

CHAPTER 7

PARKS AND RECREATION PLAN GOALS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The goals and the recommendations present a suggested course of action for Whitemarsh Township to pursue over the next ten years. The Township can work at the actions incrementally: through an annual action plan, a medium term program over five to ten years and long term strategies that require more intense planning, investment and partnerships. By having a slate of actions identified and adopted, elected and appointed officials, community organizations and citizens have a common reference for the Township's plans and goals.

Guide, Not a Law

The plan serves as a guide, not a requirement of law. Not everything can or should be done at once. The recommendations serve as a road map for Whitemarsh Township to follow on the path to its goals. The Township can follow the map at its own pace determining where to follow the path exactly and where to take detours to seize opportunities or meet emerging needs. The plan is intended to be flexible to enable the Township to make wise decisions in implementation.

Goals

Strategies to address the key findings that emerged from the planning process are organized around four goals. These goals represent the long-term condition for which Whitemarsh Township will strive. They include the following:

Goal 1: Establish a premiere system of parks, recreation facilities, greenways, and trails balanced for resource conservation and responsible public use.

Goal 2: Provide recreation opportunities, programs and services that will enrich the quality of life for the people who live, work, and visit in Whitemarsh Township.

Goal 3: Manage the parks and recreation system in a professional manner that conveys the greatest possible benefit to the public.

Goal 4: Invest in parks and recreation to sustain and enhance the quality of life in Whitemarsh in the 21st Century.

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Goal 1

Establish a premiere system of parks, recreation facilities, and trails throughout Whitemarsh Township.

Objective 1

Rehabilitate existing parks and recreation facilities to the extent possible.

General Park Improvements.

- Focus on aesthetics to make the parks places where people want to spend their time, serve as neighborhood assets, and are attractive scenery to people driving by who may never even use the parks.
- Enhance access to all parks for all members of the community regardless of age. Greatly improving mobility, in the form of trails and greenways, is needed to create interconnections between parks and recreation resources, neighborhoods, etc. The top trail priority should be creating a central spine along Joshua Road.
- Develop formal site master plans for all of the Township's parks. Each of the Township's parks have issues related to the layout and functionality of facilities. Additional aesthetic improvements could also aid in unifying the parks into one cohesive system. This initiative should also include developing an "official manual of park fixtures." Having high-quality, well designed and uniform fixtures such as benches, lights, signing, etc. is cost effective, efficient and improves the perception of an overall park system.
- Develop a comprehensive park signage and information system. Request qualifications from firms experienced in signage systems for parks. Investigate signage in other park systems, especially in Philadelphia. Determine guiding principles for Whitemarsh's signage system. Set a budget and issue an RFP to solicit potential contractors for sign design.

- Landscape parks in a manner that enhances biodiversity and use plantings that are native to the region. Park improvements should be developed with the involvement of the Township's Environmental Advisory Board.
- Develop an invasive species removal program and implement it as resources allow.
- Improve existing park sites and recreation facilities to meet ADA requirements.
- Continue to provide play equipment that meets the safety and age-segregation criteria of the CPSC (Consumer Product Safety Commission) Guidelines for Public Playground Safety. Remove all equipment that does not meet the CPSC Guidelines and that presents a significant threat to safety. Conduct ongoing safety inspections of playgrounds. Provide adequate safety zones around each piece of play equipment with safety surfacing material that meets the test requirements of the CPSC and the latest American Society of Testing and Materials criteria.
- Provide walking trails in parks and to recreation facilities. The ADA requires access to recreation facilities and activity areas via an accessible route.
- Connect park sites to greenways and trails.
- Make the park sites comfortable and convenient to use by adding benches, trash receptacles, drinking fountains, bike racks, and restrooms. Provide benches near playgrounds, in shaded locations, and at other activity areas for adults to sit and watch park activities.
- Prioritize facility development. Achieve balance between the needs of the public and the needs of organized sports for more fields.
- Pursue a capital investment financial strategy such as borrowing or a bond issue in order to make improvements that are urgently needed, such as riverfront access, trails, ballfields, and indoor recreation.

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- Phase in development over time, in accordance *with master plans*.

Site Specific Recommendations

1. **Master Plan Cedar Grove Park and expand it as much as possible** – This includes the potential dedication of the adjacent land owned by Gambone, as part of their land development process and connections into and through the PECO right-of-way. All of the Township’s parks need landscape improvements to make them more “park-like.” This specific park needs landscape improvements, such as street trees along the perimeter, plantings possibly near the farm house, benches, etc. The basketball court also needs to be improved or removed.
2. **Master Plan Kline Park with a focus on a trail as an extension of the Joshua Road trail spine** – This land is highly under-utilized and is located in a densely developed area of the Township. Until a formal evaluation of the property is performed, there is no way of knowing what its true park potential could be. The creation of a trail through the park could connect the core of the Township to Kline Park, Cedar Grove Park and ultimately to Spring Mill Park and the riverfront.
3. **Master Plan Leeland Park using the approach of creating a more formal “town square”** – A master plan should be developed for this park. The plan should consider the removal of the formal baseball field and the addition of more hardscaping. This would make the park more passive to match the character of the neighborhood and the size of the site. These changes would also allow the removal of the portable restroom facilities.
4. **Deal with basic functional issues at Miles Park** – There are special functional issues related to parking, access and circulation. Some of these issues are a function of the parks current layout and some are tied to traffic impacts of Germantown Pike. The ability to properly address many of these issues is tied to relieving some of the pressure on existing facilities, as a result of developing new park and recreation facilities in other locations. The ability to ease facility congestion and reduce the amount of programmed activities at Miles Park should be considered as part of the overall planning and development of a new community park and when master planning existing parks within the Township.
5. **Re-evaluate and update the previous Master Plan recommendations for Valley Green Park** – The master plan that was developed for this park should be re-evaluated in the context of the Township’s Parks and Recreation Plan in order to see if any changes need to be pursued. Aesthetic improvements should be a high priority for this park; it especially needs canopy trees and buffering along the boundary along with the walking path and other unrealized elements of the park master plan.
6. **Renovate, expand or replace the Recreation Building** – The Township is currently undertaking a feasibility study to determine the build-out potential of the building and the adjacent site. The recommendations from this study should be implemented in order to fulfill the major needs for indoor recreation space.
7. **Partner with Montgomery County to master plan and improve Spring Mill Park** – This would also include developing a strategy to acquire the adjacent 200 Center Street parcel (scrap yard) for a parking and access area.

