

Chapter 3

Parkland & Recreation

Chapter 3 - Parkland & Recreation

South Schuylkill Region recreation facilities and parkland are evaluated based on six factors that contribute to their value as local and regional assets and the ability of existing facilities to meet the recreation needs of residents. The six factors include:

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

Configuration of Parkland

There are 23 municipal parks in the South Schuylkill region. Table 3-1 inventories public parkland, schools, trails, and other recreation sites in the South Schuylkill region.

Table 3-1 South Schuylkill Region Park and Recreation Facility Inventory			
Municipal Parks and Private Recreation Sites			
Municipality / Park Name	Acreage	Park Type	Comments / Facilities
East Brunswick Township			
East Brunswick Playground	11.3	Community	Playground, Pavilion, Tennis Courts, Basketball Court, Open Space, Soccer Field
Friedens Evan. Church	3.7	Private	Baseball Field
Hawk Mountain Sanctuary	1,400	Private	Natural Area, Nature Center
North Manheim Township			
Second Mt. Road and Gun Club	5	Private	
Pottsville Youth Soccer Fields	8.7	Neighborhood	Soccer Fields (3) (Pottsville league use)
Seider's Hill Baseball Field	2	Mini	Softball Fields (2) (Pottsville league use)
East Abby Lane Playground		Private	Playground (abandoned, not subdivided or dedicated to Twp.)
Schuylkill Country Club	162.6	Private, membership	18-hole golf course
Field of Dreams	42	Private	Soccer Field, Baseball Field, Indoor Basketball Court
Pottsville Street Dog Park	8.39	Special Use Fac.	Undeveloped
South Manheim Township			
Wayne Township			
Aaron Kreager (Rolling View) Park	1.31	Mini	Playground, Pavilion
Summit Station Playground	1.7	Mini	Playground, Tennis Court, Basketball Court
Wayne Township Recreation Area	17	Community	Soccer Field, Open Space
Hidden Valley Golf Course	211.5	Public and membership	18-hole golf course, driving range
Ralph Fidler Softball Field	12.4	Private	Softball Field (abandoned)
Summit Station Softball Field	1.91	Private	Softball Field (abandoned)

Private parkland acreage shown in italic

Municipal Parks and Private Recreation Sites			
Municipality / Park Name	Acreage	Park Type	Comments / Facilities
West Brunswick Township			
West Brunswick Recreation Park	6	Neighborhood	Softball, Soccer, Baseball
Pleasant Valley Road Park	1.1	Mini	Basketball Court
Auburn Borough			
Auburn Memorial Park	20	Community	Baseball, Soccer, Pavilions, Playground, Basketball Courts
Auburn Camp Meeting Co.	4.33	Private	Basketball Court
Cressona Borough			
Cressona Playground	2.3	Mini	Playground, Tennis Courts, Basketball Courts
Cressona Pool	2.2	Community	Swimming Pool
Cressona Ballfield Complex	10.9		Baseball
Cressona Grove	6.9	Neighborhood	Softball, Pavilion, Playground
Deer Lake Borough			
Deer Lake Park	35.25	Community	Tennis Courts, Basketball Court, Baseball, Playground, Pavilion, Fishing, Boating, Lake
Landingville Borough			
Landingville Community Playground	3.97	Mini	Playground, Pavilion, Basketball Court (1), Baseball Field
Landingville Fire Company	2.8	Private	Open Space
Commonwealth of PA	21.8		Open Space (Two parcels along Schuylkill River)
New Ringgold Borough			
New Ringgold Little League	11.18	Community	Baseball Field, Basketball Court (Sewer Authority facilities)
New Ringgold Borough Park	3.6	Mini	Pavilion, Playground (Frantz Family Reunion Pavilion)
Orwigsburg Borough			
Albright's Woods Park	10.89	Community	Pavilion, Playground, Trail, Picnic Area
Memorial Park	7.0		Playground, Baseball (2, 60'), Batting Cages (2), Basketball Court(1), Indoor Recreation Center
Fishers Dam	1.7	Mini	Pond, Fishing, Open Space
Walborn Avenue Park	0.4	Mini	Playground, Basketball Court
Louis J. Fanelli Jr. Memorial Park	3.0	Mini	Baseball Field
Bicentennial Park	0.11	Mini	Benches
Port Clinton Borough			
Port Clinton Park	2.5	Mini	Baseball, Basketball Court, Playground
Port Clinton Grove	2.31	Private	Pavilion, Little Schuylkill River access (Evangelical Church)
Schuylkill Haven Borough			
Garfield Avenue	0.28	Mini	Playground
Fritz Reed	0.2	Mini	Playground
Saylor Street	1.21	Mini	Playground, Basketball Court
Willow Street	1.6	Mini	Playground, Basketball Court
Green Goose	0.6	Mini	Playground, Basketball Court
The Island	10	Community	Softball, Soccer, Boat Launch, Playground
Bubeck Park	3.1	Mini	Playground, Pavilions (2), Basketball Court
State Parks, Forests, and Game Lands			
Land Name	Acreage		Comments / Facilities / Location
State Game Land 80			Wayne Township
State Game Land 106			West Brunswick Township, East Brunswick Township
State Game Land 110	10,150 acres total		Wayne Township, South Manheim Township, West Brunswick Township, On the Kittatinny Ridge
State Game Lands 222			East Brunswick Township
State Game Land 286			North Manheim Township, South Manheim Township
Weiser State Forest			Wayne Township, South Manheim Township, West Brunswick Township

Trails			
Trail Name	Length		Comments / Facilities / Location
Orwigsburg Lions Walking Trail	1.5 miles		Begins/ends at Community Memorial Hall, circles school property, links to Albright Woods, Boyer/Spence Field
Appalachian Trail			Wayne, South Manheim, West Brunswick, and East Brunswick Townships
Bartram Trail			
Little Schuylkill Branch Water Trail			
Schuylkill River West and Main Branch Water Trail			
Schools			
School Name	Acreage	Location	Comments / Facilities
Blue Mountain School District - High School	25	North Manheim Township	Soccer (3), Baseball, Softball, Tennis Courts (5), Football Stadium, Track
Blue Mountain School District – Blue Mountain Middle School	1	Orwigsburg Borough & West Brunswick Township	Baseball (1, 90'), Baseball/Softball (3, 60'), Football Field (1), Soccer Fields (2)
Blue Mountain School District – Elementary East		Orwigsburg Borough	Playground
Blue Mountain School District – Elementary West	9.7	Wayne Township	Playground, Open Lawn, Pavilion
Blue Mountain School District – Elementary Cressona	3.15	Cressona Borough	Playground, Open Lawn
Schuylkill Haven Area School District – High School	14.4	Schuylkill Haven Borough	Baseball (1, 90'), Softball, Tennis Courts (4), Football Stadium, Track
Schuylkill Haven Area School District – Middle School		Schuylkill Haven Borough	
Schuylkill Haven Area School District – Elementary School		Schuylkill Haven Borough	Soccer Field, Playground, Baseball Field (1, 60')
Pennsylvania State University – Schuylkill Campus	149.18	North Manheim Township	Tennis Courts (4), Softball Field, Soccer Field, Sand Volleyball Court, Basketball Court

Conclusions from the Park and Recreation Facility Inventory include:

- Each community has municipal parkland, except for South Manheim Township.
- Private recreation lands, such as the Field of Dreams and Port Clinton Grove supplement municipal parkland.
- The Blue Mountain School District schools provide important recreation facilities in the region.
- There is significant acreage of State Game Lands and Weiser State Forest in the region that provides opportunity for passive, nature-based recreation and hunting.

