

# **Ross Township**

**Allegheny County, Pennsylvania**



## **Comprehensive Recreation, Park, and Open Space Plan Update**

**Final**

**February 22, 2022**

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# INTRODUCTION

Ross Township's neighborhoods support 33,500+ residents and are nestled among 14 square miles of hilly, wooded terrain. These neighborhoods connect to locally and regionally significant parks along with the more commonly referenced, vibrant commercial corridors and nodes. To care for the community's greatest civic assets - more than 200 acres of parkland - the Township's Parks and Recreation Department and Public Works Department coordinate daily and long-term needs of 22 park and open space facilities as well as the Municipality's Community Center. The Township offers and manages a variety of programming with focus on youth, adults, and seniors. Building upon the past decade of park and recreation system implementation successes, the Township has developed this Comprehensive Recreation Park, and Open Space Plan Update to guide the next 10 years of park and recreation-related enhancements. This document seeks to highlight and concentrate on a series of essential system-wide recommendations as well as site-specific recommendations that will support the Township's overarching aims to meet future park and recreational needs.

## Project Background

The Township's Parks and Recreation Department collaborated with fellow parks and recreation specialists and a Study Committee to examine the opportunities, challenges, and relationships between current operations, procedures, budget, programming, maintenance, field usage, and capital improvements. In turn, the Update focuses on a series of vital recommendations that address system-wide needs. These recommendations highlight



*Playgrounds provide important social spaces for children in the Ross Township community.*

**“I would love to be able to ride my bike or walk to destinations in the community.”**

*Response from 2021 Community Survey*



five key areas of the Township's civic asset system: Administrative, Programming, Financial, Maintenance, and Facilities.

As a complement to the Township's past and on-going site-specific park work, site visit evaluations of nearly two dozen facilities during this Update illuminate the municipality's depth and commitment to elevating facility conditions over the past decade. As part of this Update, site evaluation work focused on identifying potential complementing facility upgrades/repairs as well as examining opportunities to further enhance accessibility.

Grounded in realistic objectives, this Plan Update emphasizes action steps which are practical and achievable over the next 10 years. Continued collaboration across all Township Departments remains necessary to make the aims of this plan a reality. In doing so, the residents and visitors of Ross will benefit in the municipality's foresight and proactive work.

## Outreach

The Comprehensive Recreation, Park, and Open Space Plan Update's recommendations bring together the ideas of thousands of Township households. Beginning in Winter 2020-21, a community-wide, park and recreation-focused survey gathered resident feedback and preferences in both online and paper formats. Responses representing the input of nearly 20% of the Township's residents were gathered; an impressive number that reveals the community's strong sense of pride and care for local parks! In addition, numerous stakeholders, with a diverse set of interests and priorities, also provided first-hand feedback on the Township's current opportunities and challenges. The Update's volunteer Study Committee, representing every Township quadrant, various age



*While parks fulfill the community's recreation needs, they must also consider environmental factors, such as stormwater management.*

brackets, and a full complement of passive and active recreation interests, aided in discussing the trade-offs and significance of each system-wide recommendation.



*Nature play spaces are becoming increasingly popular recreation destinations.*

# ASSESSMENT OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

A successful comprehensive recreation and open space plan is a journey. The Ross Township Comprehensive Park, Recreation and Open Space plan has been no exception. This document is the product of robust collaboration about park system policies and data.

What is the comprehensive park, recreation, and open space plan and why was it completed?

A comprehensive park, recreation, and open space plan outlines a strategy to accommodate future recreational needs over the next decade. Ross Township has diligently worked towards addressing the issues and goals set forth by previous park, recreation, and open space plans. This plan seeks to continue this ongoing work by providing a guiding framework for park and recreation planning efforts for the next 10 years.



*Improved amenities positively impact the experiences of park visitors.*

Primary drivers influencing the plan include the following:

1. Ross Township currently provides a number of services and programming to the community with opportunity to better inform and engage residents in a predictable and consistent basis.
2. Preparedness for funding opportunities is important for the community to not miss out on grants and other funding channels. More measurable data regarding facilities and programming will assist in these efforts.
3. A shift has occurred in recreation planning as the health and social benefits of time spent outdoors is

**“It is very important to protect open spaces, parks, and trees in our township.”**

*Response from 2021 Community Survey*



increasingly recognized and promoted at all levels of government. This study is evidence of the community's desire to encourage many forms of outdoor activities and recreation to include individual and informal group activities as well as organized athletics. The Covid-19 pandemic has further highlighted the desire for structural shifts in existing park activities. The 2021 Ross Community Survey 'Amenities Needed' results point to this clear interest in connecting with nature. Environmental Education Programs ranked in the top 50% of responses along with Trail, Bike Trails, Green Space and Sledding Areas.

In addition to these primary drivers, the Plan will identify system-wide recommendations as well as site-specific recommendations to determine and prioritize the need for improvements to existing facilities (including ADA handicap accessibility requirements), provide suggestions for maintenance methods and safety issues, etc. Each recommendation falls under one or more of the five principal areas of the Plan, namely Administrative, Financial, Maintenance, Facilities, and Programming.

## ADMINISTRATIVE

### PURPOSE OF THE ASSESSMENT

This review of the Township's administrative role in operating the Parks and Recreation department is to acknowledge that parks and recreation administrators play a key role within the overall park system. They perform an array of financial, operational, and programmatic tasks that advance the mission of the Parks and Recreation department.

### Existing Conditions

In this section we will examine **current organization,**

**roles and responsibilities,** as well as strategies for policy and organizational information/data collection.

### Current Roles and Responsibilities

Currently, the Parks and Recreation Department and the Public Works department both share responsibility for the Township's park system, with Public Works responsible for maintenance and Parks and Recreation Department in charge of operations, site improvement planning/administration, and programming.

The Township currently employs a Parks and Recreation Director who has two full time staff members and part-time seasonal staff members during periods of high activity.

The Director of Parks and Recreation is responsible for the supervision of all Parks and Recreation functions, facilities, and programming; a position with heavy responsibility.

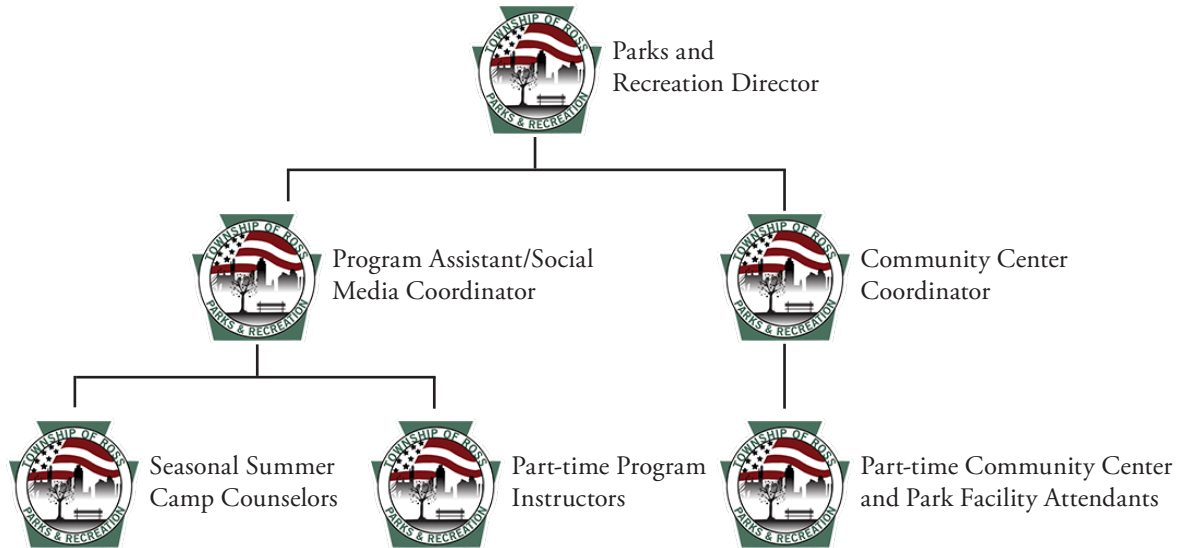
A Program Assistant performs and provides a number of administrative and operational tasks related to programming.

