

# CHAPTER 3

## PARKS AND RECREATION PLAN FACILITIES

Whitemarsh Township owns approximately 116.8 acres of dedicated parkland within its boundaries. This represents less than 1% of the 8,875 total acres within the Township. The Colonial School District has an additional 93 acres of land spread over several facilities.

An assessment of parks and recreation facilities was undertaken to determine if recreation needs are being met and to project what changes would need to occur to meet the recreation needs of residents in the future. The factors used in the assessment included: the amount of park acreage, service areas of the parks and access by the community, and recreation facilities in terms of ball fields, game courts, play equipment, support facilities and connections between parks and other community destinations. The analysis of parks and recreation facilities as presented in this plan was conducted by:

1. Completing an inventory and analysis of existing facilities
2. Establishing recreation standards for Whitemarsh Township based on the results of the planning process and the unique characteristics of the Township
3. Comparing existing parkland acreage and facilities to the state and national standards, as well as those established for Whitemarsh Township
4. Exploring trends in recreation facility use

### **Whitemarsh Township Recreation Standards**

The National Recreation and Park Association's (NRPA) *Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines, 1995* provides a framework for recreation planning that relies on locally based planning processes rather than arbitrary standards based on a ratio of facilities to a specified percentage of population. The guidelines promote a comprehensive planning process that is based on local concerns and assessment of conditions to define a plan that meets community needs. Public opinion generated through the Study Committee, key person interviews and the public forums provided the basis for consideration of standards specific to the needs of Whitemarsh Township. The assessment of such standards included an analysis of the amount and distribution of existing and planned recreation resources, and analysis of service area and determination of park classification for each of Whitemarsh Township's parks. Development of standards unique to Whitemarsh Township provides the framework for assessment of existing recreational opportunities and a basis for recommendations for future actions. As with any planning effort, success is grounded in the ability to assess changing customer needs, to be flexible and to redirect resources as appropriate. Whitemarsh Township's recreation standards are based on the NRPA park classification system described below.

# FACILITIES

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## **Distribution and Accessibility of Existing and Planned Recreational Resources**

The Township is fortunate to have park lands with prime resources, such as Miles Park and the Victory Fields/McCarthy Park Complex. Although The Township has only six parks, they represent a fairly diverse mixture of facilities. It is important, however, to evaluate the location of facilities within the community as a whole and the extent to which they are accessible. Convenient and safe access should be planned for all parks and recreation areas. The challenges that exist are not unique to Whitemarsh Township; neither are the barriers that are created by major and heavily trafficked roadways, such as Germantown Pike and the Pennsylvania Turnpike, as they bisect the overall community into smaller areas. Geographically, the topography is also a major delineator of boundaries between the various sub-areas within the Township, especially south of Ridge Pike and in the Miquon District.

The degree to which people are able to walk is primarily a function of when and how the area was developed. The Lafayette Hill area, with its dense, commercial core has grown out of a culture that was significantly more dependent on walking as part of the daily routine. As a result, Lafayette Hill depicts a land development pattern similar to a small town or village. It has a main street, Germantown Pike, which evolved with a mix of residential, small retail, governmental, and school uses. Although some of the retail has relocated, the core essentially remains intact. The area is served with sidewalks and for the most part, the pattern and scale of the development is oriented towards the street, which creates a very pedestrian friendly environment. This is not the case as the

pedestrian-oriented fabric begins to deteriorate east of Church Road, where there are no sidewalks. The current conditions at Germantown Pike and Joshua Road, with the direct connection to Miles Park, offers a perfect opportunity for the Township to link the improvements to the park with improvements to the commercial corridor and at the same time increasing pedestrian activity.

In contrast, many of the areas of the Township that were developed since the 1960's lack quality pedestrian facilities. This is a result of two separate conditions. It is true that many of the residential subdivisions that have been built have sidewalks. The real issue relates to the fact that those sidewalks often end at the entrance to the subdivision. This signifies that connections to other uses, such as parks, are limited. The entrance-ways to subdivisions are usually located along busy collector or arterial roadways, which generally do not have sidewalks and handle significant amounts of traffic moving at high speeds. The other related issue, and one that is much harder to solve, is that subdivisions, and modern land developments as a whole, have been focused on single-type land uses. This results in people living in one place and shop or "recreate" in a completely separate detached area. Thus, the benefit of proximity is often lost.

The Township does benefit from having good trail coverage to and within Miles Park and Victory Fields/McCarthy Park. In most cases these facilities are easily accessible by pedestrians from the numerous adjacent residential neighborhoods.

The Schuylkill River Trail is a regional trail that is widely utilized. This trail is a good model for The Township. The proposed Cross-County Trail, as well as several other proposed trails, will need to be

interconnected as a complete network within the Township.