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

Table 3-2
South Schuylkill Region Park and Recreation Classification System

Type/Size/ Service Radius	Definition	Benefits	Appropriate Amenities	Maintenance Level
Mini Park <i>0-5 acres ¼-mile service radius</i>	Smallest park type, addresses limited recreation need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides close to home recreation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Playground Benches, seating area 	High level of maintenance associated with well-developed park and playground and reasonably high visitation.
Neighborhood Park <i>5-10 acres minimum ½-mile service radius</i>	Focus of neighborhood; in walking/biking distance of visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides access to basic recreation opportunities Contributes to neighborhood identity Establishes sense of community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Play areas Ballfields Game Courts Picnic/Seating Pathways Community gardens 	High level of maintenance associated with well-developed park and reasonably high visitation.
Community Park <i>10-50 acres, preferably 50-80 acres 2-mile service radius</i>	Large park for active & passive recreation; serves residents municipality-wide. Accommodates large groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Variety of recreation opportunities for all ages and interests Space for organized, large scale, high participation events Family destination Fitness and wellness opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Play areas Organized sports facilities Pavilions Permanent restrooms Lighting Amphitheaters Pools, Rinks Parking 	Moderate level of maintenance associated with moderate level of development, budget restrictions, inability to perform higher levels of maintenance. Potential for park “friends” or adopt-a-park partners.
School/ Community Park <i>Variable</i>	Parkland adjoining a school used for both recreation and education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Combines two public entities for expanded year round recreation. Maximizes public resources Expands recreation opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth-oriented game courts and ball fields Play areas Seating Pathways Lighting Parking 	Moderate level of maintenance associated with moderate level of development, budget restrictions. Potential for cooperative agreement with school.
Sports Complex <i>30+ acres; preferably 50-80 acres</i>	Consolidates sports fields and related facilities in a centralized location.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economy of scale Improved management Municipal showcase Attracts visitors who stimulate local economy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ball fields Lighting Spectator areas Restrooms, Concessions Landscaping Parking 	State of the art maintenance applied to high quality facilities. Associated with high visitation; revenue generating facilities, tourism.
Special Use Facility <i>Variable</i>	Facility for a single purpose use.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides special focus recreation opportunities Contributes to community identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Depends on purpose 	High level of maintenance associated with well-developed park and reasonably high visitation.
Greenways and Trails <i>Variable</i>	Tie park areas and community together to form a contiguous park environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connects community Reduces auto dependency Improves air quality Contributes most desired recreation facility for people throughout their lifetime Attracts visitors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pathways – multipurpose Trailheads Support facilities Signage 	Lowest level of maintenance. Focus on trailheads and trail safety.
Natural Resource Area/ Preserve	Natural areas for the protection and management of natural environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protects resources Provides wildlife habitat Offers opportunities for environmental education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trails Signage Support facilities 	Lower level of maintenance.

The following conclusions can be drawn from the analysis of Park and Recreation Classifications as they relate to the parkland in the South Schuylkill region:

- The largest municipal park is Deer Lake Park at 35.25 acres, but over one-half of this site is Deer Lake, encompassing 18.5+/- acres.
- The second largest municipal park is Auburn Memorial Park at 20 acres followed by Wayne Township Recreation Area (17 acres), Cressona Ballfield Complex/Cressona Pool (13.1 acres), East Brunswick Playground (11.3 acres), and New Ringgold Little League (10.5 acres). The Wayne Township Recreation Area includes a single soccer field and open space that is currently undeveloped for recreation.
- Memorial Park and Albright's Woods Park in Orwigsburg Borough are contiguous to Blue Mountain School District land to create a School/Community Park comprised of five contiguous parcels that together equal 67.79 (Borough 17.89 acres, BMSD 49.9 acres).
- The seven park areas noted above (Deer Lake Park, Auburn Memorial Park, Wayne Township Recreation Area, Cressona Ballfield Complex/Cressona Pool, East Brunswick Playground, New Ringgold Little League, and Memorial Park/Albright's Wood Park/Blue Mountain School District lands) have the acreage recommended for a Community Park.
- There are two municipal parks in the 5 – 10-acre size range that correspond with a Neighborhood Park classification (West Brunswick Recreation Park (6 acres) and Cressona Grove (6.9 acres).
- The remaining 12 municipal parks are less than five acres in size, or Mini Parks. Several of these parks, to include Port Clinton Park (2.5 acres) and Landingville Community Playground (3.97 acres), function as community parks.
- There are no municipal parks which are Nature Preserves or Natural Resource Areas available for passive recreation pursuits. Several State Game Lands and Weiser State Forest are located partially within the South Schuylkill region, providing opportunities for passive recreation and the enjoyment of natural areas.
- There are no Sports Complexes or Special Use Facilities in the region except for the Cressona Pool and Blue Mountain Middle School swimming pool.

Recreation and Parks are essential to Quality of Life

Recreation is a:

- Factor in personal health
- Key to balanced human development
- Significant economic generator
- Component of balanced human development

Recreation:

- Reduces self-destructive and anti-social behavior
- Builds strong families and healthy communities
- Reduces health care, social services and police/justice costs

Amount of Parkland

How much parkland does the South Schuylkill Region need to meet the recreation needs of residents? The South Schuylkill region has 159.63 acres of parkland in 22 parks. A population-based analysis is typically used to evaluate active public parkland. Simply stated, the population of a community will drive the number of ballfields and basketball courts a community needs. As a community's population grows, so does the need for parkland. A population calculation can readily be updated as a community grows.

Passive parks, greenways, trails, and nature preserves are not evaluated using an acreage standard because the size of this parkland is typically based on the site resources and the area necessary to protect the resources and make them available for public enjoyment.

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

- There are new popular youth sports: soccer and lacrosse
 - Youth soccer didn't emerge as a major youth sport until the 1980's and 1990's. US Youth Soccer, the largest youth soccer organization in the U.S., has 3,000,000 members ages 5 – 19.¹
 - Lacrosse didn't emerge as a popular youth sport until the 2000's with "just over 250,000 players in 2001 to the current total of 826,023, an increase of over 225 percent over a 15-year timeframe."²
- Girl's participation in youth sports has grown significantly since 1969. In 1972, Title IX provided equal access to programs and activities that receive Federal financial assistance, including sports. In the 45+ years since Title IX went into effect, girls' participation in sports has grown exponentially. "During the 1971-1972 school year, immediately before the legislation passed, fewer than 300,000 girls participated in high school athletics. To put that number in perspective, just 7% of all high school athletes were girls. In 2010-2011, the number of female athletes had climbed by more than tenfold to nearly 3.2 million, or 41% of all high school athletes."³ Before Title IX, one in 27 girls played sports. Today that number is two in five.⁴ This growth is also reflected in youth sports programs.

¹ http://www.usyouthsoccer.org/media_kit/ataglance/, n.d., Web. 14 Dec. 2017.

² Logue, Brian. www.uslacrosse.org/blog/national-lacrosse-participation-tops-825000-players, 9 June 2017, Web. 14 Dec. 2017.

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

⁴ Olmstead, Maegan. www.womenssportsfoundation.org/education/title-ix-and-the-rise-of-female-athletes-in-america/, 2 Sep. 2016, Web. 14, Dec. 2017.

- Youth sports programs have expanded beyond their traditional seasons. Baseball is no longer just a spring sport with most youth programs offering both spring and fall seasons. Soccer and lacrosse also are played in multiple seasons.

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

The current parkland acreage for the South Schuylkill Region can be calculated to determine the status quo for parkland acreage based on population. The calculation is based on the 2010 population for the region.

2010 Status Quo Calculation

$$23,449 \text{ (2010 population of region)} \div 1,000 = 23.449$$

$$159.63 \text{ (active parkland acreage)} \div 23.449 = 6.81 \text{ -acres of parkland/1,000 residents.}$$

At 6.81-acres per 1,000 population, the South Schuylkill Region is not meeting the minimum standard first recommended in 1969. The need for additional parkland is also evident in the way recreation currently occurs in the region. Consider:

- Private residents have volunteered land for community recreation use over the years in the region. The Field of Dreams provides a soccer field, a baseball field, and an indoor basketball court used by community leagues. Friedens Evangelical Church baseball field and Ralph Fidler Softball Field are additional examples of recreation facilities built on private land for community use.
- The Blue Mountain School District school athletic facilities are heavily used to meet community recreation needs.
- Community park sites such as the Cressona Ballfields and Memorial Park in Orwigsburg are maximized with facilities.

The use of sports fields on private land may currently work to offset the need for additional parkland, but this use is not guaranteed into the future. Land ownership may change or concerns regarding maintenance and liability may eliminate the use of these recreation sites in the future. Additionally, using school district facilities is a wise use of facilities paid for with public funds, but community use of school facilities will always be second priority to school use.



Table 3-3 provides an assessment of active parkland in the Southern Schuylkill Region for the U.S. Census years 2000 and 2010. For assessment purposes, the 10-acres is divided between community parks (8-acres) and neighborhood and mini parks (2-acres). Table 3-3 compares the population of the region with the existing active parkland acreage. The undeveloped 17 acres of land in Wayne Township has been included as active parkland for this analysis. Pottsville Youth Soccer Fields and Seider's Hill Softball Field are not included in the analysis below because the facilities in these parks are used exclusively by Pottsville Borough leagues.

