturalize the stream by removing the gabions, laying back the banks, constructing pools and riffles, and planting riparian buffers twenty to thirty feet out from the stream and ponds.
22. Improve all trails within the park according to the Sustainable Trail Description found in Chapter 4 of this report.
23. Except for the previously recommended trail upgrades, no additional recommendations are made for Parcel 2; therefore, there is no Master Site Plan Drawing for that section of the Park.

### **Denny Park**

1. Improve the existing parking lot with pervious surface to reduce stormwater runoff - 37 spaces including 2 ADA accessible spaces.
2. Upgrade existing picnic shelter by installing a new roof, painting or staining wood surfaces, adding rain gutters and down spouts, and providing ADA compliant access from the parking lot.
3. Provide accessible routes to field of play and spectators bleachers.
4. Relocate the ballfield. Provide new foul line fencing along first base and outfield fencing. The right field fence should be taller to compensate for short distance. Install new bleachers.

5. Create a regional stormwater infiltration area by improving the existing stormwater pipe through park as part of infiltration design. Engineering for this project will determine the design details. This should be done prior to reconstruction of the ballfield.
6. Improve the court area parking along Denny Park Drive to have three parking spaces with one ADA compliant space. Create an ADA accessible route to court area.
7. Upgrade the existing basketball court and two tennis courts by sealing the surfaces and painting new lines. Install new fencing around the tennis courts.
8. Install a new pervious surface playground parking lot with fourteen spaces including one ADA accessible space.
9. Construct a new 20' x 28' picnic shelter with a capacity of thirty-two persons.
10. Replace the existing playground with a new neighborhood modular play structure designed for five to twelve year-olds.
11. Develop a nine-hole, short-distance technical disc golf course in the wooded area east of the ballfield. Use the local disc golf club as volunteers to design and construct the course.

### **Herge Park**

1. Provide two ADA accessible parking spaces along the east side of Peony Drive.
2. Provide ADA accessible walkways from the ADA parking spaces to spectator bleachers and to the field of play.
3. Improve spectator area to include two sets of five-row bleachers with guiderails along the left field foul line and overlooking the field near the tennis courts.
4. Improve the ballfield by adding infield mix, leveling the outfield, adding new player benches, installing baseline and foul line fencing and a new backstop.
5. Define ADA accessible parking spaces in the church lot to provide access to the shelter and playground.
6. Maintain the existing tennis courts by color sealing the court surface and painting court lines.
7. Provide an accessible route from the ADA compliant parking spaces to the spectator area, tennis courts, playground, and the picnic shelter.
8. Install a three-bay swing set and an interactive ground level play panel.
9. Install a modular playground for children aged five to twelve.
10. Construct a 20x28' shelter with a capacity of 32 persons.
11. Develop a level pad for the future installation of a playground for children aged two to five.

## ESTIMATE OF PROBABLE CONSTRUCTION COSTS

An estimate of probable construction costs was developed for the proposed site improvements. This estimate was based on the assumption that implementation will involve public bidding, utilizing Pennsylvania's 2012 prevailing wage rates. All costs are shown in 2012 dollars. To adequately account for inflation of costs for future improvements, Pashek Associates recommends a (4%) annual increase be budgeted for all work occurring after 2012.

In Pennsylvania, all projects over \$25,000 are required to use the State's prevailing wage rates for construction. However, volunteer labor, as well as donated equipment and materials, may reduce construction costs. Ross Township may choose to construct some of the proposed facilities using its own staff or donated labor and/or materials if they are available. Alternate sources of funding, such as state and federal grant opportunities, may also help to offset direct expenses.

Based on these requirements, the estimated probable construction cost based on current wage rates are:

- Evergreen Park – \$1.375 million
- Denny Park – \$989,566
- Herge Park – \$301,955