Objective 2

Develop special use facilities to fulfill “niche” needs within the Township.

Recommendations

1. **Create a high-quality facility for the Community Arts Center** – The Township

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and the Whitemarsh Community Arts Center have fostered a new mission to expand the arts programs within the Township. A properly equipped and modern facility should be jointly developed to support arts programming.

2. **Develop a soccer complex** – With only one Township-owned field, soccer is currently the most underserved active recreation activity in the Township, especially when compared to the enrollment in the activity. A new facility, either as a free-standing complex or as part of a future larger park should be developed. This facility should also be constructed with special turf surfaces in order to maximize its utilization.
3. **Build a gym/neighborhood center** – The location of this facility would be dependent upon available land, however ideally it would be within walking distance of Miles Park for summer camp programs. The facility should include a gym at the minimum, but should also have the ability to be expanded as needs change.
4. Develop facilities for current and emerging user needs such as a skate park, roller hockey, dog parks, ice skating rink, rock climbing wall, etc. The existing active facilities are focused on traditional organized sports, such as baseball, softball and football. Demographics show dramatic increases in soccer, as well as new types of activities such as rollerblading, skateboarding, and extreme-type sports like rock climbing. These facilities should also include activities for a larger range of age groups, such as dog parks or ice skating rinks.
5. Enhance access to the Schuylkill River – Either through the purchase of existing privately-owned parcels, or through the Township Riverfront District Zoning requirement for private development, public access to the River's edge should be promoted.

Objective 3

Target land acquisition and easements to meet specific community needs.

Recommendations

1. Develop at least one new neighborhood park in the Central District – The core of the Township, the area with the primary concentration of population, is in need of more neighborhood parkland.
2. Seek land adjacent to existing public parkland, including State and County lands, to expand the size of the parks – With the high cost of land in the Township, one method to expand park facilities is to expand existing resources, instead of creating new ones. The Township should capitalize on any opportunity to acquire lands adjacent to existing resources.
3. Develop two or three additional neighborhood parks – These sites, ranging in size from five to twenty acres, should be located in or near the Central District of the Township and have a mix of passive and active recreation uses.
4. Target land acquisition activities that could be the basis for a future new community park - Combined with the need for recreation facilities, the Township should start identifying target properties for the creation of a new park that is at least 75 to 100 acres in size. The ability to acquire a parcel of this size will be a challenge for the Township, therefore options which assemble several parcels or expand on existing resources such as the State Park lands, should be considered.
5. Consider a long term community park in the Broad Axe area- Should development in this district occur, there will be a need to provide community-oriented parkland, different from the State and County lands, in this portion of the Township. This parkland could be the proposed community park, if that facility is located in this area of the Township.

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Objective 4

Promote protection of natural areas through the park system.

Recommendations

Conserve natural areas for recreation and environmental education in the Whitemarsh Township park system.

- Partner with the Township's Environmental Advisory Board to develop standards for landscape management that promote biodiversity and natural habitats on parklands and public open spaces.
- Develop and implement a natural resources management plan for all of the parks, especially the more passive parks such as Kline and McCarthy Parks. Bring in the County Conservation District, the Natural Lands Trust, and other experts to consult with Township Parks and Recreation staff on resource management.
- Provide trails and greenways to connect natural area, community destinations, and parks and provide for long distance recreation activities.
- Incorporate natural areas within community parks and greenways for passive recreation activities, enjoying nature, and environmental education.
- Design future parks with nature in mind. Protect and enhance natural resources, buffer sensitive natural resources, use native plant material, incorporate unique areas into park designs, and develop sites using Best Management Practices for erosion control and storm water management.
- Explore a partnership with the Colonial School District for environmental education. This program would have to be part of the Department's program management plan to insure that staff time and resources would be available to plan and implement the program.

Objective 5

Continue park planning efforts with public involvement to ensure effective design and construction.

Recommendations

1. Involve the sports groups in addressing field improvements, rehabilitation, potential relocation and timing.
2. Set a policy regarding which parks should have restrooms. Traditionally, community parks have restrooms and neighborhood parks do not. Where parks do not have restrooms and are used by organized sports, Port-a-Pottys should be available.
3. Park planning should take a holistic approach to the park and recreation system. Improvements to one park should be reviewed within the context of the system as a whole.