A Community Center Coordinator works in an administrative capacity to coordinate single day recreation programs, keep departmental records of program expenses, and coordinate facility use, in addition to a variety of other tasks.

There are also numerous part time seasonal employees that help facilitate summer programming.

All current roles are summarized in the chart below.

## Current Role Chart



## Key Considerations

- Cooperation between the Parks and Recreation and Public Works Departments is essential in providing the public with a consistent quality experience.
- More extensive data inventory, such as maintenance cost per park metrics, would be helpful in operations and planning efforts.
- The Township no longer distributes information about its programs/offerings through any non-digital platform, which may not reach select demographics. In January 2022, the Parks & Recreation Department accomplished a mailing to approximately 6,000 households specifically aimed at residents over 60. Along with the Spring Programming Guide, a separate correspondence was including asking residents to contact the department if they wished to join our mailing list to receive future printed/mailed Program and Event Guides.



# PROGRAMMING

## PURPOSE OF THE ASSESSMENT

Programming is addressed to recognizing how the offerings of the Township serve the community and in what ways programming may be enhanced or directed.

### Existing Conditions

The Township currently offers (19) unique **Adult Programs** and (17) unique **Youth Programs** as well as (4) **Senior Programs**, (10) classes at the **Community Center**, and (5) **Free Community Events**. Programming highlights include:

- Variety of activity types (Athletics, fitness, social/community events, performing arts, youth camps, etc.)
- Online platform for scheduling/enrollment
- Unique/specialty programs not commonly provided by other peer municipalities include:
  - variety of social dance classes (i.e. ballet, ballet jazz, swing, line)
  - crafts and board/card games (i.e. carving, knitting, games)
  - composting
- Most programs offered year round
- Events occur year-round, with some events offered free of charge and other events with a fee to off-set the cost of the activity. Note that a formalized cost-recovery system has yet to be established.

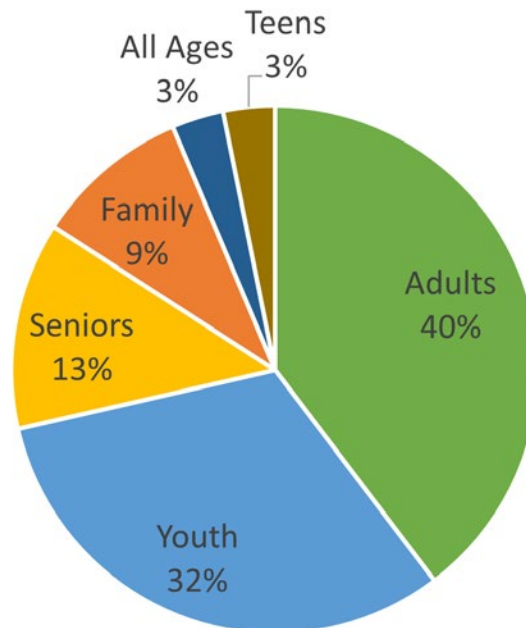


*Planning improvements to popular destinations ensures the parks can continue to serve their communities for years to come.*



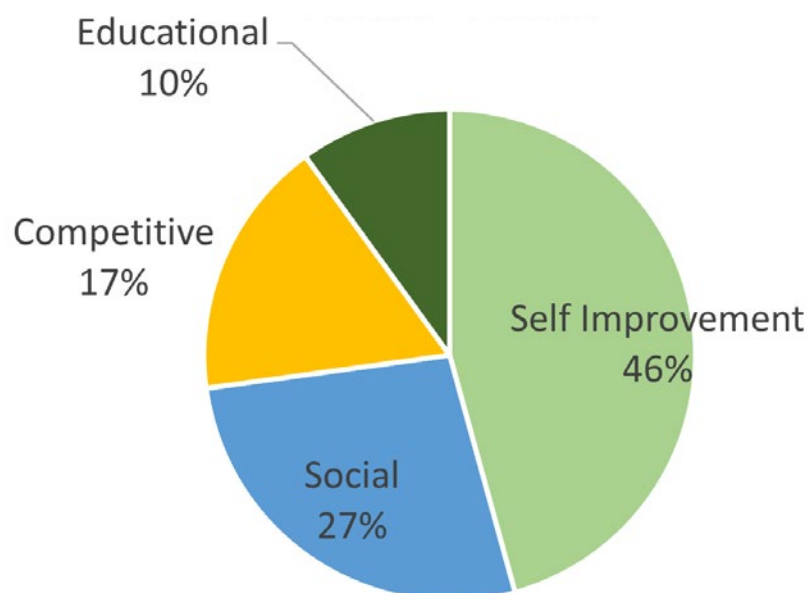
*Accessible playground equipment enables children of all abilities to enjoy the parks.*

**Current Program Age Groups - Overall good balance; opportunity for more teen activities**



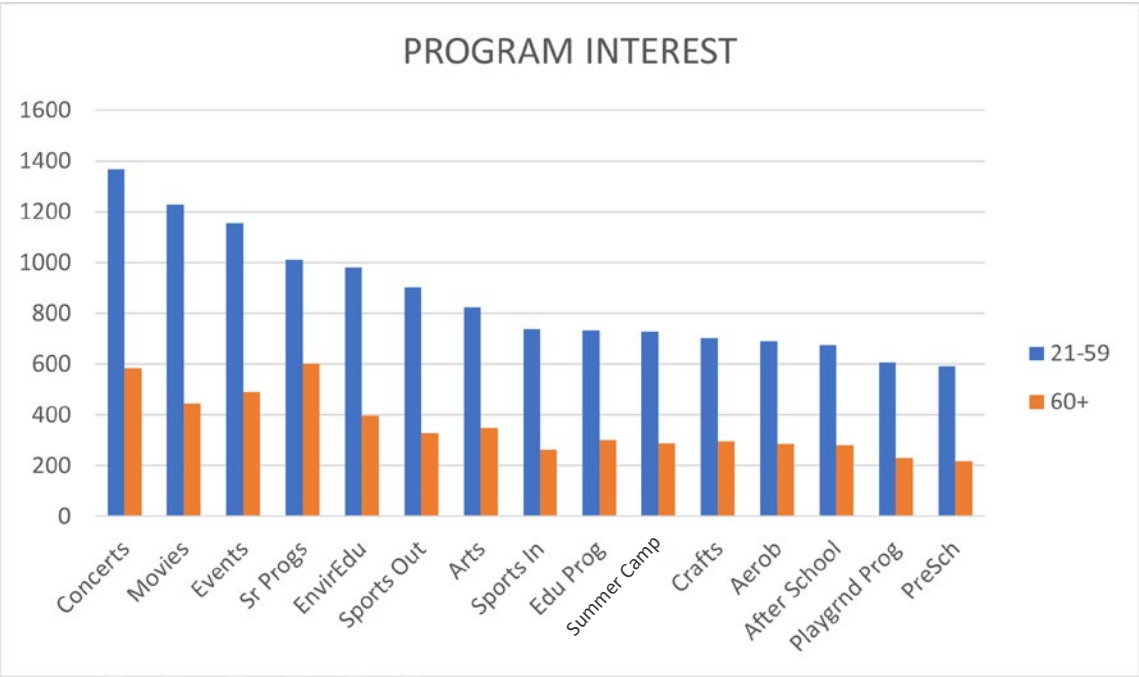
Note: Some programs fall into multiple categories.