Table 3-3 South Schuylkill Region - Parkland Acreage/NRPA Standards Analysis					
	Existing Active Parkland Acreage	Recommended Acres/2000 Population – 22,090	2000 Deficit (-) Excess (+)	Recommended Acres/2010 Population – 23,449	2010 Deficit (-) Excess (+)
Community Parks @ 8 Acres/1,000 Population – Total acreage	125.04	176.72	- 51.68	187.59	- 62.55
Neighborhood/Mini Parks @ 2 Acres/1,000 Population	34.59	44.18	-9.59	46.90	-12.31
Totals (Total community park + neighborhood park)	159.63	220.90	-61.27	246.21	- 74.86

Source: PA State Data Center

The 2010 U.S. Census indicated a population of 23,449 in the South Schuylkill region. Unfortunately, the Schuylkill County Planning Commission does not have population projections for 2020 or beyond. The PA State Data Center projects that Schuylkill County will lose population between 2010 and 2020 and continue to lose population between 2020 and 2030. This projected decline in population follows a 2.2-percent loss from 2000 to 2010 at the county level. However, it should be noted that the Southern Schuylkill region increased population by slightly over 6-percent between 2000 and 2010.

The latest available information is the US Census 2016 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimate which shows an overall decline in population from the 2010 population at the County and South Schuylkill Region. The 2016 estimated population decline in the South Schuylkill Region was minor with 92 fewer individuals, or less than one-half percent decline. The 2016 population estimate indicates an increase in population in four municipalities (Auburn, Cressona, and Deer Lake Boroughs and South Manheim Township) and a decrease in other regional municipalities. For planning purposes, this Plan assumes that the future population of the South Schuylkill Region will remain near the 2010 population into the next decade.

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

- The South Schuylkill region currently has a deficit of parkland. Based on the 2010 population, the Southern Schuylkill Region needs an additional 75 acres of parkland to serve the current population.
- The greatest need is for additional community parkland. At the 10-acre standard an additional 63 acres of community parkland is needed to meet current and projected needs. This equates to one additional community park in the region.
- The status quo parkland acreage per 1,000 population for the South Schuylkill Region is 6.81 acres.

Location of Parks

The parkland distribution analysis evaluates the location of parks relative to population centers and considers physical barriers that limit easy access to park sites. Service radiuses, which define the geographic area generally served by a park, have been applied to each municipal park, based on the South Schuylkill Region park classification system. Community Parks have the most facilities and typically draw visitors from beyond a municipal boundary. A two-mile service radius is applied to Community Parks. Neighborhood and Mini Parks are smaller with fewer facilities and typically draw visitors from the immediate surrounding neighborhood. Neighborhood Parks have been assigned a half-mile service radius and Mini Parks have a quarter-mile service radius. Refer to the Existing Facilities Map on page 3-37 for locations of parks and service areas. Examination of the Existing Facilities Map with service radius illustrates the following about park locations:

- Parkland distribution is relatively even when considered by municipality. Each municipality in the South Schuylkill Region has at least one park, except South Manheim Township and North Manheim Township. There are private sites that have recreation facilities available for public use in North Manheim Township.
- Community parks service radius covers most of the communities located throughout the South Schuylkill Region.
- Barriers to easy access include PA Route 61, the Schuylkill River, and the active railroad line that parallels the Schuylkill River.
- Gaps in parkland access include:
 - Eastern-most area of the valley beyond New Ringgold Borough.
 - Southwest area of the region along the Route 895 corridor, west of Auburn. Summit Station Playground is the only park in this area, and at 1.7-acres typically serves only the residents in close proximity to the park. This area does include Lake Wynonah, a private community with private recreation amenities offered for community residents only.
 - While barriers create an area between Deer Lake Borough and Auburn Borough without parks, except Landingville Playground, PA Route 895 provides a direct access across these barriers.
 - The service area gap between Orwigsburg Memorial Park and Cressona Pool and Ballfields is offset by Blue Mountain High School.

Recreation Facilities

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

Table 3-4
Recreation Facility Inventory

Park Name	Baseball Field 60/75' BL	Baseball Field 90' BL	Softball Field	Multi-Purpose Field	Playground	Pavilion	Basketball Court	Tennis Courts	Football Field	Walking Trail
South Schuylkill Region Municipal Parks										
East Brunswick Playground	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	2	-	✓
Aaron Kreager Playground	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	-
Summit Station Playground	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	-	-
Wayne Township Recreation Area		-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-
West Brunswick Recreation Park	-	-	2	1**	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pleasant Valley Road Park	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Auburn Memorial Park	1	1	-	1	1	1	1	-	-	-
Cressona Playground	-	--	-	-	1	-	2	1	-	-
Cressona Grove	-	-	1	-	1	2	-	-	-	-
Cressona Pool	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Cressona Ballfield Complex	2	1	-	2	1	1	-	-	-	-
Deer Lake Park	1	-	-	-	1	1	1	2	-	-
Landingville Community Playground	1*	-	1*	-	1	1	1	-	-	-
New Ringgold Little League	1	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-
New Ringgold Borough Park	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-
Albright's Woods Park	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-
Memorial Park	2	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-
Fishers Pond	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Walborn Community Park	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-
Louis J. Fanelli Jr. Memorial Park	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bicentennial Park	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Port Clinton Park	1	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	-	-
Totals	10	2	3	8	15	16	10	6	0	1

*Ballfield used for youth baseball and softball

**Soccer and football played in outfield of softball fields

Park Name	Baseball Field 60/75' BL	Baseball Field 90' BL	Softball Field	Multi-Purpose Field	Playground	Pavilion	Basketball Court	Tennis Courts	Football Field	Walking Trail
Blue Mountain School District Recreation Facilities										
Blue Mountain High School	-	1	1	3	-	-	-	5	1	-
Blue Mountain Middle School	1*	1	2*	2	-	-	-	-	2**	✓
Blue Mountain SD Elementary East	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-
Blue Mountain SD Elementary West	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-
Blue Mountain SD Elementary Cressona	-	-	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	-
Totals	1	2	2	6	5	1	0	5	3	1
Private / Non-Municipal Recreation Facilities										
St. John's Evan. Church	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-
East Abby Lane Playground	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Field of Dreams	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ralph Fidler Softball Field	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Port Clinton Grove	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	--
St. Paul's Lutheran Church	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Summit Station Bear Creek Field	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

* One field used for both baseball and softball

** One field on softball outfield

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

Facility Assessment

Following is the facility assessment for the South Schuylkill Region by activity:

Softball – There are four softball fields in the region: one at Cressona Grove, two in West Brunswick Recreation Park, and one in Auburn Memorial Park. Three additional softball fields are also located at Blue Mountain High School and Middle School. The Boyer-Spence Field at the Blue Mountain Middle School is also used for baseball. Softball fields should be developed in community parks.

- Cressona Girls Softball Association had 60 participants in the spring and 30 girls in the fall of 2017.
- Orwigsburg Area Girls Softball had 80-100 participants in the league in spring 2017.
- Schuylkill Haven Youth Softball had 54 girls play in their spring softball program in 2017.

- Both Cressona and Schuylkill Haven characterize their softball programs as having stable participation. Both leagues indicate that it is difficult to find fields for practice.

Baseball – There are 10 youth baseball (60' baseline) and two adult baseball fields (90' baseline) in municipal parks in the South Schuylkill Region. Three of the baseball fields (New Ringgold, Port Clinton, and Auburn) are in disrepair and are no longer being used. There are two additional 90'-baseline fields located at Blue Mountain High School and Middle School. Baseball fields should be provided in community parks and developed with lights, as appropriate based on the location.

- Baseball leagues in the region are fragmented with three Little League organizations (Cressona, Orwigsburg, and Schuylkill Haven). Deer Lake has recently combined with Orwigsburg.
- Little League has recently moved to an Intermediate Division with 75' baseline field for 11-13-year old's. There are no 75' baseline fields in the region.
- A summer sand-lot league operated by Blue Mountain Recreation Commission occurs at Deer Lake Field, following the regular baseball season.

Football / Cheerleading – There are no football fields located in municipal parks. There are two football fields at Blue Mountain Middle School. One of these fields is on the outfield of a softball field.

- Blue Mountain Tri-County Football and Blue Mountain Midget Football use the same fields at Blue Mountain Middle School and Cressona Elementary School.
- Football and soccer conflict for field use at West Brunswick Recreation Park.

Basketball – There are 10 basketball courts in nine parks. Several of these courts are undersized and are not located with the preferred solar orientation. A youth Basketball League is organized by Blue Mountain Recreation Commission and is played in the three elementary schools, the Middle School, and Orwigsburg Memorial Building. The league serves boys and girls in grades 1-12, with 388 participants in 2017 and the participation is stable.

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

- Basketball is considered Very Important or Somewhat Important by 72.31% of the respondents to the on-line survey.