Objective 6

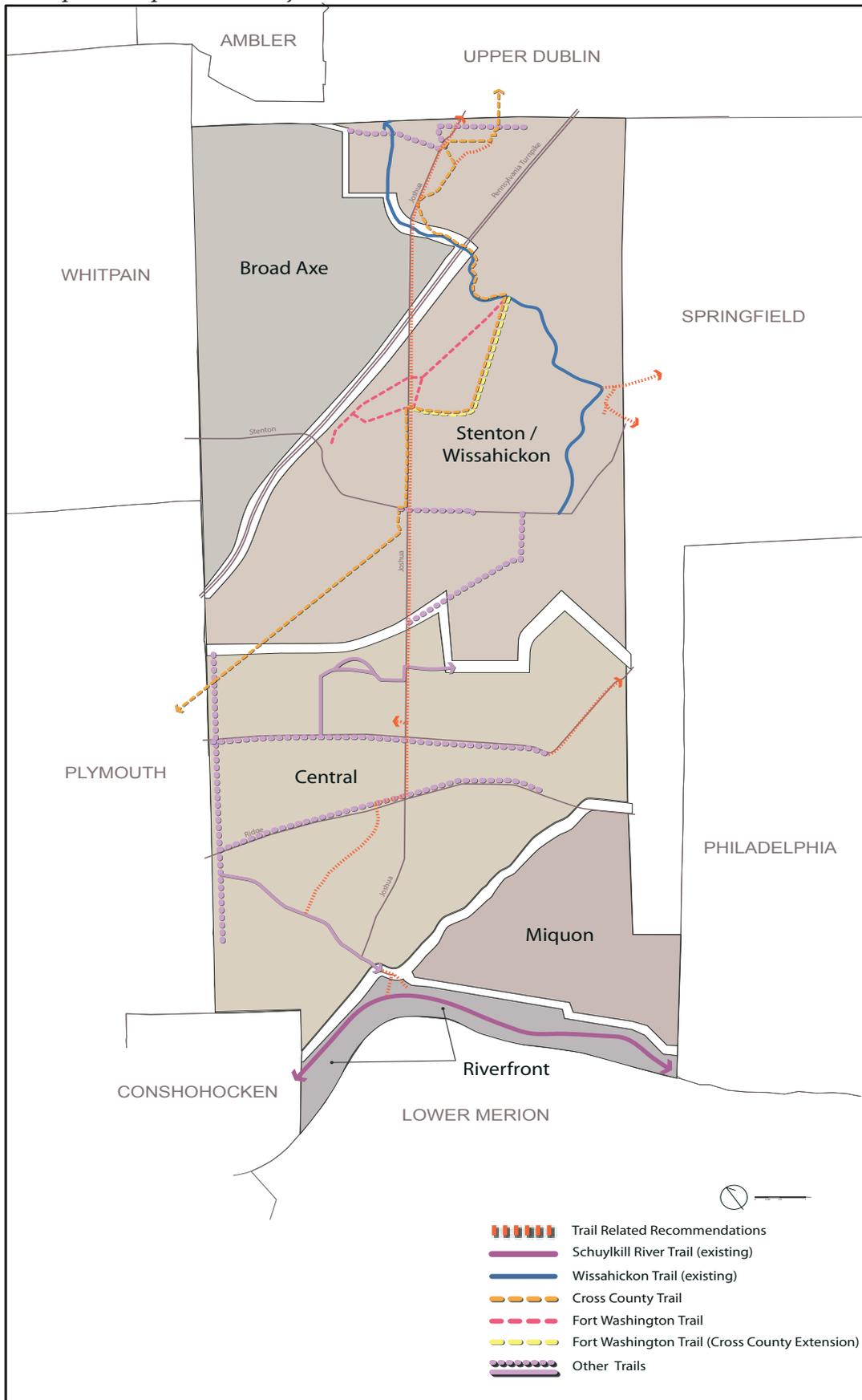
Design and develop a township-wide greenways, trail and bike path system.

Recommendations

1. As recommended by this Plan and the Township's Open Space Plan, create and adopt a comprehensive sidewalks, trails and greenways master plan.
2. Establish feeder trails to link residents to the Township's major trails.
3. Support Montgomery County's trail development initiatives in the Township and coordinate with County representatives regarding project timelines and prioritization of trail segments.

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Map #5 Proposed Trails by District



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Goal 2

Provide recreation and arts opportunities, programs and services to enrich the quality of life for the people who live, work or visit in Whitemarsh Township.

Objective 1

Continue recreation programming in Whitemarsh Township year round.

Recommendations

1. Develop a program and service management plan for recreation opportunities in Whitemarsh Township. Create an annual plan and an annual program report.
2. The program management plan should include a mix of organized programs and self-directed recreation opportunities. For the organized programs, the Department should identify specific target goals for number of programs and participants to project the amount of revenues that could be generated. Continue the focus of the Department on producing programs aimed at effective customer service.
3. Broaden the perspective on service delivery from organized scheduled programs to providing opportunities for self-directed recreation that people undertake on their own schedule as they wish. This will enable the Township to expand recreation opportunities without increasing staffing requirements.
4. Include the role of “information broker” in which the Department presents ideas for how people can spend their leisure time with specific suggestions for what people can do on their own. This could be a weekly feature on the WEB site.

Objective 2

Maintain the pulse of the community in terms of needs and interests in parks and recreation.

Recommendations

1. Evaluate programs, services, and facilities on an on-going basis to determine public preferences. This should be a formalized process instituted for the programs overall. Target both leaders and participants for the evaluations.
2. Develop a targeted mailing list for people interested in program categories, age groups etc.
3. Participate in community advisory groups and organizations as a liaison to parks and recreation. This would include service clubs, the potential umbrella sports organizations and other community meetings in which departmental staff could monitor or participate.
4. Obtain public input from a variety of means including:
 - Parks and Recreation Board.
 - A community wide needs assessment update every three to five years. Build upon the recent township survey in future surveys. Use this plan as the basis for the next survey. To begin planning for active adult programs, consider a targeted survey of people age 45 and over.
 - Letters and telephone calls from citizens. Suggestion boxes. Parks and Recreation WEB site.
 - Focus groups. Community boards and organizations including the sports groups, service organizations, and others.
 - Periodic interviews in parks with park visitors.