**Current Program Format/Theme – Overall good balance; opportunity for more educational programming**

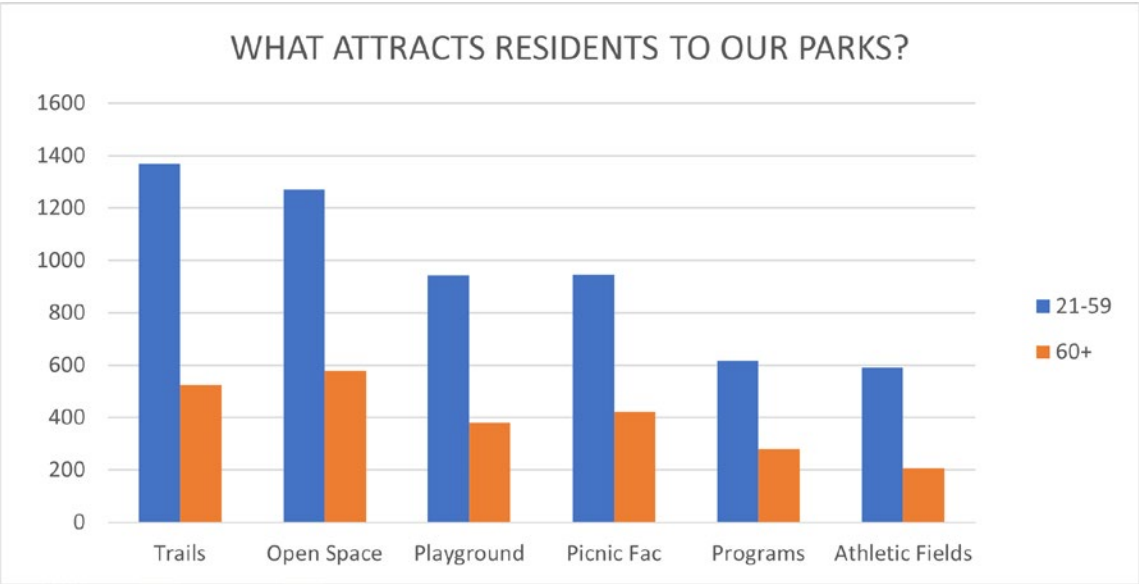


Note: Some programs fall into multiple categories.

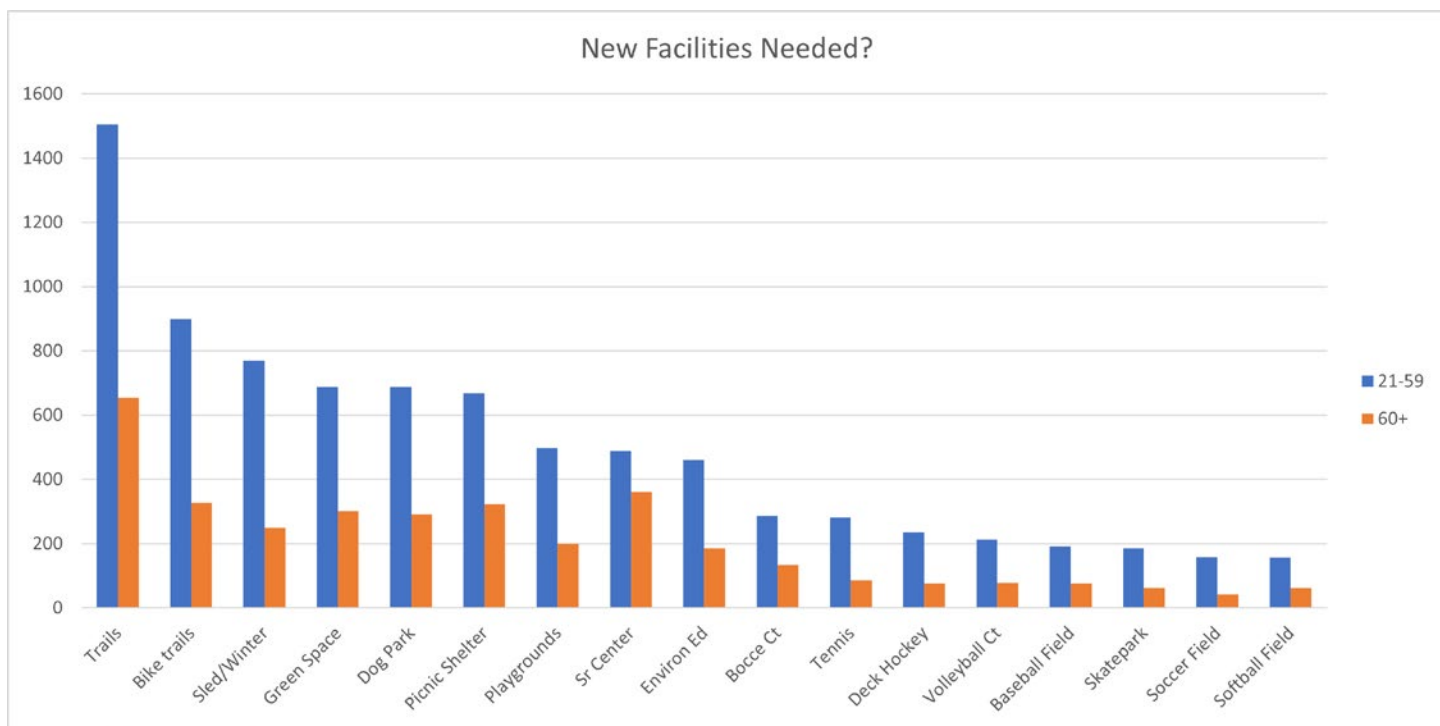
In the winter of 2020, a survey was distributed to residents asking what they would like to see regarding the Township’s programming activities.