Soccer – There are six (6) multi-purpose fields located in municipal parks and there are an additional five (5) fields located at schools. Blue Mountain Soccer Club and Schuylkill Haven Soccer Club serve the region. In 2017 Blue Mountain Soccer Club had 250 boys and girls in the program on 15 teams and Schuylkill Haven had 220 boys and girls on 14 teams. The leagues play during the fall season. Both clubs indicate that participation is growing. The leagues indicate that there is a need for additional fields and that finding field space is currently a problem. Multi-purpose fields which serve soccer, field hockey, and lacrosse should be developed in neighborhood and community parks to accommodate the existing programs. Field lights are suggested, where appropriate, to extend playing times and maximize the use of existing facilities.

- Soccer is considered Very Important or Somewhat Important by 63.14% of respondents to the on-line survey.

Lacrosse – Lacrosse is a growing sport in the State but is not currently played as a club, league, or school sport in the South Schuylkill Region. There is currently no use of parks or school grounds for lacrosse. Lacrosse is growing at a fast pace in other areas of the State and is also currently played in several school districts in PIAA District XI. The interest in lacrosse and its growth at the youth level is expected to reach the South Schuylkill Region and will eventually have an impact of participation in traditional sports like baseball and soccer. Multi-purpose fields should be provided in community parks for lacrosse and soccer. Multi-purpose fields should be sized to accommodate each of these sports.

Volleyball – One grass volleyball court is located at Auburn Memorial Park. Volleyball courts are popular park facilities and are often used in conjunction with picnic outings and should be located close to picnic pavilions, where possible. Families and adults generally prefer lawn volleyball while teens and young adults prefer sand volleyball courts. When new community parks are developed, the level of interest in league play should be evaluated. If interest emerges for competitive volleyball, courts in banks of two or more for league play should be developed. League play is typically in evenings and courts should be developed with lights.

- The on-line survey indicates relatively low interest in volleyball courts with 52.18% of respondents indicating that sand volleyball courts are Very Important or Somewhat Important and 49.65% indicating that grass volleyball courts are Very Important or Somewhat Important.

Tennis – There are six tennis courts in four municipal parks and five tennis courts are located at Blue Mountain High School. The single courts at Summit Station Playground and Cressona Playground are developed with incorrect orientation. The two courts at East Brunswick Playground are well developed. The two courts in Deer Lake Park are in poor condition. This Plan suggests replacement with a basketball court.

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

- The on-line survey found moderate interest in tennis courts with 62.47% listing tennis courts as Very Important or Somewhat Important.

Swimming Pools – There is one public outdoor swimming pool in the region: Cressona Pool. There is an indoor swimming pool at the Blue Mountain Middle School. The Blue Mountain Sharks, a swim team, uses the Middle School pool for fall, winter, and summer programs. In 2016 Fall was the largest season with 99 participants. The league shares the pool with the Blue Mountain Recreation Commission swim programs. Swimming is a lifetime recreation activity, and convenient access to swimming pools is an asset for the region. Blue Mountain Recreation Commission runs swim lesson programs year-round in the Blue Mountain Middle School. Schuylkill Haven Recreation also operates a swim team and swim lesson program.

Playgrounds – Play equipment is included in most municipal parks. Several parks do not have the physical space to develop playgrounds such as Pleasant Valley Road Park, Fishers Pond, and Bicentennial Park. Playgrounds should be added to West Brunswick Recreation Park, Louis J. Fanelli Jr. Memorial Park, and Wayne Township Park. Except for the newly installed playground at Orwigsburg Memorial Park and Auburn Memorial Park, none of the playgrounds meet the latest safety and accessibility requirements. When developing and renovating playground areas, the following general guidelines should be incorporated into the design:



- The playground layout, equipment, and safety zone should comply with the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) Guidelines for Playground Safety.
- Playgrounds must meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which requires that an accessible route be provided from walkways/parking areas to the playground equipment and that a portion of the equipment offer activities that can be utilized by physically challenged children.
- Playgrounds should be age-segregated to accommodate children of different ages and abilities and meet the CPSC safety guidelines.
- Important American Society for Testing and Materials references for public playground safety:
 - F1487 Standard Consumer Safety Performance Specification for Playground Equipment for Public Use.
 - F2373 Standard Consumer Safety Performance specification for Public Use Play Equipment for Children 6 Months through 23 Months.
 - F1292 Standard Specification for Impact Attenuation of Surface Systems Under and Around Playground Equipment.

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

Playgrounds should be renovated or upgraded on a cyclic basis to conform to the latest safety and accessibility standards. A playground safety and accessibility audit should be completed, and all parks and playground equipment should be removed that cannot be rehabilitated to fully comply with the latest standards. Playground renovation and replacement should be identified in the

municipality's Capital Improvement Program, starting with the playground that is in most urgent need of replacement. Playgrounds should be incorporated into new community and neighborhood parks.

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

Many residents of the South Schuylkill Region have convenient access to the Bartram Trail and the Appalachian Trail. Walking is an activity widely enjoyed by all segments of the population.

- Respondents to the internet survey ranked trails highest (93.16% rated as Very Important or Somewhat Important) in facility importance, following restrooms.

Indoor Recreation – Indoor recreation venues include the Orwigsburg Memorial building, the Cressona Ballfield Complex Building and the Blue Mountain School District schools.

- The on-line survey found moderate interest in developing an Indoor Field House with game fields and courts, with 67.04% of respondents indicating that an indoor facility is Very Important or Somewhat Important. The survey also found that a Recreation Center with a gymnasium and classrooms is considered Very Important or Somewhat Important by 69.02% of respondents.

Picnic Area – Picnic pavilions are offered in numerous municipal parks. Picnic areas can be configured as scattered picnic tables and grills within a shaded grove of trees or a picnic pavilion with complementary amenities such as horseshoe pits, volleyball court, playground, and softball field. In community parks, picnic areas serve families and groups. In sports complexes picnic pavilions are often located for team use and tournament functions. Pavilions offer shaded sitting areas for caregivers near playgrounds and are important amenities in new parks with limited vegetation for shade.

- The internet survey found high interest in developing picnic opportunities, with 85.81% of respondents indicating that picnic pavilions were Very Important or Somewhat Important and 84.13% indicating that informal picnic areas were Very Important or Somewhat Important.

Park and Facility Trends and Research

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

- Dual seasons, year-round sports, and travel teams are affecting participation numbers in youth sports. Players are choosing a single sport earlier and not playing multiple sports.
- Lacrosse is growing in many communities throughout the state and nationally. Nationally, lacrosse participation grew 11.8% for youth (15 and under) from 2010 – 2013. PIAA first

sanctioned high school competitive lacrosse for boys and girls in 2009 and it is now played competitively in many school districts in PIAA District XI. Currently lacrosse is not played in Blue Mountain or Schuylkill Haven School Districts. As lacrosse becomes more popular it typically will pull from traditional sports like soccer, baseball, and softball.

- Local sports trends and observations:
 - Soccer participation continues to increase.
 - Finding field space is an issue for the soccer program. Large size fields are needed.
 - Soccer is played year-round.
 - Football and soccer conflict for field use.
 - Baseball participation is falling.
 - Cressona Baseball uses two private fields; if use of these fields is lost it would be a problem.
 - There are baseball fields in the region that are no longer being used.
- SFIA (Sports and Fitness Industry Association) provides sports participation data, 5-year participation trends (2009-2014) for youth sports (6-17-years old):

- Baseball: - 4.3%	- Football (Touch): -32.4%
- Basketball: - 6.8%	- Lacrosse: + 28.8%
- Field Hockey: - 15.5%	- Soccer (Outdoor): - 8.4%
- Football (Tackle): - 17.9%	- Softball (Fast-pitch): + 1.6%
- The On-Line Recreation Survey for this planning project asked: “How important is it to expand or add the following facilities in the South Schuylkill Region?” and the percentage of responses that indicated Very Important and Somewhat Important included:

- Basketball Courts: 72.31%	- Baseball: 62.76%
- Soccer: 63.14%	- Softball: 62.38%
- Support facilities, such as restrooms, off-street parking, shaded sitting and gathering areas, and landscaping are important features in parks and add to the function and quality of facilities.
- Seniors are more active and request facilities for recreation and fitness and wellness activities.
- State-wide, walking is ranked as the activity with the highest participation and trails are typically the highest desired park facility. Trails can be used by most segments of the population and are popular for walking, jogging and participating in fitness and wellness activities.
- Trails were cited on the on-line survey as the second most desired facility but are not provided in most of the parks. Trails are required to provide accessible routes to recreation facilities as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act and to provide opportunities for health and fitness activities.