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5. Develop information about customer preferences, interests and demographic characteristics. Knowing who the customers are and their characteristics is essential in expanding and positioning services effectively. This can be done through registration, program evaluations, focus groups and intercept surveys in the parks, special events or programs.

Objective 3

Expand the summer camp program.

Recommendations

1. Develop holiday day camp program for children and youth during the school year.
2. Consider the design of a day camp site in the master-planning projects for Miles Park, the Recreation Building and other parks in the future.
3. Conduct evaluations of participants with age appropriate evaluation tools and parental evaluations where appropriate as well as holding focus groups for program categories or age groups.

Objective 4

Develop a plan for providing recreation services to senior adults in Whitemarsh Township.

Recommendations

1. Develop a program management plan for senior adults.
2. Begin to focus on an active aging population with Baby Boomers. Start with interviews and focus groups with citizens in this category to figure out where the Department needs to go. This will be ground breaking planning.

Objective 5

Address the need to provide and promote recreation opportunities aimed at improving lifelong fitness and wellness.

Recommendations

1. Adopt a multi-faceted approach that includes facilities, services, promotion, and partnerships.
2. Create facilities such as pathways, indoor recreation, the riverfront and scenic natural areas to entice people to participate.
3. Promote the need for an active lifestyle, its role in disease prevention, and how the Department can help citizens to lead healthy lifestyles.
4. Establish partnerships with health care providers in this effort. Partner with the Pennsylvania Activities and Nutrition Advocates (PANA), the Colonial School District and the local private schools including Germantown Academy. Work with the school district in creating the plan for fitness that is required of all school districts by 2007.

Objective 6

Explore new program areas as staff resources are available.

Recommendations

1. Consider after school programs for middle school students, especially in the Recreation Building. Consider working with Colonial School District in creating the Recreation Building as a drop off point for the school bus route.

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2. Consider an adult recreation/self-improvement evening and weekend program.
3. Change the approach to the School District by identifying and scoping out programs that are suitable for collaboration; develop a proposal outlining the goals, objectives, parameters and support requirements for the program. Transition the Department from the role of requester of facilities just like any other group to a partner for the School District in mutual endeavors that would serve the public and solve community problems.
4. Expand environmental education and nature based recreation as the next program area in the Department. Consider an expanded working relationship with Morris Arboretum, Fort Washington State Park and Montgomery County Parks and Heritage Services.

Objective 7

Incorporate teens in the recreation program planning and park master planning projects.

Recommendations

1. Establish a teen advisory council for the purpose of facility planning and program development. Have the teen advisory council establish their mission, goals, and ground rules for working with the Township.
2. Start small and work towards one or two key successes to launch the new program area.
3. Use the Department's approach of working with middle schoolers and expanding upward as the group moves through high school as a way to capitalize on a successful target audience.
4. Establish the Counselors-In-Training program as a feeder program for staffing.

Objective 8

Continue to facilitate the provision of community recreation services by other providers.

Recommendations

1. Continue to collaborate with the community organized sports groups. Work with them to establish an umbrella sports organization for Whitmarsh Township in which each group would retain its autonomy but work with the larger convocation of sports groups on common township sports issues.
2. Continue to work with commercial recreation providers to offer public recreation opportunities. It provides an important public service as well as a feeder program to strengthen local recreation type businesses.
3. Work with citizens interested in building and operating a dog park to plan, develop and operate a community dog park.
4. Continue to provide facilities, support, and advertisement in the township newsletter for community groups with their contact numbers.
5. Monitor trends to determine how services can be enhanced or rejuvenated. A regular program of community needs assessment and program evaluation should be established.

Objective 9

Develop a formalized marketing program.

Recommendations

1. Identify the department's customers and their demographics. Develop a plan for collecting and using additional information that would help with planning and advertising recreation services.

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2. Incorporate the Whitemarsh Community Arts Center into the Township's advertising and promotional activities.
3. Analyze what services are working and which ones are not. Discontinue the services that are not working in a timely manner.
4. Determine how to expand services to existing customers.
5. Hold focus groups.
6. Determine promotional goals and methods.
7. Develop a tracking system to find out where customers are finding out about the department's services.
8. Determine how to use the Internet to promote services and get feedback.
9. Investigate how to advertise through technology such as instant messaging with teens.
10. Develop program planning formulas as the basis for program marketing and evaluation.
11. Create a detailed one year marketing program that includes advertising, benchmarking for results, and needs assessment.

Goal 3

Continue to manage the parks and recreation system in a professional manner that conveys the greatest possible benefit to the public.

Objective 1

Adopt the organizational structure shown in Figure 7-1.

Objective 2

Establish performance standards for each functional area of parks and recreation.

Recommendations

1. Each functional area of parks and recreation should establish annual goals, objectives and outcomes prior to budget season for the following fiscal year. These objectives should be tied to the budget. This includes park maintenance through Public Works.
2. Assess progress annually before budget season. Make recommendations for resource allocation through the budget based upon goals, objectives, needs and opportunities.

Objective 3

Develop a formal maintenance management system for the parks and recreation facilities.

Recommendations

1. Develop park standards, a documented method for planning, directing, scheduling, and evaluating park maintenance. Set policies for park maintenance management.
2. Develop a maintenance impact statement for all capital improvement projects. This should be included as a component in all master

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site plans. The statement would identify the tasks, costs, and resources needed to maintain the park as well as potential ways to mitigate the cost to the Township.