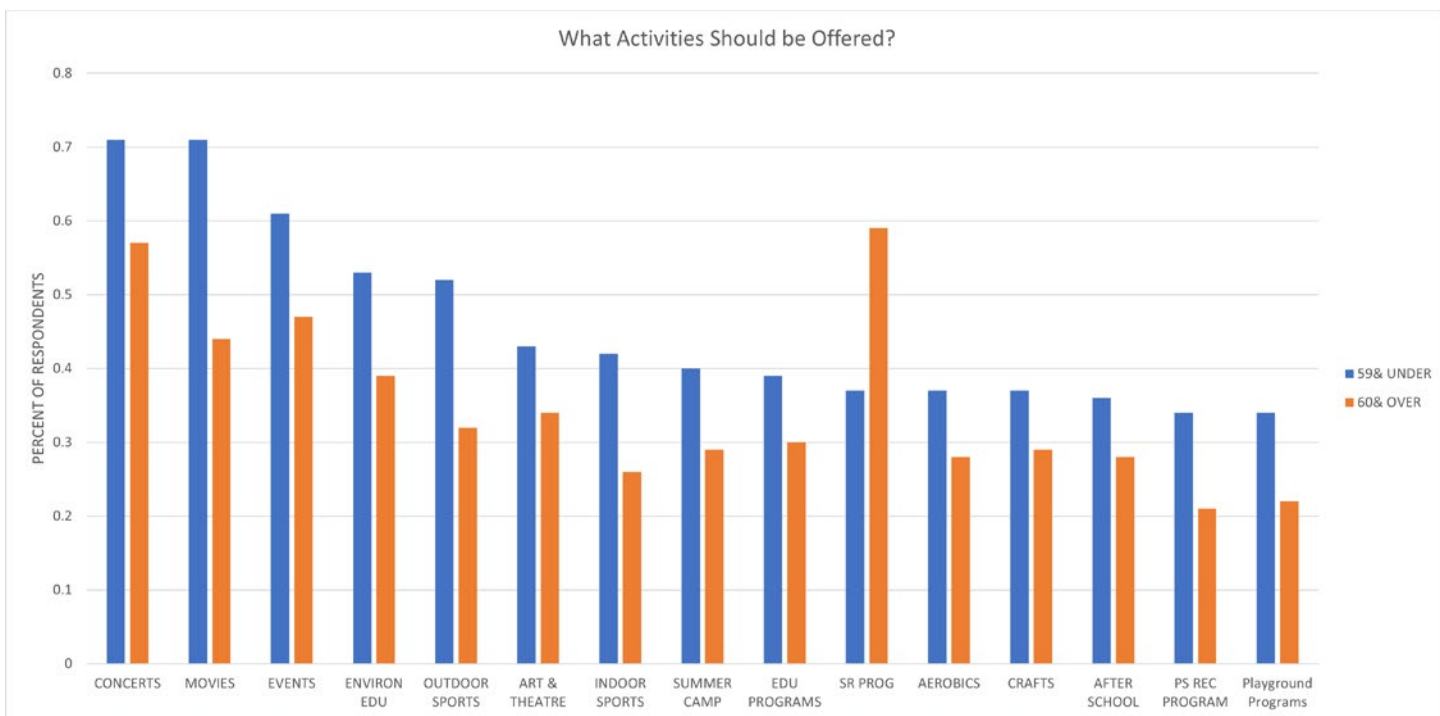
Note: Chart provided by Ross Township



Note: Chart provided by Ross Township

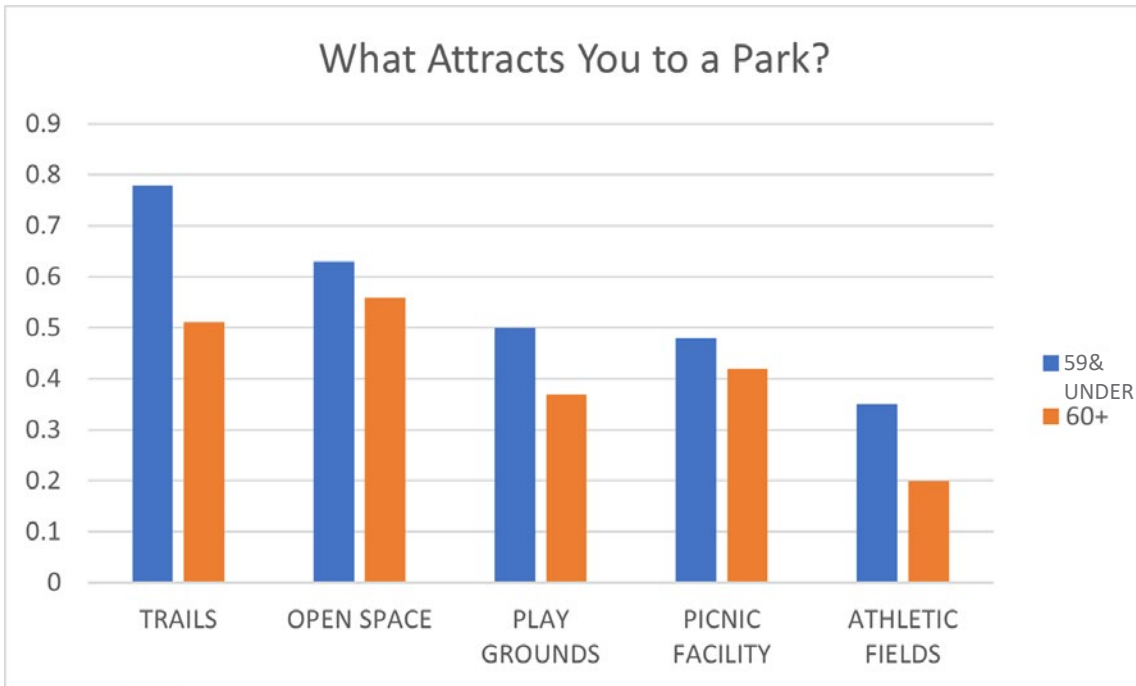


Note: Chart provided by Ross Township



Note: Chart provided by Ross Township





Note: Chart provided by Ross Township

## Key Considerations

- There is opportunity for more programming tailored to teens as well as more educational programming, such as environmental/nature classes.
- Residents tend to enjoy social events the most, such as concerts and movies.
- Program enrollment data from the online registration platform should be organized and analyzed regularly, so that trends/findings may be used to inform future planning regarding programming.

# FINANCIAL

## PURPOSE OF THE ASSESSMENT

The purpose of the financial assessment is to review how the financial aspects of the parks and recreation system are supported, managed, and directed towards respecting the Township’s resources and making recommendations for future improvements.

not considered due to their proximity to large regional county parks (i.e. North Park, Boyce Park), which presents unique local dynamics.

## Existing Conditions

The following table compares some key financial metrics between Ross Township and two peer municipalities. Each municipality was chosen because of comparable background demographics, range of programming offered, presence of a community recreation center, and scale of park facilities. Some ‘peer’ municipalities were

	Ross Township	Peer Municipality A	Peer Municipality B
<b>Overview</b>			
Households	13,896	13,593	7,733
Total Land Area	14 Sq. Mi.	6 Sq. Mi.	20 Sq. Mi.
# of Parks	21 parks	16 parks	7 parks
Total Parks Area	160 Acres	216 Acres	300 Acres
Total miles traveled from main Public Works facility to all parks	65.8 Miles	28.7 Miles	16.6 Miles
% of total General Fund expenses allocated to Parks & Recreation	2.7%	11%	12%
% of total General Fund expenses (Minus additional facilities i.e. golf course, ice rink, pool, tennis center)	2.7%	4%	10%
<b>Parks Maintenance<sup>1</sup></b>			
Supplies & Services	\$140,200	\$304,500	\$187,500
Personnel Wages	\$200,000 <sup>2</sup>	\$286,580	\$494,220
Total	\$340,200	\$591,080	\$681,720
Cost per Acre	\$2,126*	\$2,736	\$2,272
<b>Parks Programming</b>			
Number and variety of programs offered	--	Slightly More Developed	Similar
Parks/Rec Programming Budget	\$280,150	\$438,190	\$259,400
Cost per Household	\$20	\$32	\$33

Note: All numbers representative of the 2019 General Fund

1. Maintenance for additional facilities (i.e. golf course, ice rink, pool, tennis center), not comparable with Ross Township, are subtracted.

2. Estimated around \$200,000 for 1 Public Works staff member, Summer Help, and occasional project assistance.

\*Value is likely higher due to personnel costs allocated within the Public Works Budget.

# MAINTENANCE

## PURPOSE OF THE ASSESSMENT

Quality park and recreation facilities should be clean, safe, and welcoming for all visitors. In addition to athletics and individual activities, they are also places where the public can come together to build a sense of community. Maintenance and upkeep of park facilities ensure both day to day safety as well as the longevity of the Township's investments in fields, play structures, and other various amenities.

### Existing Conditions

Currently, Public Works Department is the primary responsible party for maintaining parks and recreation facilities. In general, community members recognized the Township's excellent job of maintaining its facilities. This comment has been echoed throughout the community survey and by stakeholders in our stakeholder interviews.

Facilities are maintained on a regularly scheduled basis, an approach that generally works to keeps park facilities functional. However, there is no record of which parks

require more attention than other facilities. Without such data, there is no way to evaluate and analyze current maintenance procedures. As a result, certain inefficiencies may exist.

The Township has invested significantly in upgrading its fields. Current records of which parks' fields have been improved are kept by the Director of Parks and Recreation and are shared with the Public Works Department. In general, each upgrade project is initiated on a case by case basis when facilities reach the end of their lifespan or require extensive rehab. However, the Township does have a long term schedule that outlines the maintenance cycles of each and every facility.

## Key Considerations

### NRPA Maintenance Standards

Maintenance Goals and Guidelines that have been developed into Township policy could help to make scheduling tasks more accessible to people who are onboarding or streamlining maintenance tasks.