Conditions of Parkland and Facilities

Each park site listed below was visited to observe existing conditions and explore park development opportunities and issues. Several parks were visited multiple times. Generally, the parks are small and maximized in terms of facility development.

Common issues in the parks relate to the requirement to meet the public access provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the need for age-segregated playgrounds, and the suggestion for gathering area near activity areas. Specific findings of site observations and recreation opportunities for each park are outlined below.

East Brunswick Playground – East Brunswick Township

East Brunswick Playground is classified as a community park based on the diversity of facilities although it is smaller than a typical community park at 11.3-acres. The park has been upgraded through the assistance of PA DCNR grants. The park surrounds the municipal building and garage. The park offers the only walking trail in a municipal park in the region.

Opportunities –

- Extend the trail to connect to the recreation facilities located along Catawissa Street to provide ADA access.
- Extend the trail to the spectator and player areas of the multi-purpose field to provide ADA access.
- Create a loop configuration to the trail on the northern portion of the property to provide an option for diversity of walking routines. Add mile-markers along the trail for fitness activities.
- Improve and expand the playground to be age segregated. Add a plaza area with benches, picnic tables, and trees for shade for caregivers at the playground.
- Convert the existing basketball court along Catawissa Street to pull-in parking spaces.



- Develop a full-size basketball court with the correct north-south orientation in the open lawn area near the entrance drive at Catawissa Street.
- Plant street trees along the frontage of the property and along the drive.

Summit Station Playground – Wayne Township

This mini park is located near the intersection of Spring Road and Fair Road in the Summit Station area of Wayne Township. The park is in walking distance from several homes in the village, but no sidewalk areas are provided. The parking is associated with the Post Office on the east side of the park. The head-in parking is off of Spring Road, requiring vehicles to back out onto the roadway when leaving the park. The tennis court is developed with an incorrect orientation and is slated for removal due to surface disrepair and infrequent use. The basketball court is developed to a non-standard width. The playground equipment is outdated and should be replaced. The site does not comply with the accessibility requirements of the ADA. There is no accessible route to facilities and no accessible parking spaces.

Opportunities –

- Partner with the Post Office to develop handicap parking spaces that can be used by park visitors and connect to an accessible trail.
- Develop an accessible trail that extends through the park to connect the basketball court, playground, pavilion, and other use areas.
- Replace the playground equipment with age-segregated equipment that meets the latest safety and accessibility requirements. Install the play equipment within edging to define the safety surface area.
- Re-develop the court area to provide courts with correct orientation and size.
- Develop a gathering area at the playground for caregivers to watch playground activities.
- Install signs that alert drivers on Spring Road that there is a public park and that vehicles back out onto the road.
- Consider developing a soccer wall or other facility that will promote use of the open lawn area.



New Ringgold Little League – New Ringgold Borough

This park is classified as a community park due to the mix of facilities and the size. While the size is smaller than is typically recommended for a community park, it is relatively large for the region. The park

is located on three separate parcels that total 11.18-acres, although the full acreage is not available for recreation as the New Ringgold Borough Sewer Authority facilities occupy the southern portion of the largest parcel. The baseball field does not appear to have been used recently. The newest facility is the basketball court, but it was developed with the incorrect orientation. There is no parking associated with the park.

Opportunities –

- Improve the ballfield so that it can be used for youth baseball or softball.
- Develop a small parking area that includes a handicap parking space.
- Provide accessible routes from the handicap parking space to the ballfield, basketball court, and playground.

Port Clinton Park – Port Clinton Borough

This mini park is maximized with facilities. The park is located along the Schuylkill River with the Schuylkill River Trail on the opposite bank of the river. The Appalachian Trail passes through the Borough east of the park. There are lights on the baseball field and basketball court. The outdated playground equipment is located adjacent to the basketball court. The basketball court is not developed with the preferred north-south orientation. The river access area in the park is a fire company draft site and a fire lane must be kept open between Schuylkill Street and the river. The open area of the park at the river access has mature trees.



Opportunities –

- Develop a new basketball court with the correct orientation near the corner of Pine and Schuylkill Streets. Include chain link fence at the ends of the court to retain balls in the court area.
- Explore the potential of grading the river access to accommodate ADA access to the river.
- The basketball court is popular and informal seating developed on the embankment between the court and picnic pavilion would accommodate both spectators and players.



- Develop a new playground with new equipment on the north and east sides of the pavilion. Maximize the open space between the playground and the basketball courts to separate the user groups as possible.

Landingville Community Playground – Landingville Borough

This mini park is fortunate to be located adjacent and near other public and semi-public lands which expand recreation opportunities for residents. The park is maximized with development to include a playground, a small pavilion, a paved area for basketball and volleyball, and a youth baseball/softball field with overlapping multi-purpose field. The playground equipment is outdated and should be replaced. Across Main Street from the playground is a 2.8-acre parcel of open space owned by the Fire Company. The Fire Company parcel has convenient, at-grade access to the Schuylkill River and is informally used as launch area for paddle-craft. The open space near the road serves as a parking area for the park. West of the playground property is a small 1.79-acre parcel owned by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania which contains historic remnants of a lock from the Schuylkill Canal. Two private properties separate this Commonwealth parcel from multiple Commonwealth parcels totaling over 420-acres associated with the canal and desilting basins along the river.

Opportunities –

- Develop an accessible trail that encircles the existing park site to include the small Commonwealth parcel. Provide a designated crosswalk across Main Street to the Fire Company parcel and create a loop trail that encircles the open lawn area of the parcel. Provide an accessible link to a stabilized river access.
- Develop a new, age-segregated playground near the existing pavilion. Connect the playground to the trail.
- Develop a new, full-size basketball court with the preferred north-south orientation.
- Formalize the parking on the Fire Company property with a paved parking area with accommodations for handicapped parking spaces and trailer spaces for pull-behind



paddle-craft. Extend an accessible trail from the parking to the Schuylkill River for paddle craft launch.

- Partner with the Fire Company to develop a large picnic pavilion centered on the open lawn for community gatherings and special events.
- Partner with the Commonwealth to celebrate the history of the Schuylkill Canal. Extend a walkway through area remnants of the canal lock and develop interpretative signs to describe the history and cultural of the canal era.



- Develop an informal picnic area near the canal locks with scattered picnic tables.

Deer Lake Park – Deer Lake Borough

This community park offers a unique setting in the region with the 17-acre lake as the centerpiece. A youth baseball field, playground, tennis courts, basketball court, pavilion, and stage are located at the southern end of the lake, creating the hub of the community along with the Fire Company and community buildings.

Opportunities –

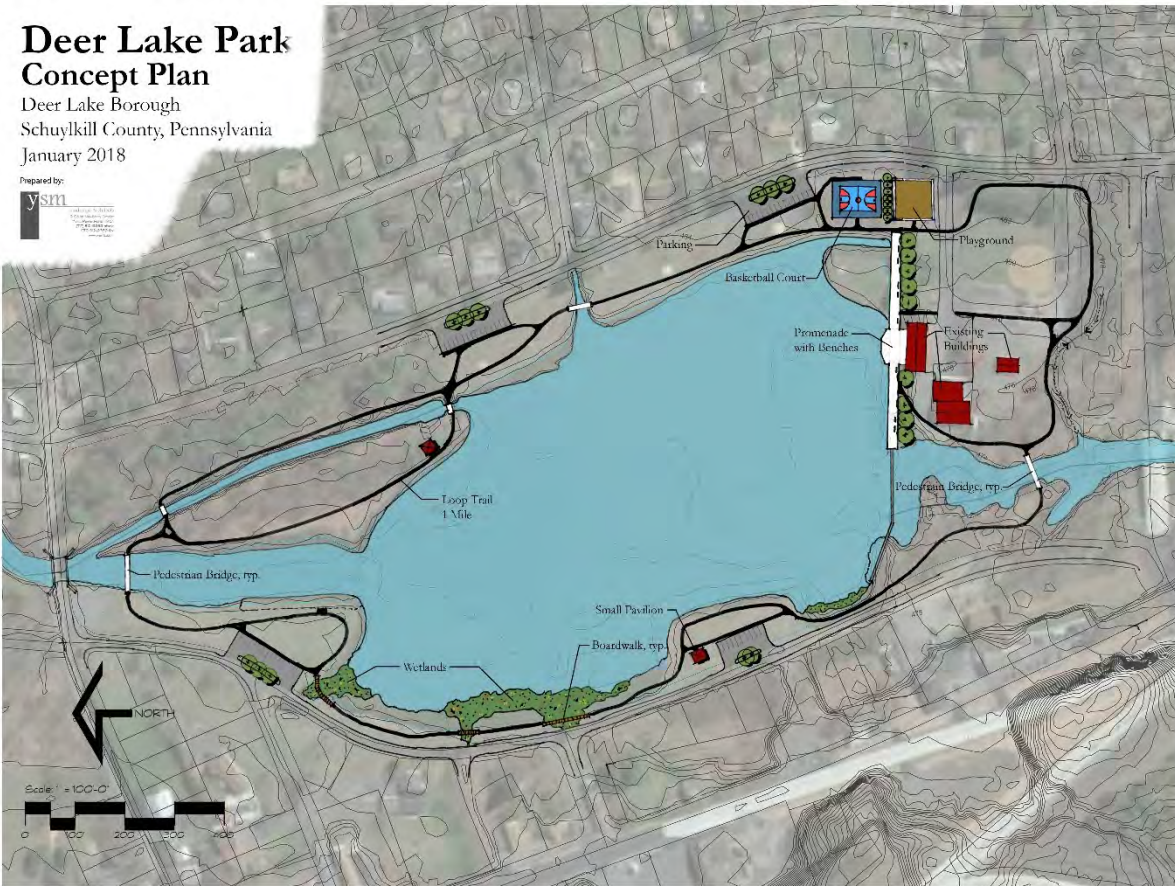
- Develop a trail that encircles the lake and links to the park facilities. Develop pedestrian bridges to span the streams at the northern end of the lake and to connect across the stream south of the dam.
- Provide accessible areas for fishing at various location around the lake.
- Develop a promenade at the south end of the lake at the community buildings. Place benches along the promenade where visitors can enjoy the view of the lake.
- Dredge the lake and take other measures to improve the long-term health of the lake.
- Deposit the dredged material from the lake along the lake edge parallel to Parkway Drive. The material will expand the area available to develop the trail that encircles the lake.
- Develop additional parking areas off of Lakefront Drive.
- Remove improvements associated with the tennis courts and develop a basketball court overlaying the tennis court pavement.
- Separate the basketball court from the playground with buffer vegetation.