3. Computerize the workload cost tracking system using the coding and reporting system. Investigate software systems used in other townships.
4. Use the information generated more easily through the automated system for planning, decision-making, making the case for additional support, and establishing fees and charges for facility use.
5. Add staff and budget commensurate with the park improvements in order to ensure well maintained, safe and attractive parks. Include a Park Superintendent to oversee managing and evaluating parks, recreation facilities and v as well as construction management. The Parks & Recreation Director will continue to do all capital improvement planning and will oversee the Park Superintendent.
6. Institute a natural resource management component to the current maintenance operations, which are primarily directed to developed active recreation areas. Coordinate this with the potential Open Space Coordinator for the Township.

LIFETIME COST OF A PARK	
Acquisition, Planning, Financing	15%
Design	2%
Construction	10%
Maintenance	73%
Source: Lay, Francis. 1978. Management of Grounds or Site Management Operations. Manual of Site Management. Environmental Design Press. p.4	

Objective 4

Build the case for parks and recreation and potential major capital funding through effective information management.

Recommendations

1. Adopt a strategic and vigorous program to document the facts and figures related to parks and recreation along with an interpretation of what the figures mean. Track numbers that illustrate the impact on parks and recreation in Whitmarsh. Document a range of information from impact on property values to the numbers of participants at community recreation events and what they spend. Use this information in cultivating sponsorships as well as in overall township planning.
2. Use this information for decision-making, promotion, budgeting, and negotiating partnerships and sponsorships.

Objective 5

Support the professionalism of the Department through an Employee Development Program.

Recommendations

1. Assess the training needs of the Parks and Recreation Department, the park maintenance area of the Public Works Department and the staff.
2. Create a five-year employee development program. Allocate one to two percent of the budget for training (\$6,700 at 1%). Areas to be considered include sport turf management, computerization, specialized management schools, participation in national conferences, and others to be identified. The employee development program should

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also incorporate a performance evaluation program that reflects a philosophy of personal and professional development. Insure that certification programs are kept up to date for staff.

3. Develop procedures to report on training efforts for training that would benefit other department members, elected and appointed officials. Consider in-house and self-directed training such as videos, brown bag lunches with discussion topics, a book club featuring books related to parks and recreation, motivation, job enrichment, and other enriching topics.
4. Continue to recruit high caliber staff for recreation leadership and park maintenance positions when needed. Conduct wage surveys in the area regularly to determine competitive pay rates. Set wages at a competitive level to attract quality employees. It is important to provide a professionally enriching environment in order to retaining professional staff.

Objective 6

Establish an umbrella organization for volunteerism related to parks and recreation.

Recommendations

1. Focus on volunteerism through organized groups and not on individuals. Expand the current basic policy on volunteerism. The nature and scope of the current policy needs to be fleshed out. Recognize that volunteers are not free.
2. Continue to work with the organized sports groups in a collaborative fashion to set-up an umbrella organization for community sports.

Sustain and enhance the sponsorship program for the township's activities. Recognize that most partners and sponsors have already been identified and appear to

be giving as much as they can. Future expansion of partnerships and sponsorships appears to be limited.

Objective 7

Provide secure and safe parks that protect both visitors and public property.

Recommendations

1. Work with the Colonial School District in developing a Site Watch Program.
2. Continue to work with the Police Department on park safety. Include the police in park planning to insure that improvements are consistent with security measures.
3. Continue the Department's current practice of regular park inspections. Coordinate with the insurance carrier to develop a system that minimizes the township's exposure to liability.

Objective 8

Enhance the visibility and public awareness of parks in the community.

Recommendations

1. Maximize the use of the gecko logo for the Parks & Recreation Department to project the image and presence in the community desired by parks and recreation. Parks and Recreation in Whitemarsh is a source of community pride. A unified identity system organized around the logo is a great way to build a visible presence in the community that connects with the taxpayer.
2. Display the logo on all departmental materials, promotions, uniforms and other signs. Identify all of the different materials and equipment that could carry the parks and

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recreation message: brochures, letterhead, park signs, trucks, uniforms, memo pads, vehicles, awards, and so on.

3. Create a gecko mascot (similar to sports team mascots like the Philly Phanatic). The gecko is likely to be an enormously popular figure at township events and was an effective choice for a logo in terms of translation into a mascot.

Objective 9

Position the Department of Parks and Recreation to be part of municipal community planning.

Recommendations

1. Tie together projects such as trail, bike path to community planning, the land development process, open space conservation, and road improvements.
2. Make parks and recreation projects a key component of an aggressive approach to get non-traditional funding sources from federal and state sources.

Objective 10

Develop a strategic plan to merge the Whitemarsh Community Arts Center with the Parks and Recreation Department.