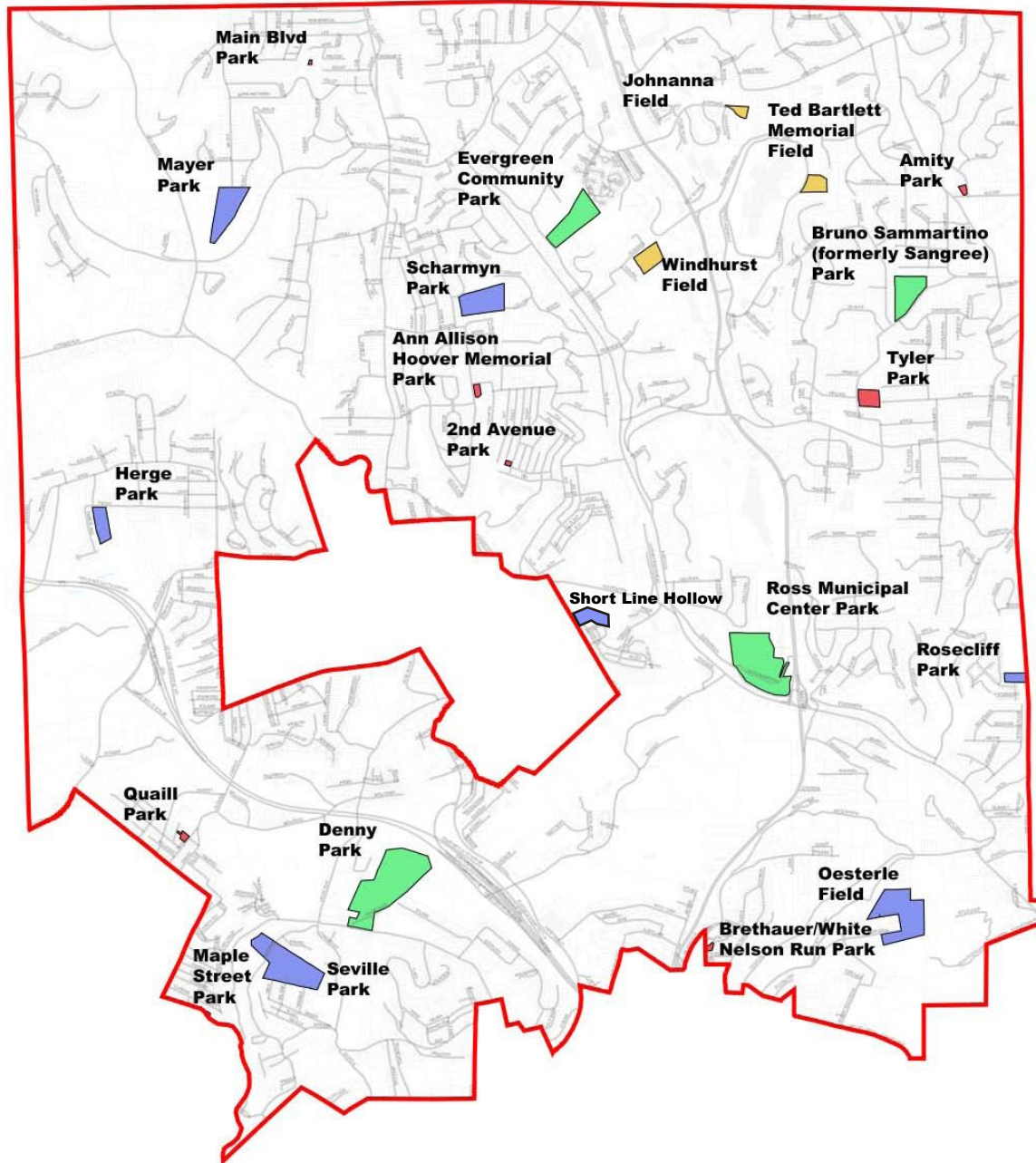


*Routine maintenance practices and clear maintenance standards ensure the parks are safe and welcoming to their visitors.*

# FACILITIES

## PURPOSE OF THE ASSESSMENT

The Township currently operates 22 parks on ~200 acres of land. Facilities range from open multi-use sports fields to playgrounds to ball fields and a Community Center. The Municipality's Parks and Recreation Department coordinates the use of the fields and spaces. Visual assessments made used a standardized rubric that catalogued park amenities as well as identified potential areas for further enhancement. Associated mapping using geographic information system (GIS) technology also explored the parks in a systemic, networked way revealing any potential patterns or connections between different sites.



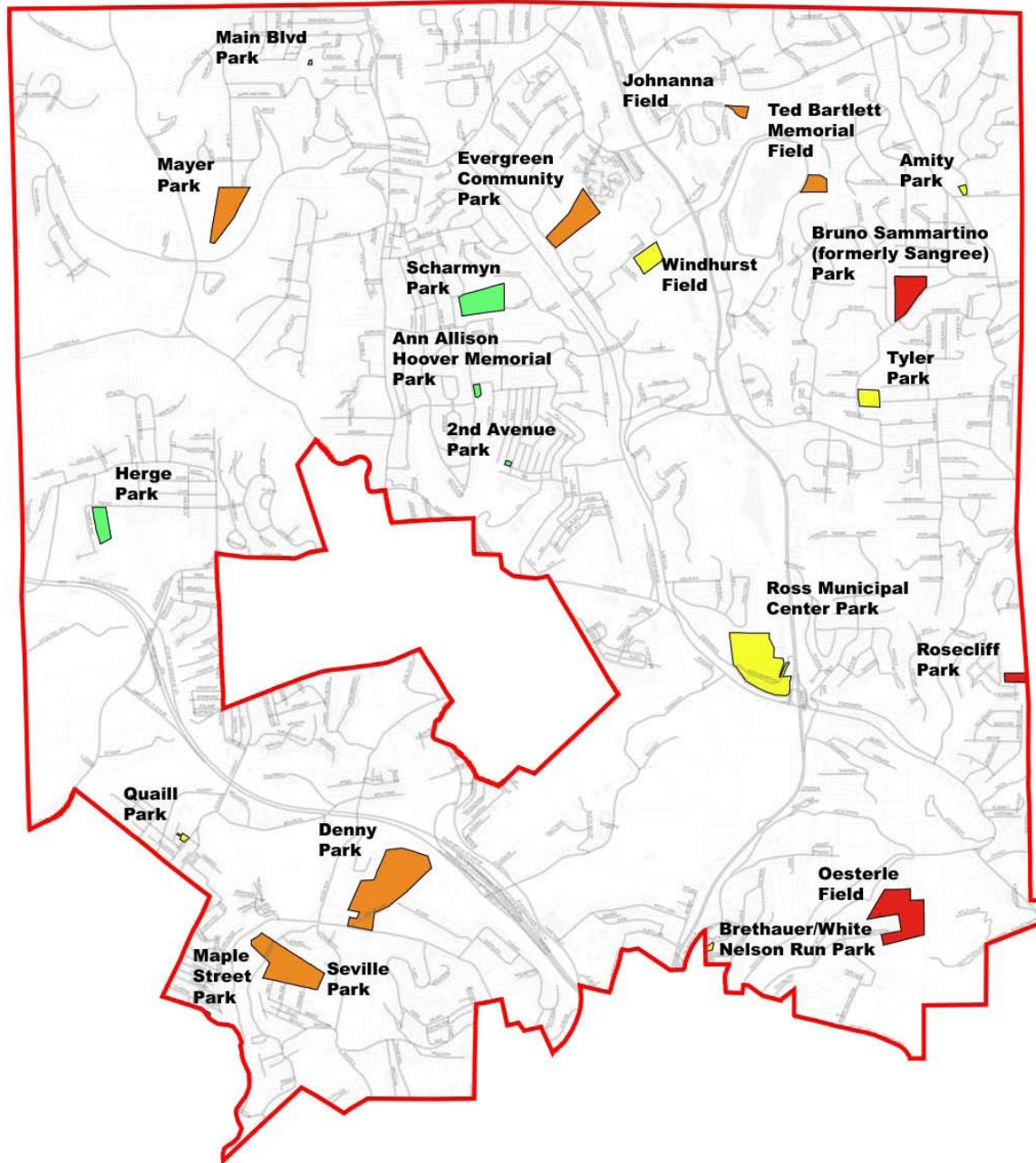
## Ross Township Park Typologies

- **Community** - Larger, regional oriented.
- **Neighborhood** - Smaller, non-regionally focused.
- **Small Neighborhood** - Small, focused on serving immediate area.
- **Sports Complex** - Offers team based sports oriented programming facilities.