Deer Lake Park Concept Plan

Deer Lake Borough
Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania
January 2018

Prepared by:

ysm



Cressona Playground – Cressona Borough

This mini park is adjacent to the Borough office. One of the basketball courts has an incorrect orientation. Parking is available at the adjacent Fire Company property and a pedestrian bridge provides access across Panther Creek. A playground is located on the Fire Company property. The West Branch Schuylkill River forms the eastern boundary of the site.

Opportunities –

- Develop handicap parking spaces in close proximity to the recreation facilities and connect the spaces to an accessible route that extend to the recreation facilities. Extend an accessible trail link between the handicap parking spaces to the playground.
- Reconfigure the playground to age-segregate the play equipment between tots (2-5 years old) and youth (6-12 years old). Develop a small plaza area with benches and picnic tables for caregivers to watch playground activities. Plant deciduous trees in the playground plaza area for shade.
- Explore opportunities to provide a stabilized fishing access on the river. Connect the fishing access area to the accessible trail.

Cressona Pool – Cressona Borough

The Cressona Pool is located adjacent to the Cressona Ballfield Complex and shares parking with the Complex. The swimming pool area is fenced and includes an “L” shaped pool with a slide and concrete deck surrounding the pool. There is a separate tot pool. The pool complex includes a bathhouse with concession stand and a picnic pavilion is located north of the main pool.

Opportunities –

- Develop an accessible walk connection from the pool bathhouse to the picnic pavilion.
- Plant deciduous trees for shade.
- Add lights throughout the complex for night-time swimming and speakers for music and movies.
- Paint the building and add more tables with umbrellas to add color and amenities to the pool area.
- Upgrade the pool bathhouse to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Consider adding a spray feature and/or splash toys in the tot pool.



Cressona Ballfield Complex – Cressona Borough

The Cressona Ballfield Complex and Cressona Pool together are classified as a community park with combined acreage of 13.1 acres. The Complex is maximized with facilities. The Graeff Street side of the park is elevated creating a natural viewing area for park activities. The topographic differential in the park makes compliance with the ADA challenging. The church-owned tract to the east provides two additional youth baseball fields.

Opportunities –

- Develop an ADA compliant accessible route between parking areas and athletic fields.
- Define the parking areas by paving and striping parking spaces. If parking areas are not paved, consider adding bollard or concrete bumper blocks to define parking spaces. Add paved handicapped parking spaces that connect to the accessible route.



- Develop a trail that encircles the lower level of the park site to provide for fitness and wellness activities. Add mile markers along the trail to mark the distance.
- Add deciduous trees throughout the park for shade. Prioritize shade in the parking area, at the playground, and between the athletic fields.
- Renovate and expand the playground to provide an age-segregated playground with both tot and youth play equipment. Add plaza area with benches and picnic tables for caregivers. Connect the playground to the handicapped parking spaces in the lower parking area.

Cressona Grove – Cressona Borough

This neighborhood park provides a playground, softball field, restrooms, and picnic amenities. The northern portion of the park is in mature woods. The softball field does not have a preferred orientation. There is no formalized parking area or ADA accommodations.

Opportunities –

- Develop a trail that provides an accessible route to facilities and creates a walking loop encircling the park site.
- Develop a small parking area to serve the park with a handicap parking space.
- Develop a new playground that is age segregated with equipment that meets the latest safety and accessibility guidelines. Connect the playground to the pavilion and other facilities with an accessible trail.
- Plant a vegetative buffer to separate adjacent homes from the park. Plant native trees and shrubs.



Memorial Park – Orwigsburg Borough

Memorial Park is the heart of active recreation in the Borough and region due to the park's location adjacent to the Blue Mountain Middle School campus. The park is maximized with recreation facilities to include a newly updated playground. The facilities are well developed with trails connecting to the walking trail on the school campus and nearby Albright's Woods. Trail links are required to the ballfield player and spectator areas to provide accessibility. An indoor recreation center with a basketball court is located on the western side of the park. Parking is associated with the recreation center and appears to be insufficient for both the center and the park.

Opportunities –

- Plant deciduous trees for shade along the trail.

- Develop accessible trail connections to the field spectator and player benches and batting cages.
- Define handicap parking spaces that connect to the accessible route.



Albright's Woods Park – Orwigsburg Borough

Albright's Woods is a passive park connected by walking trail to Memorial Park and the Blue Mountain Middle School campus. The park provides a wooded setting with picnic facilities nestled among large deciduous trees. The parking area is informal pull-off parallel to Grove Street. The playground is located within an area of sand.

Opportunities –

- Develop an age-segregated playground that has engineered safety mulch or resilient pavement as the safety surfacing. Sand does not meet the fall safety standards
- Develop formalized parking spaces that are off road and include handicapped parking spaces. Minimize the removal of trees to develop the parking.
- Connect handicapped parking spaces to an accessible route that extends to the facilities in the park.
- Retain and protect the mature trees in the park.
- Develop a kiosk with a trail map showing the link to Memorial Park and the distance.