Recommendations

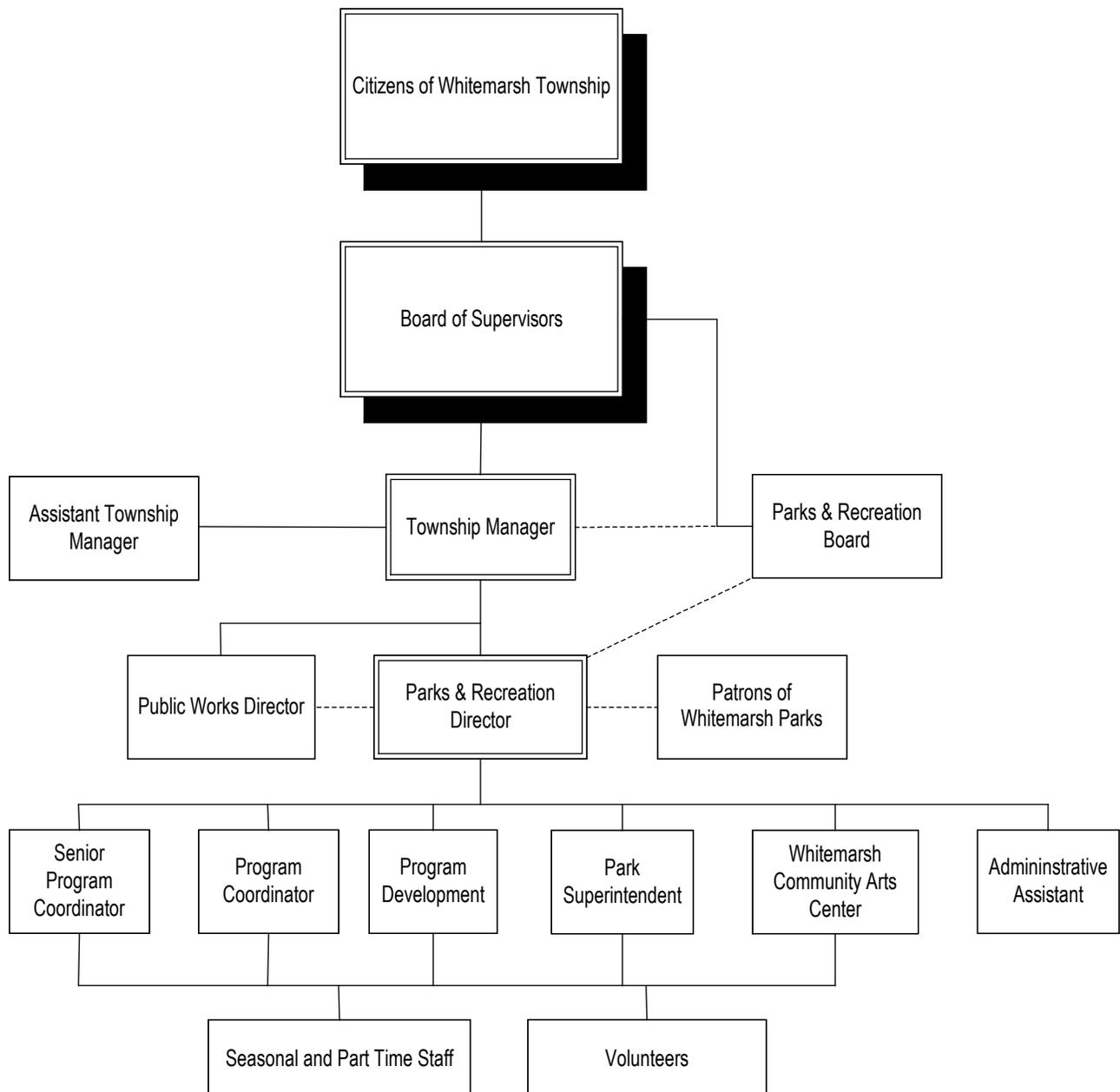
1. Develop the plan collaboratively with managers from both organizations.
2. Develop a vision, mission, and guiding principles to serve as the foundation for the

plan to merge these entities.

3. Consider applying for a Peer-to-Peer grant from PADCNR to study the organization and management of the Arts Center with a goal of making it a more prominent player in regional arts.
4. Enable the Arts Center to operate as a separate enterprise fund within parks and recreation in much the same way as other departments operate golf courses, swimming pools, ice rinks and so on.
5. Establish an Arts Coordinator position for township wide arts management.

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Figure 7-1
Whitemarsh Township
Parks & Recreation Department
Proposed Organizational Structure



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Goal 4

Invest in parks and recreation to sustain and enhance the quality of life in Whitemarsh Township in the 21st Century.

Objective 1

Provide adequate financial support for parks and recreation through its operating budget.

Recommendations

1. Work to fund Parks and Recreation at a level of five percent or more of the operating budget of the Township.
2. Develop a four-part revenue policy for Parks and Recreation. It should include four classifications:
 - Compulsory resources: Dedication fees, dedicated millage and/or a portion of the general fund.
 - Earned income: Fees & charges; admissions; rentals; sales; user fees; special services; and permits.
 - Contractual receipts: Land leases; facility rentals; and concessions.
3. Develop a fees and charges policy.
 - Ensure that provisions are made for those in need of financial assistance.
 - Offer low cost or free programs that serve large groups or significant target groups such as a movie series and the concert series. Try to get sponsors to support these kinds of events.
 - Consider using the equivalent cost of a “recreational hour” which is about \$5 when setting fees and charges. Scholarships or work exchange programs could be set up through partnerships.
 - Establish a percentage of 30 to 40 percent of the program fee for administration and advertising.
4. Develop an impact statement for all projects to demonstrate the need for support to undertake the project and protect the investment. This would enable the Department to hire additional staff for maintenance and programming as improvements are made to the system.
5. Continue to support organized sports and work on collaborative projects for the benefit of the community.

Benefits of Information Management

- Better understanding of community needs
- Enhanced decision-making capability
- Improved customer service
- More effective allocation of resources, potential cost savings
- Documentation that parks and recreation is an essential community service

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Objective 2

Continue to use the current revenue strategy of tax and non-tax sources.

Recommendations

1. Determine how Whitemarsh Township could increase budget support for parks and recreation operations and capital projects.
2. Strive to increase the percentage of the operating budget generated through non-tax sources. Set 45 percent as the benchmark with increases of five percent annually over the next five years. The Department's progress in generating cost recovery (i.e. revenues generated through user fees and charges, events, concessions, sponsorships, gifts, grants, bequests and other means) should be monitored and evaluated and new goals should be established based upon the Department's level of success.
3. Develop a targeted program for soliciting sponsorships and donations on an annual basis.
4. Develop a parks and recreation gift catalog and promote the catalog as a way of encouraging donations to improve the parks. Items could range from a few dollars up to full-scale facilities such as pavilions.

based on recommendations outlined in the Township's Parks and Recreation Plan. In the same manner that the Parks and Recreation Plan is a blueprint for parks and recreation development over the next decade, the CIP is based on the typical five year planning horizon from 2007-2012. The CIP provides a framework for budgeting major capital allocations by the Township and for pursuing outside funding sources to support the implementation of projects. The CIP highlights approximately \$7 million in capital investments over the next five years, over and above the funds needed to maintain the system as the level it exists today. A comprehensive long-range strategy is needed beyond what is included in this Plan. A thorough evaluation of long term financial commitments and available outside funding sources should be carefully addressed to provide the Township with the greatest opportunity to leverage available resources to achieve all of the projects identified herein.