1 inch = 4,200 feet





## Ross Township Parks

Remaining Efforts Per Last Comp Plan

- Greatest Number of Efforts Remaining
- Medium Number of Efforts Remaining
- Fewest Number of Efforts Remaining
- No Current Efforts Remaining



1 inch = 4,200 feet



Park Name/Type	PARK SCORE	PARK RATING			
	Overall Rating	Maintenance	Accessibility	Age Groups	Equipment
<b>Community</b>					
Bruno Sammartino Park	Very Good	•	○	•	•
Denny Park	Very Good	•	•	•	•
Evergreen Community Park	Very Good/Good	●	●	•	•
Ross Municipal Center Park/John Herb Field	Very Good	•	•	•	•
<b>Neighborhood</b>					
Herge Park	Very Good	•	•	•	•
Mayer Park	Good	•	●	●	○
Oesterle Field	Good/Fair	•	○	○	●
Rosecliff Park	Good	•	○	○	●
Scharmyn Park	Good/Fair	○	●	•	○
Seville Park	Very Good/Good	•	●	•	●
<b>Small Neighborhood</b>					
Second Avenue Park	Good	●	○	●	●
Amity Park	Good	●	○	•	●
Ann Allison Hoover Memorial Park	Very Good	•	●	•	●
Brethauer/White Park/ Nelson Park	Good	•	●	●	●
Main Boulevard Park	Good/Fair	•	○	○	●
Maple Street Park	Very Good/Good	●	●	•	•
Quaill Park	Good	●	●	●	●
Tyler Park	Very Good	•	○	•	•
<b>Sports Complex</b>					
Johnanna Field	Good/Fair	●	●	○	○
Ted Bartlett Memorial Field	Good	●	●	●	●
Windhurst Field	Good	●	●	●	●
<b>Public Green Space- Planning in Progress</b>					
Short Line Hollow					
	Very Good		•		
	Good		●		
	Fair		○		
	N/A				

Park Name/Type	ATHLETICS / FIELDS				PLAY / LEISURE				AMENITIES			
	Multiple Use Field	Baseball / Softball	Basketball	Tennis	Shelter/ Pavilion	Play Space	Trail	Water Feature	Seating	Trash Cans	Drinking Fountain	Restrooms
Amity Park	-	-	•	-	•	•	•	-	✓	✓	-	✓
Ann Allison Hoover Memorial Park	-	•	•	-	•	•	•	•	✓	✓	✓	-
Brethauer/White Park/ Nelson Park	-	•	•	-	•	•	-	-	-	✓	-	-
Bruno Sammartino Park	-	•	U	-	•	•	-	-	✓	✓	-	✓
Denny Park	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	-	✓	✓	-	✓
Evergreen Community Park	-	-	-	-	•	•	•	•	✓	✓	-	✓
Herge Park	-	•	•	•	•	•	-	-	✓	✓	-	✓
Johnanna Field	-	○	•	-	-	-	-	-	✓	✓	-	✓
Main Boulevard Park	-	-	•	-	•	•	-	-	-	✓	-	-
Maple Street Park	-	•	•	-	•	•	-	-	✓	✓	-	0
Mayer Park	-	○	•	-	•	○	-	-	✓	✓	-	✓
Oesterle Field	•	•	•	-	○	•	-	-	✓	✓	-	✓
Quaill Park	•	•	•	-	•	•	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rosecliff Park	•	•	•	-	•	•	-	-	✓	✓	-	✓
Ross Municipal Center Park/John Herb Field	•	•	•	-	•	•	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓
Scharmyn Park	-	○	○	○	•	○	-	-	✓	✓	-	✓
Second Avenue Park	-	-	•	-	0	•	○	-	✓	✓	-	-
Seville Park	-	•	•	0	○	•	•	-	✓	✓	-	✓
Ted Bartlett Memorial Field	•	•	-	-	•	-	-	-	✓	✓	-	✓
Tyler Park	•	•	-	-	•	•	-	-	✓	✓	-	✓
Windhurst Field	•	•	-	-	•	•	-	-	✓	✓	-	✓

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## PARK SYSTEM WIDE RECOMMENDATIONS

### Administrative

1. **Diversify and schedule parks and recreation-related communication strategies across electronic and printed media for interaction with community members 1) at regular intervals and 2) to broaden awareness of Township opportunities/assets.**
  - a. Effectively communicating with the community is a key tool in promoting the parks and recreation image and agenda in the Township. To achieve a greater impact and expand the knowledge of existing and upcoming events the Township should broaden its reach in a cost-effective manner.
  - b. The Township has an older demographic which is not easily reached by a digital only strategy, to address this the Township needs to broaden its outreach strategy. Reintroducing printed media is an effective tool to reach out to the community. A large portion of survey respondents (43.37%) responded that they wanted print media via the community survey. This will benefit not only older residents but newcomers to the community who may be unaware of the Township's parks role.
2. **Hire an additional parks and recreation staff member who will coordinate outdoor programming, supervise vocational and DCNR crews, promote volunteering with the Parks and Recreation throughout the community, and facilitate marketing and communication regarding programming with residents.**
  - a. With this position the Township will be able to deliver a higher level of service and respond to the Township's needs more adeptly.
3. **Highlight (to residents) each season's key tasks and cooperative work between the Parks/Recreation Department and the Public Works Department that was completed and is slated for the coming season.**
  - a. Pointing to upcoming work that is completed and/or slated for completion helps to act as another touch point with the community and reinforces that the park system is working for them.
  - b. An outline of key tasks can also act as a supplement to the Township's public relations strategy reminding the community of upcoming amenities and generating excitement about the park system.

4. **Outline and prioritize park facilities for potential re-purposing as green space based upon criteria that examines each facility's annual maintenance demands, service area, ecological sensitivity, and programming capacity.**
  - a. Current parks should be examined to see if they are meeting the community's needs and are being used in a way that is valuable to the community.
  - b. There are a few parks within the system that are isolated and cannot be brought into compliance with current ADA guidelines without considerable investment.
  - c. Create a cost/benefit analysis to assess if conversion of park property into green space is necessary.
5. **Produce a guest services handbook that focuses on policies and procedures for all Parks/Recreation-related Township employees in continuing to deliver high-quality, consistent customer-service oriented communications to the general public.**
  - a. Procedures can be identified and streamlined for easy on-boarding of new members to the parks and recreation staff.
  - b. Tasks, once identified, can be examined to see if current job descriptions are matching current Township Parks and Recreation roles.
6. **Prioritize the park-by-park listing of remaining accessibility-related improvements based upon each facility's level of visitation.**
  - a. Outstanding accessibility remaining improvements should be addressed to allow all members of the community access to facilities. Accessibility related park issues were a topic that stakeholders brought up numerous times in the project stakeholder interview process and would like to see addressed.
  - b. Improvements will promote a positive image of the park and recreation system in the community and demonstrate the Township's commitment to serving all members of the community.
7. **Work with Township leadership as part of the adopted Ross Township Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan to construct the plan's identified short-term segments with direct connections to existing parks.**
  - a. This action will promote health and wellness within the community allowing people to easily access parks without the use of motorized transportation.
  - b. Creating a walking network will benefit all residents (including older residents) and was a highly ranked issue in the community survey.

8. **Develop and implement a system for tracking and reporting park and recreation visitation/participation.**
  - a. Tracking this information will reveal trends and data on what parks are being used and how.
  - b. By regularly documenting which facilities are being used the Township can decide how to prioritize and allocate funding to different areas of the park system.
9. **Foster continued interdepartmental cooperation between Ross Township departments to strengthen the efficiencies and effectiveness of capital improvement planning and funding pursuits.**
  - a. Greater cooperation between Township staff will result in a more effective delivery of services to the community.
10. **Create an advisory committee whose sole focus is to ensure that the Comprehensive Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan is being carried out.**
  - a. This advisory committee will help to ensure that the Township is meeting the goals set forth by the plan.
  - b. This is an opportunity for community residents to participate in civic life and create a sense of ownership of the park system.