Bicentennial Park – Orwigsburg Borough

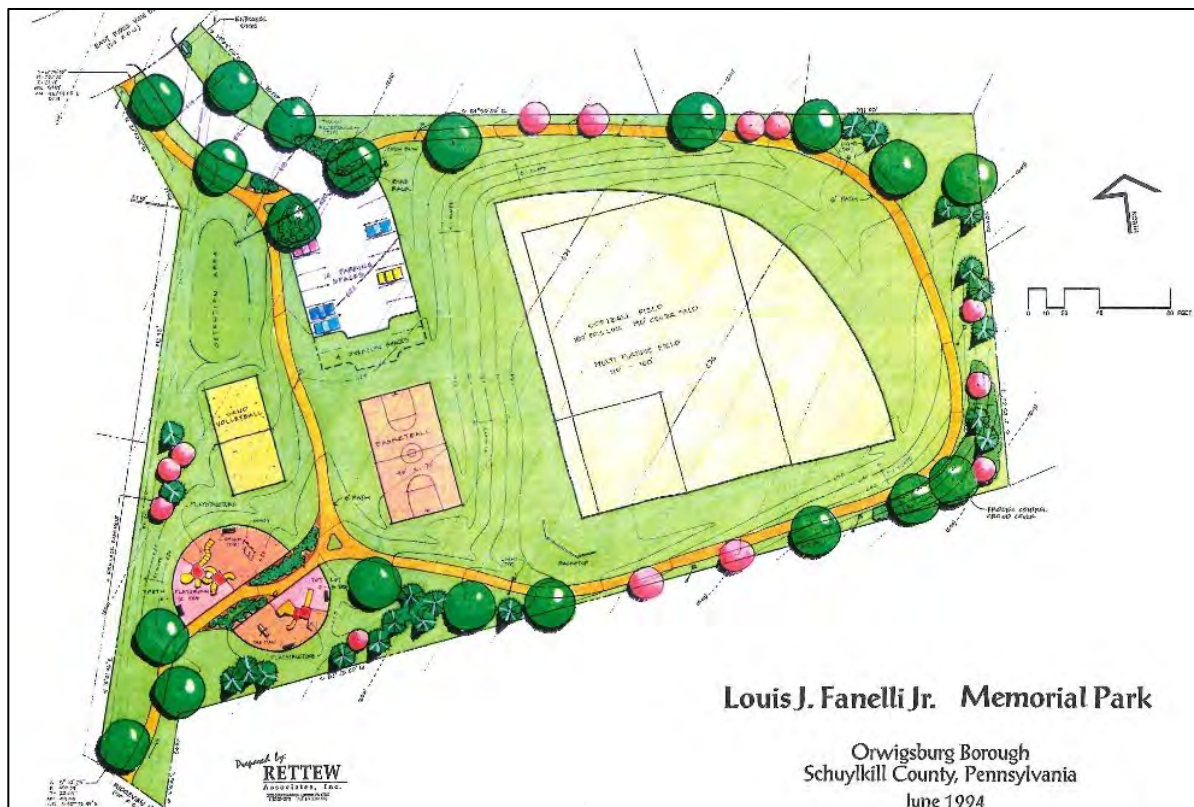
This is a small pocket park located on a corner lot in the Borough. The park includes benches on a small brick patio surrounded by landscaping and flowers. The park provides opportunities to sit and view the activities on West Market Street.

Fanelli Park – Orwigsburg Borough

This mini park contains a single facility, a youth baseball field and gravel parking. A master plan was developed for the park in 1994 which showed additional recreation facilities.

Opportunities – Hold a neighborhood outreach meeting to gather input on further development of the park. Share the 1994 master plan and request input on additional facilities that are desired in the park.

- Develop handicapped parking spaces in the parking lot.
- Develop a trail that encircles the park site and connects the handicap parking spaces to the ballfield spectator and player areas with an accessible route.



Fishers Dam – Orwigsburg Borough

This mini park contains a small pond that is a popular fishing spot. There is a small gazebo, benches, and a pedestrian bridge across the dam structure. The park is not accessible.

Opportunities –

- Develop a path encircling the pond and connect to the gazebo and an on-street handicap parking space. Create pads along the trail for benches facing the pond.
- Add colorful perennials and ornamental grasses at the park sign.
- Add sidewalk along the park frontage without sidewalk, construct a curb cut, and designate an on-street handicap parking space.



Walborn Avenue Park – Orwigsburg Borough

This mini park provides a playground and basketball hoops to serve the surrounding residential neighborhood. The park is not accessible.

Opportunities –

- Check the playground equipment for compliance with safety guidelines. The limits of the safety surfacing at the swings appears smaller than is required. Remove play equipment that does not meet the latest playground safety and accessibility requirements.
- Add new playground equipment to existing compliant equipment to create an age-segregated play area.
- Add a gathering area at the new playground area with benches and picnic tables.
- Add a parallel handicapped parking space along Walborn Avenue and connect to the park via an accessible route.
- Extend an accessible route throughout the park to connect to each facility.
- Develop an overlay pavement on the basketball half-courts and paint the basketball key and three-point line at each hoop.
- Add deciduous trees for shade.
- Add a park sign with colorful perennials and ornamental grasses at the park entrance.



Aaron Kreager Park – Wayne Township

This mini park is in the Rolling View residential neighborhood and provides a playground, small pavilion, and open lawn area for informal play.

Opportunities –

- Expand and reconfigure the playground to be age-segregated.
- Add a plaza gathering area for caregivers with benches, picnic tables, and trees for shade.
- Connect the playground, pavilion, and small parking area with an accessible trail.
- Develop a handicapped parking space in the existing parking areas.
- Add additional deciduous trees along the street frontage and east of the playground.
- Retain the open area west of the playground for informal use such as soccer practice, throwing a Frisbee, etc.



Wayne Township Recreation Area – Wayne Township

This community park is partially developed with a soccer field and parking near Route 443 and pavilion, stage and open area in the lower level across a small stream. The soccer field was not developed with the preferred north-south orientation. The park is not accessible.

Opportunities –

- A master plan is suggested to define improvements desired by the community. The master plan should address the need for improvements to meet the requirements of the ADA.



West Brunswick Recreation Area – West Brunswick Township

This park is classified as a neighborhood park based on its size at 6 acres. The park is maximized with two softball fields and multi-purpose area between the fields. The park is adjacent to Pine Creek, a trout stocked stream. The park is not accessible. A private property located southeast of the park requires access through the park parking area.

Opportunities –

- Formalize the parking area by paving and striping spaces or adding bumper blocks to maximize the number of spaces.
- Develop handicapped parking spaces and an accessible route to the spectator and player areas for the fields.
- Develop a stabilized location for stream access for fishing.

Pleasant Valley Road Park – West Brunswick Township

This mini park contains a single recreation amenity; a small basketball court. The court has two baskets but no pavement markings. There are no provisions for accessibility or parking.

Opportunities –

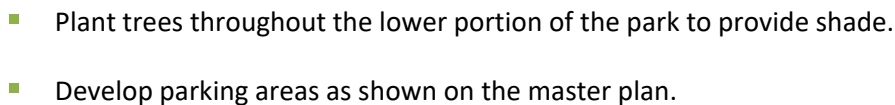
- Stripe the court with basketball keys, three-point circle, and other markings.
- Provide a handicap parking space and a path that leads from the space to the court.
- Add benches for spectators and players.

Auburn Memorial Park – Auburn Borough

Auburn Memorial Park is the largest park in the South Schuylkill region at 20 acres. The park is a traditional community park with both active and passive recreation opportunities. The existing basketball court and small ballfield have poor orientations. The existing playground is outdated and does not meet accessibility and safety standards. Parking occurs on lawn area and there are no handicapped parking spaces. The area north of the park is owned by Auburn Memorial Park Association and contains a soccer field, pavilion, and concession building.

Opportunities –

- Develop the park as illustrated on the 2017 master plan.
- Develop the walking trail to provide an amenity for health and fitness and to provide accessibility to existing and proposed recreation facilities. Add mile markers along the trail.
- Eliminate the existing playground and develop the youth playground portion of the new playground to complement the new tot lot.



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

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

The dedication of parkland is a mechanism that many municipalities use to ensure that future residents have adequate park and recreation opportunities by requiring developers to dedicate public open space within proposed developments. Two municipalities of the South Schuylkill Region have a mandatory dedication ordinance; East Brunswick Township and Wayne Township. These ordinances provide for fees-in-lieu of land as an alternative to land dedication, when approved by the municipality.

2014 Changes to the Law

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

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

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

This changed in 2014 to state that:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Upon request of any person who paid any fee under this subsection, the municipality shall refund such fee, plus interest accumulated thereon from the date of payment, if

the municipality had used the fee paid, for a purpose other than the purposes set forth in this section.

There is no time limit for expending collected fees.

Land Dedication Formula

Current Land Dedication Formula – The municipal SALDO's defines the required parkland acreage to be dedicated as follows:

East Brunswick Township

Two thousand (2,000) square feet of open space and recreation area per dwelling unit shall be set aside for open space or recreation.