2. Adopt criteria for determining which capital projects to pursue. Given the fact that there are different views and interests (Mainly resource conservation vs. active facilities – sports fields), a clear process for decisions about funding should be established and provided for public information. Sample criteria are in Figure 7-2.

Objective 3

Establish a five-year capital improvement program (CIP) based upon decisions made for implementing this plan.

Recommendations

1. Project the funding that would be available for capital improvements over the next five to ten years. The purpose of the CIP is to develop a blueprint for capital expenditures

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Five-Year Capital Improvement Program	
2007-2009	
1. Recreation Building	\$1,030,000
2. Gym/Soccer Complex	\$540,000
3. Cedar Grove Park Improvements	
Design	\$25,000
Barn	\$150,000
House	\$150,000
4. Valley Green Park	
Redesign	\$10,000
Construction	\$100,000
5. Leeland Park	
Design	\$10,000
Construction	\$200,000
6. Hart Lane - Arts Center	\$195,000
7. Miles Park	\$540,000
8. Dog Park	
Design	\$25,000
9. Kline Park	
Design	\$15,000
Construction	\$55,000
Open Space Fund	\$500,000
TOTAL	\$3,545,000
2010+ (or sooner if opportunity & funding emerges)	
1. Community Park	\$9,000,000
2. River Access	\$1,500,000*
4. Neighborhood Parks	\$3,500,000*
TOTAL	\$14,000,000
* This represents approximately \$1.5 million allocated annually for next five years	
** Includes land acquisition costs	

Objective 4

Consider a bond issue or low interest loans for a twenty-year park re-development program.

Recommendations

1. The scope of the recreation facility improvements is such that major investment is needed over twenty years and beyond. If the Township can make a funding commitment, then decisions about park improvements can be made in a logical fashion based upon a projected configuration of the park system in the year 2020. Consider contracting with a financial planning consultant to work with the Township on a long term financing plan for parks. Future bonds or loans should be based upon park development costs and impact on municipal taxes.
2. Parks & Recreation, the Recreation Building, trails, natural resource conservation and recreation opportunity potential is tied directly to economic vibrancy. These create the kind of amenities that will attract new businesses and residents to the community. Particularly important to economic development are projects and programs aimed at the 25 to 40 year old demographic, a more entrepreneurial age group.
3. The bond or loan amount should be based upon park development costs and impact on municipal taxes.
4. If the Township develops other forms of dedicated revenue streams, a percentage should be allocated to capital development in parks and recreation.

GOALS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Objective 5

Develop a financing plan for major parks and recreation projects that includes a mix of public and private resources.

Recommendations

1. Sustain, enhance, and expand alternatives including partnerships, sponsorships, fee and charges, and fundraising.
2. Apply for grants from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (PA DCNR) to help pay for trail planning, trail development, land acquisition, and park improvements.
3. Work with Fort Washington State Park to determine if their park could share or lease some land for community recreation purposes.
4. Establish an endowment program as a vehicle to raise funds and generate investment income to offset operating and maintenance costs.

Objective 6

Establish strategic alliances with other providers as a way of maximizing all of the available resources for specific projects.

Recommendations

1. Explore a partnership with PANA and Healthy Communities through Montgomery County.
2. Explore a partnership with the Colonial School District for specific projects that the Department would develop and propose to the School District. Such programs could include a targeted after-school program, adult recreation/self improvement, fitness and wellness, and at-risk youth. Shared facilities for sports and environmental education would serve the whole community, students, residents and visitors.

Objective 7

Undertake a private fundraising campaign if appropriate for a major project.

Recommendations

1. Determine if the Township has the capacity to undertake a fundraising campaign. Consider the following factors in order to avoid the error most frequently made in capital fundraising: deciding to have a campaign before the organization is ready. The factors that should be considered include:
 - Staff capacity – A fundraising campaign requires concentrated, dedicated staff time. If a fundraising campaign is undertaken, staff time must be specified to work on the campaign while other duties are re-assigned to others or put on hold for the duration of the campaign. Even when an outside fundraiser is retained, the amount of work to be done within the Department is considerable. Availability and skill of leadership and staff to commit to the project is required for success.
 - Budget – Professional fund-raisers charge a fee, not a percentage of the amount raised. The amount is negotiated based upon the scope of work required for the fundraising project.
 - Quality of data available on prospective donors – Knowledge about the resources available among citizens and businesses helps to gauge the potential likelihood of success for a fundraising campaign. This knowledge includes both financial information and particular interests of prospective donors.
 - Volunteer base – Volunteers are needed to make the case for the project as well as to go out to conduct visits with prospective donors. Donations usually result from people giving to people so the personal

GOALS & RECOMMENDATIONS

connections and ties are crucial to success.