## **Programming**

1. **Assemble a Senior-focused Steering Committee (12 months max.) to prepare the Parks and Recreation-related components of a Livability Action Plan supporting components of AARP planning principles.**
  - a. Planning for senior adults should focus on future generations of active, healthy seniors who are more likely to use community recreation centers throughout their lifetime and on an expanded basis once they retire.
2. **Expand the Township's nature-based recreation offerings as part of multi-generational programming opportunities.**
  - a. Connection with nature helps citizens to reduce their stress and mental fatigue and contributes to their sense of well-being. Areas with natural features help citizens develop social ties that foster strong neighborhoods and a sense of community.
  - b. Expanding the Township's nature based programming dovetails with the wishes of the community that were expressed in the community survey. Residents wanted to see expanded environmental focused programming and increased walking areas.
3. **Outline and host a Township-wide Fun and Fit challenge; initiate 3-year Healthy Place to Live and align programming with concept.**
  - a. Supplement the Township's existing walking and fitness programming with a fitness challenge component; fitness challenges can be a way to get the community excited about wellness and healthy living.
  - b. Goals can be incentivized and promoted using step-tracking devices and check-in apps/websites.

## Financial

1. **Analyze revenue streams from programming and determine the manner and extent to which offerings relate to the Township's philosophy on cost recovery; align fee structure based upon the following: free/minimal cost, fee program partially offset by Township taxes, fee programs mostly paid for by individuals, full-cost recovery programs that cover direct/indirect expenditures, and full-cost recovery programs that cover direct/indirect expenditures with designated percentage of profit..**
  - a. The purpose of the financing assessment is to review how the financial aspects of parks and recreation are supported, managed, and directed toward meeting community goals and making future recommendations.
  - b. Operating budgets support the daily operations of parks and recreation and revenue and streams should be analyzed to see if they are contributing positively to the township.
2. **Map and publish park/recreation facility-related capital improvement projects (CIP) to strategize the sequence, locations, and relationships of targeted annual enhancements.**
  - a. Aids in focusing park resources regarding long-term planning.
  - b. Reduces waste or duplicative efforts.
3. **Explore opportunities to create a Friends of the Parks organization to assist in long-term planning initiatives and funding strategies. Friends should function as an independent, 501 (c)(3) organization that has a mission to fund special parks projects and collaborates with municipal staff.**
  - a. Friends group should meet on a regular basis to make recommendations on matters of budget and policy to the Parks and Recreation Department. In this respect members should remain apolitical and term limits are advisable.
  - b. Fundraising for the park system frees up Parks and Recreation administrators to focus on more pressing park system needs.

4. **Create a detailed, digitally-based and searchable operational/maintenance cost accounting database that tracks a selection of representative neighborhood and community-scale facilities; evolve approach to systemwide cost accounting and all Township park and recreation facilities.**
  - a. Gathering data about park facilities is an integral component in understanding where Township resources are being spent.
  - b. This action will help the Township to focus resources and respond more efficiently when making decisions about purchasing future amenities.
5. **Incorporate expanded weekend and evening program opportunities so a greater percentage of residents have opportunity to participate in Township recreation.**
  - a. Diversifying the schedule of Township opportunities can alleviate some of the stress on the community center and allow more residents to participate in programming that does not currently align with their schedules.
6. **Rejuvenate family-oriented programming with competitive and noncompetitive offerings.**
  - a. The recent community survey identified that there was a strong desire among the community to have activities which are inclusive and not competitive in nature.
  - b. These events can act as community building activities which residents (particularly older residents) would like to participate in.

## **Maintenance**

1. **Establish department routine maintenance manuals that include the major/repetitive operations/activities as per each park classification and align with that classification level of care to ensure the longevity of amenities and to expedite the time frame for repairs. Evolve the maintenance manuals into a digital system-wide searchable database.**
  - a. Maintenance manuals act as a checklist and help to standardize the level of care that park facilities receive.
  - b. Maintenance manuals are also an effective tool in on-boarding new park staff and familiarizing them with tasks that need to be completed.
2. **Design and install an improved unifying park signage system to both reinforce park identity and to provide referenceable locations necessary for increased public safety.**
  - a. Park signage increases safety by informing park goers of their location within the Township.
  - b. Georeferencing of parks should be updated so that park users can obtain clear directions to parks via their mobile devices.
3. **Continue and maintain the Township's commitment to improving athletic and multi-use fields at park facilities.**
  - a. Park rules notify park users that they are on public property and alert them to a set of laws/rules the Township has enacted regarding parks for the public's well being.
  - b. Enlarge text of park rules and highlight those which are most relevant/applicable to the park.
4. **Post park rules at all park/recreation properties consistently and prominently.**
  - a. The Township has endeavored to improve its fields and has invested in bringing them into excellent condition. This upkeep needs to be continued to maintain the investment in the Township's fields.
  - b. Improve upon the acting director's field maintenance records by making them digital so that they may be easily updated and distributed to Staff members.

## **Facilities**

1. **Adopt park classification standards to prioritize parks based on usage and size as well as to align maintenance requirements and investment strategies.**
  - a. Park classification allows the Township to ascribe certain levels of maintenance to each park using a set of criteria and schedule of maintenance procedures.
  - b. Certain parks and fields are recommended to be reclassified into different types of recreational spaces to allow the park system flexibility in offering different levels of service.
2. **Install park way-finding signage to highlight the full range of each facilities amenities and to orient park goers to the site's opportunities for fun.**
  - a. Way-finding is important in creating a safe environment for park users which connects them to park facilities.
3. **Phase construction of a way-finding system alerting the public to all park locations concurrent with the implementation of improvements outlined in the 2019 Ross Township Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.**
  - a. Park way-finding outside of the park's boundaries will be limited to larger/regional parks that serve people who are not in the immediate neighborhood so as not to overwhelm smaller, neighborhood-oriented parks.
  - b. Enlarge text of park rules and highlight those which are most relevant/applicable to the park.
4. **Develop a common park edge treatment to distinguish public space that adjoins private property.**
  - a. Creating a common edge treatment for parks will help to alert park patrons to when they are on civic or private property.
5. **Create a master plan for the 18 acre Osterle Park.**
  - a. A master plan should be developed for Osterle Park so that future improvements can be made to the park in a coordinated manner. Considerations could be: diversifying the parks recreational opportunities (e.g. consider removing one of the ballfields and replacing with a multi-use field), regrading the slope to create ADA access to the upper portion of the park, expanding pavilion and creating opportunities for informal outdoor gatherings and play.



6. **Recognize the important strides that have been made regarding the 2012 Comprehensive Park, Recreation and Open Space plan and continue addressing the remaining identified action items.**
  - a. Continue to address the pending items from the 2012 plan to highlight the Parks and Recreation Department ongoing commitment to the community.
7. **Evaluate the feasibility of incorporating amenities such as: improved lighting, composting toilets, and the addition of security cameras.**
  - a. A cost/benefit analysis should be performed when contemplating the addition of new amenities.
  - b. The Township should consider using technology like composting toilets to explore possible funding options and partnerships.
8. **Implement synergistic amenities in parks.**
  - a. Parks should have seating to accommodate caretakers to rest and relax while children enjoy other amenities.
9. **Consider converting certain parks into green space based on suitability analysis.**
  - a. Main Boulevard Park should be considered for conversion into green space due to the safety issues posed by accessing the park. Current erosion from slope runoff has damaged the parks entryway.
  - b. Johnanna Field should also be considered for conversion into green space as it also poses a safety issue due to the proximity of a stormwater detention area and great difficulty in bringing the park into ADA compliance.
10. **Update the due diligence report made for the park property referred to as Short Line.**
  - a. An update to the due diligence study will possibly lead to other avenues that can make recommendations or lead to recommendations of how to treat that park property.
  - b. Coordination with the county conservation district will be useful in determining possible pathways for development at biological relevance at the site.
11. **Implement a dog park feasibility study for Seville Park**
  - a. The current small dog agility course if successful could be used to reinforce the idea of a dog park being a popular amenity for the community.

## Site-Specific Recommendations

Installation of security cameras and Wifi is recommended for all parks with electricity and/or addition of electrical poles when appropriate. Water fountains in community parks are also recommended. Recycling capability should be instituted at all community parks.