Wayne Township

The amount of land required to be dedicated in each subdivision shall be based upon the following development densities (dwelling units per acre [d.u./ac.]), provided that the minimum area acceptable for dedication shall be one (1) acre in size:

<u>Density (d.u./ac.)</u>	<u>% of Tract in Open Space</u>
Up to 3	5%
3.1 to 6	10%
6.1 to 10	15%
10.1 to 15	20%
Over 15	25%

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

East Brunswick Township

East Brunswick Township 2010 Average Household Size: 2.50

$1,000 / 2.50$ persons per dwelling unit = 400 dwellings

Dividing this number by the desired 10 acres per 1,000 residents yields this amount of land:

$10 \text{ acres} / 400 \text{ dwellings} = 0.025 \text{ acres/dwelling}$

Example: For a subdivision of 50 homes, this 0.025-acre requirement would net 1.25 acres of parkland:

$0.025 \text{ acres/dwelling} \times 50 \text{ dwellings} = 1.25 \text{ acres}$

East Brunswick Township's current formula:

$$2,000 \text{ sq. ft./dwelling} \times 50 \text{ dwellings} = 2.30 \text{ acres of parkland}$$

Wayne Township

Wayne Township 2010 Average Household Size: 2.47

$$1,000/2.47 \text{ persons per dwelling unit} = 405 \text{ dwellings}$$

Dividing this number by the desired 10 acres per 1,000 residents yields this amount of land:

$$10 \text{ acres}/405 \text{ dwellings} = 0.025 \text{ acres/dwelling}$$

Example: For a subdivision of 50 homes, this 0.025-acre requirement would net 1.25 acres of parkland:

$$0.025 \text{ acres/dwelling} \times 50 \text{ dwellings} = 1.25 \text{ acres}$$

Wayne Township's current formula is a range with the low and high-density calculations:

$$50 \text{ acres @ } 3 \text{ du./ac.} = 16.67 \text{ acres} \times 5\% = 0.83 \text{ acres of parkland}$$

$$50 \text{ acres @ } 15 \text{ du./ac.} = 3.33 \text{ acres} \times 25\% = 0.83 \text{ acres of parkland}$$

This alternative land dedication formula relates to the Parkland Acreage Standard adopted by this recreation plan and is based on the latest U.S. Census data for average household size. In Wayne Township the alternative formula yields parkland dedication acreage that exceeds the current ordinance provisions. In East Brunswick Township the current method yields a higher amount of parkland for dedication. However, in both of these examples, the dedication formula appears to be arbitrary and not tied to an adopted standard.

Fee-in-Lieu

Current Fee-in-Lieu Requirements – Fee-in-lieu of dedicating parkland or open space is defined by the ordinances as follows:

East Brunswick Township and Wayne Township

The fee is \$1,000 for each dwelling unit.

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

Using the 1.25 acres of land dedication for a 50-unit subdivision, the developer should provide the Township with an appraisal of the required 1.25-acre parcel. Therefore, if the land were appraised at \$50,000 per acre, the Township would accept a \$62,500 fee-in-lieu of the land dedication. By contrast, the current requirement is \$1,000 per dwelling unit results in \$50,000 for the same 50 unit subdivision.

By tying the mandatory dedication fee-in-lieu to the fair market value of an acre of land and the average household size, the dedication of lands or fee will align with the changing real estate market. If the Township prefers a dwelling unit calculation, the calculation should relate to the fair market value and should be review and adjusted on an annual basis. The following calculation is based on \$50,000 per acre land appraisals:

Using the previous example of appraised land value of \$50,000 per acre translates as follows:

$$0.025 \text{ acres} \times \$50,000/\text{acre} = \$1,250/\text{dwelling unit fee-in-lieu amount.}$$

This method of calculating fee-in-lieu exceeds the amount defined by the current ordinance. A lower or higher assessment of fair market value for an acre of land would translate to corresponding lower or higher fee-in-lieu amount.

Land Type and Characteristic for Dedication Requirements

The characteristics of land suitable for dedication for recreation purposes should be defined by the ordinances. The description of land to be dedicated should not be subjective and should protect a municipality from receiving lands that do not provide recreation benefit. Mandatory Dedication ordinances should provide concise criteria for land to be dedicated for parkland or open space. Following are suggested criteria for land to be dedicated for parkland and trails.

- The land is a minimum of five acres in size, contiguous in shape and has soil conditions suitable for developing recreational facilities. The five acres relates to the size of a neighborhood park as defined by the South Schuylkill Region Park and Recreation Classification System. The municipality should require a fee-in-lieu for land areas less than five acres unless the land to be dedicated is contiguous to an existing park site or protected open space.
- The land is configured to include natural features worthy of preservation and protection.
- The land is easily and safely accessible from all areas of the subdivision with direct access to a public street and the minimum required lot width at the public street frontage. Sidewalk connections are provided where feasible. No roadways traverse the site.
- A maximum of 15% of the total site to be dedicated can consist of floodplain, wetlands, steep slopes (more than 8%), utility easements or rights-of-way, or other limiting features that render the lot un-developable.
- The land should be accessible to utilities such as sewer, water, and power. The municipality should require that the developer extend utilities to the tract.
- The land should not contain stormwater facilities designed to detain, retain, or infiltrate stormwater.
- The land should, where possible, be located adjacent to existing parkland, protected open space, undeveloped tracts, or other dedicated lands to create a single, larger tract.

The land to be dedicated may be incorporated into the trail system of the municipality, by means of a grant of right-of-way or easement to the municipality, and shall be consistent in location, design, dimension, topography and route with an approved *Trail System Map* or recommended by the

Township Supervisors or Borough Council. Lands to be dedicated for trails should be suitable for the development of a trail without extensive engineering and structures. Grant of rights-of-way or easements intended to be incorporated in the trail system shall be not less than 20-feet wide and not more than 30-feet wide at any point along the length of said trail and shall include an additional 20-foot-wide parallel construction easement along the length of said trail which shall automatically terminate upon the completion of construction of the same.

Mandatory Dedication for Non-Residential Development⁵

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

Nevertheless, a number of municipalities do impose public dedication requirements on commercial and industrial development. Newtown Township (Bucks County), for example, imposes a dedication standard of 750 sq. feet of parkland per 1,000 sq. feet of building area or requests a fee-in-lieu payment of \$1,291 per 1,000 sq. feet of non-residential building area. In the South Schuylkill Region, East Brunswick Township SALDO has a provision for Non-residential development.

East Brunswick Township

The amount of land or cash from non-residential subdivisions and land developments shall be determined by the number of dwelling units that would result if eighty percent (80%) of the tract were occupied by two (2) acres lots for single family dwellings (i.e., 100-acres tract = 40 dwelling units).

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

To continue the previous example, in East Brunswick Township, .025 acres of land is required for every 2.50 residents (average household size) in a development. Similarly, this non-residential approach could require 0.025 acres for every 2.50 parking spaces of employees who are not municipal residents and who use local park and recreation facilities.

There is disagreement in the planning field about whether or not public dedication should be applied to commercial or industrial uses, and it does not appear that this disagreement will be settled anytime soon. Therefore, to improve the odds that its public dedication ordinance will stand the test of time, a municipality that decides to require public dedication for commercial and industrial land uses should specifically document the recreational needs of commercial and industrial users who are not residents within the municipality and devise a methodology to determine their level of demand. Then it should create a standard that exacts the amount of parkland needed to serve future employees and make sure that such parks are readily accessible to the employees.

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

Parkland & Recreation Analysis

Strengths

The South Schuylkill Region municipalities together offer 22 public parks with additional recreation facilities developed on private land that is available for public use. All but one municipality has one or more local parks. The use of private recreation sites offsets the critical need for parkland at the municipal level.

Throughout the region there is a diversity of park offerings; Albright's Woods and Cressona Grove offer a wooded setting for picnic activities, Auburn Memorial Park offers a traditional mix of passive and active recreation options, Cressona Pool offers a swimming pool, Memorial Park and the schools offer indoor gymnasiums, and Cressona Ballfield Complex offers an athletic park.

The Blue Mountain School District permits public use of the school grounds and gymnasiums for general recreation. The Blue Mountain Middle School campus combined with Memorial Park create a hub for active recreation in the region.

Challenges

The park facilities typically target the recreation needs and interests of youth. Opportunities for teens, young adults, adults, adult seniors, and persons with disabilities are limited. The parks lack accessibility accommodations (ADA) and in most locations include outdated play equipment.

With a few exceptions the parks are small and maximized with recreation facilities. There is relatively little room to expand the recreation facility offerings in the existing parks to add facilities desired by residents. Overall in the region, there is a need for 75 acres of additional parkland based on the Parkland Acreage Standard.

Citizens would like the opportunity to enjoy nature and participate in fitness and wellness activities. There are no nature parks and nature preserves, among the 22 public parks in the region. Albright's Woods and Cressona Grove offer a wooded setting but not a natural setting for nature study and enjoying the natural landscape. Only three parks (East Brunswick Playground and Albright's Woods/Blue Mountain Middle School/Memorial Park) offer trails for fitness and wellness activities.

Only two municipalities have mandatory dedication of parkland ordinance provisions in their SALDO requiring dedication of parkland or fee-in-lieu to offset the recreation impact of new development.

Opportunities

Small enhancements in the existing parks will achieve compliance with the requirements of the ADA. Investment in the existing parks can provide facilities that provide quality recreation experiences.

Continued cooperation and partnership with Blue Mountain School District and the Blue Mountain Recreation Commission will help to maximize recreation opportunities for residents. A regional approach to providing expanded recreation opportunities can be efficient and is viewed positively by State funding agencies.

South Schuylkill - Comprehensive Park, Recreation & Open Space Plan

Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania

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EXISTING FACILITIES MAP

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