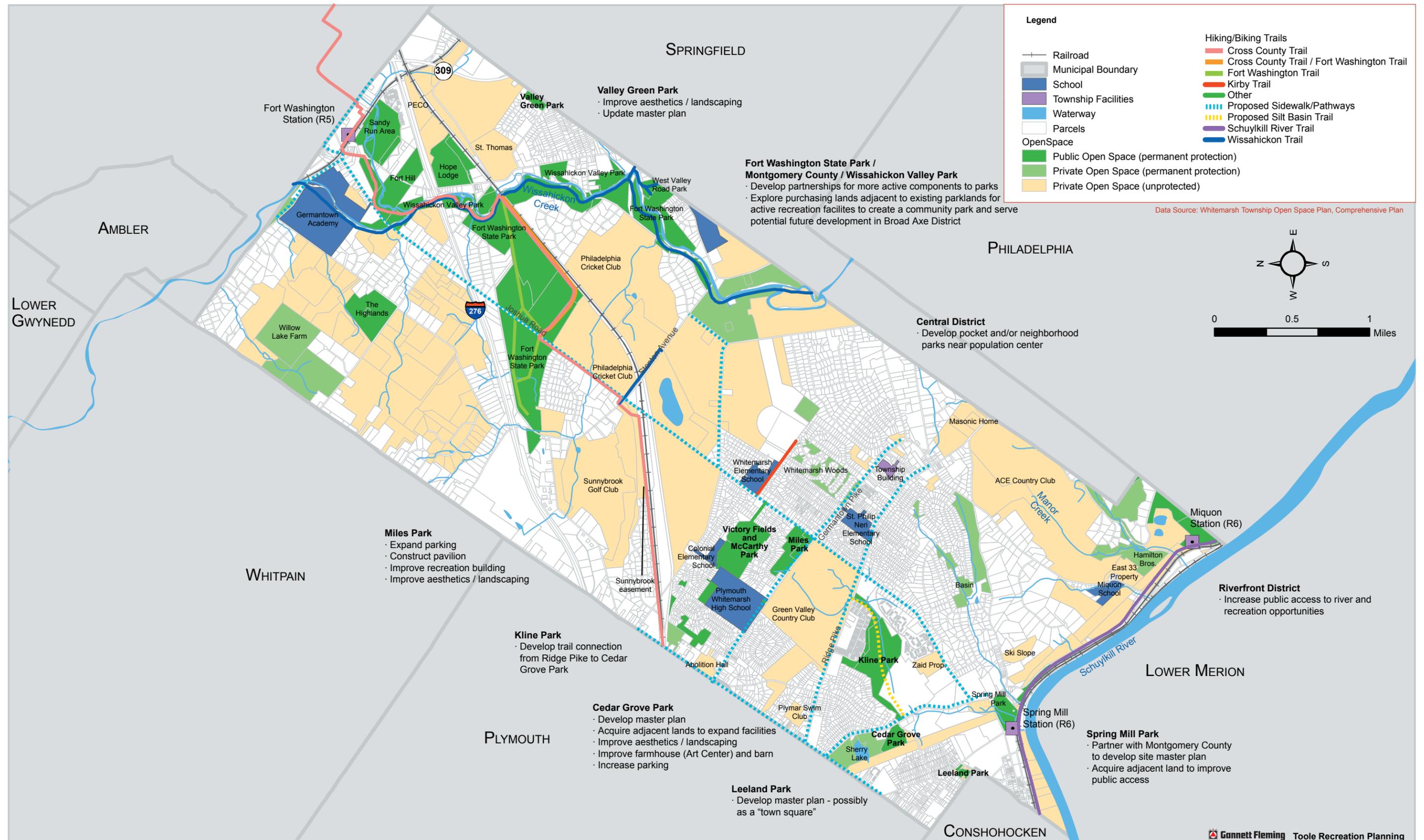
- Potential of getting major donors on the Board – Getting major donors on the board is a key to success. The board members need to be counted on to deliver the first significant donations to the cause. This will enable the fundraisers to leverage other donations based upon a demonstration of successful fundraising to date.
- Board strength – The Board needs to include well-known people of influence in the community. The individuals must be powerful enough to lead the charge in capturing donations. They are usually considered to be the movers and shakers of the community.
- Gift management – As the donations come in, the process of receiving, acknowledging and rewarding the donations must be managed by staff. This will be an on-going process throughout the campaign until all donations are received. This includes the tracking of multi-year pledges.
- Gift recognition – A worthy method for recognizing donations needs to be developed. This can include a permanent signage structure with names and donation category levels as well as through newsletters describing the donations, and media coverage. The gift recognition program should be developed as a component of the campaign.
- Consensus on fund-raising direction – Clear consensus on the purpose of the fundraising project needs to be achieved and formalized in a written document. Consensus on the fund-raising project should be a requirement before beginning the campaign steps.
- Materials and publications to explain the case for support – Staff can assist in the development and publication of the materials. The professional fundraiser

should actually develop the materials and publications to convey the proper message, tone and information to the public and potential donors. Different levels of publications may be needed for various target audiences.

2. Develop a campaign master plan if the Township decides to move ahead with a fundraising project. The Township's fundraising campaign should include campaign objectives, policies, an organizational chart, job descriptions, a campaign strategy, printed materials, cultivation plans, and a prospective donor pool analysis. In conducting a successful campaign program, many organizations find that they cannot take on an additional task when they already have too much to do in daily operations.
3. Decide the purpose of fundraising and what the benefit to the community at large will be. The Township needs to be able to develop a case of compelling need that requires private funds. Preparedness underlies all successful campaigns. Projects that could be considered are a new community park, recreation building improvements, an amphitheater, pavilions, children's playgrounds, sports fields, trails, beautification, and nature. Paid design competitions for shelter, pavilion, or park building design can be held in local schools of architecture and design. Fundraising should be strategic, well orchestrated, and for popular projects.

GOALS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Map #6 Parks & Recreation Recommendations



Gannett Fleming Toole Recreation Planning