*\*Italicized items are remaining actions from last plan*

### **Facilities**

- a) Amity Park
  - i) *Install ADA parking spaces and accessible pathway.*
  - ii) Replace basketball backboard nets.
  - iii) Basketball court cracks need to be repaired.
  - iv) Play area is not ADA accessible.
  - v) *Remulch play area.*
- b) Ann Allison Hoover Memorial Park – To address significant cost concerns, the North Hills Estates Civic Association is getting pricing information to replace the entire gazebo.
  - i) *Reroof to replace moss covered roof.*
  - ii) *Restore drinking fountain to operational status.*
  - iii) *Gravel pathway needs fines/repaving.*
- c) Brethauer/White Park/Nelson Park
  - i) *Basketball court needs re-striping*
  - ii) *Replace rusted fencing.*
  - iii) *Park is not currently ADA accessible. Grade too steep for wheelchair access.*
- d) Bruno Sammartino (Sangree) Park – These concerns are addressed in the 2018 Master Site Plan. The engineering team is creating an update to show the remaining work and the site modifications implemented for the basketball court. The field orientation will need to be discussed considering functionality and planning for accessibility.
  - i) *Replace the backstop on the ballfield.*
  - ii) *Improve the handicap parking spaces to be ADA compliant.*
  - iii) *Provide ADA accessible pathways from the compliant parking area to all facilities within the park.*
  - iv) *Re-roof the picnic shelter.*
  - v) *Rehabilitate the infield.*
  - vi) *Replace existing bleachers with (4) five row bleachers with guide rails.*
  - vii) *Replace and relocate the player benches.*
  - viii) *Remulch the play area*
  - ix) *Eliminate poison ivy near play area*
- e) Denny Park
  - i) *Upgrade existing picnic shelter- consider garage-door style doors to allow for three-season use and addition of water supply/sink inside shelter*

- ii) *Improve court area parking.*
  - iii) *Implement the proposed parking lot.*
  - iv) *Trim back vegetation in basketball and tennis court*
  - v) *Trim vegetation near hiking trail*
- f) **Evergreen Park**
  - i) *Improve existing shelter (80'x30')*
  - ii) *Create an accessible walkway to the restrooms.*
  - iii) *Create and install proposed footbridges.*
  - iv) *Improve existing trails- consider installing fitness equipment along trails*
  - v) *Improve trail to become natural surface accessible loop.*
  - vi) *Naturalize the stream area.*
  - vii) *Install ADA accessible picnic tables*
  - viii) *Create an accessible pathway to the play area.*
  - ix) *Provide ADA companion seating at seating areas.*
  - x) *Create ADA parking spaces in lower lot.*
- g) **Herge Park**
  - i) *Outfield needs reseeding*
- h) **Johnanna Memorial Field**
  - i) *Develop an ADA access route from the parking space to the field and seating.*
  - ii) *Infield needs maintenance*
  - iii) *Backstop is rusted and needs replacing*
  - iv) *ADA spots need restriping*
- i) **Main Boulevard Park**
  - i) *Basketball area needs restriping*
  - ii) *Park needs a park sign*
  - iii) *Create accessible pathway into the park if feasible*
- j) **Maple Street Park**
  - i) *Play area needs remulching*
  - ii) *Play structures need updated*
- k) **Mayer Park**
  - i) *Paint two (2) ADA parking spaces in the existing lot near the picnic tables.*
  - ii) *Replace the existing backstop.*
  - iii) *Install two (2) new bleachers.*
  - iv) *Install two (2) player benches.*
- l) **Osterle Park – The Township may want to consider alternative uses for this property, which could be explored through a Master Site Plan and Public Input process.**
  - i) *Remove and replace the backstops on both fields.*
  - ii) *Rehabilitate the infields.*
  - iii) *Replace the 8' baseline fence on the north ballfield.*
  - iv) *Replace foul line fencing on the south field.*
  - v) *Create two (2) handicap parking spaces on the ballfield level of the park.*

- vi) *Provide ADA accessible paths to each ballfield and spectator areas.*
- vii) *Install new sets of bleachers.*
- viii) *Install a modular play structure at the upper level.*
- ix) Backstop area is rusting and needs replaced
- x) Repair shelter roof
- m) Quail Park
  - i) Paint an ADA compliant parking space near the sidewalk entrance to the park on Bellevue Terrace.
  - ii) Install ADA accessible pathways from the center walkway to all equipment.
  - iii) Springer play area amenities are old and need to be replaced
  - iv) Remulch play area under swings
  - v) Widen pedestrian pathway into park
  - vi) Provide ADA accessibility to each play structure.
  - vii) Provide ADA accessible pedestrian entrance into park.
- n) Rosecliff Park
  - i) *Remove the asphalt curb around the basketball court; seal and line the court.*
  - ii) *Install decorative fencing between the play area and both the basketball court and ballfield.*
  - iii) *Provide ADA accessible pathways from the compliant parking area to all facilities within the park.*
  - iv) *Re-roof the picnic shelter.*
  - v) *Replace the backstops on both ballfields.*
  - vi) *Replace existing bleachers with four (4) five row bleachers with guide rails.*
- o) Ross Community Township Park
  - i) Stripe basketball court. Fix cracks in basketball court.
  - ii) *Install a 3'-4' decorative fence between the play area and the parking lot.*
  - iii) Play area needs remulching.
  - iv) Create ADA access to picnic table near basketball court.
  - v) Install an ADA accessible picnic table.
  - vi) Address drip line issue from pavilion/shelter roof.
- p) Scharmyrn Park (under the association area of responsibility)
  - i) Rehabilitate baseball infield
  - ii) Reseed lawn area
  - iii) Replace tennis net
  - iv) Play structure needs updating
  - v) Trim back overgrown vegetation
  - vi) Add accessible routes to amenities
- q) Second Avenue Park
  - i) Remulch under play structure
  - ii) Address drainage issues near play area
  - iii) Nature trail needs better signage to ensure trail users remain on designated path

- r) Seville Park
  - i) *Paint (2) ADA compliant parking spaces on the adjacent road and create accessible connections from the main walkway in the park to each piece of equipment.*
  - ii) *Install a new backstop and 8' base line and full foul line fencing.*
  - iii) *Replace existing bleachers with two five row bleachers with guiderails.*
  - iv) *Connect trails from Lucerne Ave and make sustainability upgrades to the trail system.*
- s) Ted Bartlett Memorial Field
  - i) *Construct two (2) ADA compliant parking spaces behind the third base bleachers.*
  - ii) *Create accessible connections to the concession stand and seating area.*
  - iii) *Install a new backstop (association related)*
  - iv) *Improve the landscaping on the hill side ( association related)*
  - v) *Improve the roadway to the lower level of the park and make it ADA compliant.*
  - vi) *Repaint dugouts (association related)*
  - vii) *Update concession building (association related)*
- t) Tyler Park
  - i) *Construct two (2) 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.*
  - ii) *Grade the soccer field to eliminate uneven terrain.*
  - iii) *Playground needs remulching*
  - iv) *Provide accessible ADA seating next to picnic tables*
- u) Windhurst Park
  - i) *Construct two (2) ADA compliant parking spaces in the existing parking lot and create accessible connection from the parking lot to the sports fields, spectator areas, and picnic shelter.*
  - ii) *Grade the soccer field to eliminate uneven terrain and improve drainage.*
  - iii) *Replaced rusted and sagging fencing.*
  - iv) *Seating is not ADA accessible.*



## Highlights from Meetings

- Committee Discussions Summer 2021
  - Programming
    - Need to increase public awareness regarding programming
    - Discussed possibilities for adding more program and events
  - Communication with taxpayers
  - Amenities
    - ADA access to and within parks
    - Improving amenities (play areas, seating, sidewalks) in the existing parks
  - Maintenance
    - Vegetation concerns
    - Desire to improve stormwater management
- Public Meeting Fall 2021
  - Amenities
    - Discussed concerns about baseball field orientation
    - Interest in pickleball
    - Trails- improving trails, potentially adding fitness equipment to trails, opportunities for biking in addition to walking
    - Consideration for a swimming pool
  - Maintenance
    - Vegetation and tree management