Evergreen Park Master Plan					
Item	Item / Recommendation	Quantity	Unit	Unit Cost	Total Item Cost
<b>1</b>	<b>Property</b>				
	Park Sign	1	EA	\$15,000	\$15,000
	Improve and Expanded Parking Lot	3,585	SY	\$125	\$448,125
	Proposed Fishing Deck (35'x30'x23'x40')	1	EA	\$50,000	\$50,000
	Existing Community Center (65'x35') Maintenance upgrades only	1	EA		\$50,000
	Existing Garage and Storage Building (27'x24') Maintenance Upgrades only	1	EA		\$30,000
	Improved Existing Fishing Deck (35'x20')	1	EA	\$17,500	\$17,500
	Proposed Pedestrian Bridge (40'x8')	1	EA	\$80,000	\$80,000
	Improved Existing Shelter (80'x30')	1	EA		\$30,000
	Proposed Accessible Walkway to Restroom	105	LF	\$50	\$5,250
	Aeration Fountain for Pond	1	EA	\$15,000	\$15,000
	Improve/Replace Existing Restroom (10'x15')	1	EA	\$85,000	\$85,000
	Improved/Proposed Footbridges	3	EA	\$25,000	\$75,000
	Play Structure (2-5 year old)	1	EA	\$25,000	\$25,000
	Play Structure (5-12 year old)	1	EA	\$35,000	\$35,000
	Play Surface	1,025	SY	\$125	\$128,125
	Playground Edger	223	LF	\$35	\$7,805
	Nine-hole Disc Golf Course*	1	EA		\$18,000
	Improve Existing Trails	2,125	LF	\$15	\$31,875
	Improve Trail to become Natural Surface Accessible Loop	725	LF	\$25	\$18,125
	Naturalize Stream				TBD
	Lawn Seeding (all disturbed areas)	5	AC	\$2,041	\$10,205
<b>SUBTOTALS</b>					<b>\$1,175,010</b>
	Stake-Out		%	\$1,175,010	\$35,250

	Erosion & Sedimentation Control Measures		%	\$1,175,010	\$47,000
	Professional Services (Design and Engineering Fees)		%	\$1,175,010	\$117,501
<b>TOTAL</b>					<b>\$1,374,762</b>

\*construction by volunteers

Denny Park Master Plan					
Item	Item / Recommendation	Quantity	Unit	Unit Cost	Total Item Cost
<b>1</b>	<b>Overall</b>				
	Park Sign	1	LS	\$15,000	\$15,000
	Earthwork for Field Relocation	1	LS	\$12,500	\$12,500
	Chain-link Fence (along First Base)	280	LF	\$75	\$21,000
	Chain-link Fence (Outfield)	452	LF	\$75	\$33,900
	Existing Parking Lot	1,555	SY	\$125	\$194,375
	Existing Picnic Shelter (Upgraded)	1	EA	\$15,000	\$15,000
	Bleacher (3 row x15')	2	EA	\$2,250	\$4,500
	Infield Mix	1,258	SY	\$35	\$44,030
	Walkway	1,065	LF	\$50	\$53,250
	Court Area Parking	225	SY	\$125	\$28,125
	Existing Basketball Court	2,170	SY	\$15	\$32,550
	Proposed Parking Lot	755	SY	\$125	\$94,375
	Proposed Picnic Shelter (20'x28')	1	EA	\$35,000	\$35,000
	Play Structure (5-12 year old)	1	EA	\$55,000	\$55,000
	Playground Area	1,240	SY	\$125	\$155,000
	Playground Edger	510	LF	\$35	\$17,850
	Nine-hole Disc Golf Course (materials only)*	1	EA		\$18,000
	Lawn Seeding (all disturbed areas)	8	AC	\$2,041	\$16,328
	Regional Stormwater Infiltration Basin				TBD
<b>SUBTOTALS</b>					<b>\$845,783</b>
	Stake-Out		%	\$845,783	\$25,373
	Erosion & Sedimentation Control Measures		%	\$845,783	\$33,831
	Professional Services (Design and Engineering Fees)		%	\$845,783	\$84,578
<b>TOTAL</b>					<b>\$989,566</b>

\* Use the local disc golf organization as volunteers to design and construct the course.

Herge Park Master Plan					
Item	Item / Recommendation	Quantity	Unit	Unit Cost	Total Item Cost
<b>1</b>	<b>Overall</b>				
	Park Sign	1	LS	\$15,000	\$15,000
	Line Striping	1	LS	\$1,500	\$1,500

Walks	240	SY	\$35	\$8,400
Walk to Play Area	465	SY	\$50	\$23,250
Bleachers (5 rows x 21')	3	EA	\$5,000	\$15,000
Fence	410	LF	\$75	\$30,750
Backstop	1	EA	\$8,000	\$8,000
Players Bench	2	EA	\$1,500	\$3,000
3 Bay Swing	1	EA	\$6,000	\$6,000
Play Structure	1	EA	\$45,000	\$45,000
Protective Play Surface	380	SY	\$125	\$47,500
Protective Play Edger	432	LF	\$35	\$15,120
Picnic Shelter (20'x28')	1	EA	\$35,000	\$35,000
Play Panel	1	EA	\$1,500	\$1,500
Seeding	2	AC	\$2,041	\$3,062
<b>SUBTOTALS</b>				<b>\$258,082</b>
Stake-Out		%	\$258,082	\$7,742
Erosion & Sedimentation Control Measures		%	\$258,082	\$10,323
Professional Services (Design and Engineering Fees)		%	\$258,082	\$25,808
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>\$301,955</b>