The Whitemarsh Township Parks & Recreation Plan Existing Facilities and Service Area Map presents the location of the Township's parks and school sites. This map illustrates several conditions:

- Miles Park is centrally located and is highly visible and is easily accessible by most of the adjacent residents by all modes of traveling including walking and biking.
- Parks are centrally located in the Central District of the Township with the exception of Valley Green Park, which is the only Township facility serving the residents north of Flourtown Road.
- The Broad Axe Area is completely devoid of parks, yet many opportunities still exist to create open space, parks, greenways or preservation areas.
- The Schuylkill River edge has no physical or visual connections except near the Spring Mill and Miquon Train Stations.
- The quarries, private golf courses, large farm estates and The Pennsylvania Turnpike each serve to divide and create circulation barriers for Township residents.

## 1. Mini – Park

**Definition:** Small parks located in a neighborhood setting with passive facilities, community gardens, playground/tot lot and possibly a small active use such as basketball, bocce ball courts and lawn space for volleyball.

**Size:** Varies, can be up to 2 acres depending on the setting

**Service Area:** Less than a 1/4 mile service radius in a residential neighborhood,

accessible by way of interconnecting trails, sidewalks, and low volume residential streets.

**Facilities:** Based upon public input, facilities can include playgrounds, scenic areas and lunch time seating areas/gathering places.

**Findings:** Small open space set-asides in individual developments, such as Whitemarsh Woods.

## 2. Recreation Node

**Definition:** Similar to a neighborhood park with both active and passive facilities designed for a specific purpose.

**Size:** Up to five acres

**Service Area:** Less than a 1/4 mile service radius in a residential neighborhood, accessible by way of interconnecting trails, sidewalks, and low volume residential streets.

**Facilities:** Based upon public input, facilities can include playgrounds, scenic areas and lunchtime seating areas.

**Findings:** Leeland Park

## 3. Neighborhood Park

**Definition:** Basic unit of the park system in meeting the active and/or passive needs of the neighborhood. Create a sense of place for a wide variety of ages living in the service radius.

**Size:** 5 to 10 acres minimum

**Service Area:** 1/4 mile to 1/2 mile service radius uninterrupted by non-residential roads and other physical barriers accessible throughout its service radius by way of

# FACILITIES

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interconnecting trails, sidewalks or low volume residential streets.

**Facilities:** Neighborhood parks can be for active or passive recreation or a combination of both. Facilities can include ball fields and game courts, picnic and sitting areas, play equipment, trails and passive areas with natural features.

**Findings:** Valley Green Park and Cedar Grove Park

## 4. Regional/Community Park

**Definition:** Meets the broader recreational needs of several neighborhoods. Provides for both active recreation and preservation of unique landscapes. Allows for group activities neither desirable nor feasible in neighborhood parks.

**Size:** 50+ acres

**Service Area:** 0.5 to 3.0 mile service radius; served by arterial and collector roads and accessible throughout its service area by way of interconnecting trails.

**Facilities:** Designed for both active and passive uses, facilities can include: large play structures, game courts, ball fields, ice skating, swimming pools, picnic areas, open space, unique landscape features, nature study and ornamental gardens, parking lots and lighting as appropriate.

**Findings:** Miles Park is fulfilling this need, but is technically too small to meet the true definition of a community park.

## 5. School/Athletic Complex/Community Park

**Definition:** Combines the resources of two public entities to allow for expanded

recreational, educational, and social opportunities in a cost-effective manner.

**Size:** Depends upon intended use and size of school.

**Service Area:** Based upon distribution of the schools. The location can guide how it fits into the park system classification. Service Areas for the site depend upon the type of use of the site.

**Facilities:** Development should be based upon the criteria of other park classifications.

If athletic fields are developed, they should be oriented towards youth rather than adults.

**Findings:** The Victory Fields & McCarthy Park and the adjacent High School and Elementary School Complex falls into this category, but the complex lacks sufficient landscape and passive amenities to fully meet the criteria of a community park.

## 6. Natural Resource Area/ Preserve

**Definition:** Parks and recreation facilities that are oriented towards the preservation of significant natural features, open space, special landscapes, buffering and visual aesthetics.

**Size:** Dependent upon quality and extent of the resources and opportunity for preservation.

**Service Area:** Areas that, when preserved, can enhance the livability and character of the community by preserving as much of its natural features as possible.

**Facilities:** Resource rather than user-based, natural resource areas can provide limited passive recreational opportunities such as

# FACILITIES

trails and nature study areas. They can also function as greenways.

**Findings:** Kline Park

## 7. Greenways

**Definition:** Linear trail corridors that tie park system components together to form a continuous park environment, allowing for safe uninterrupted pedestrian movement between the parks and around the community and providing people with a desired outdoor recreation opportunity. Greenways emphasize use to a greater extent than do wildlife preserves.

**Size:** 25' width minimum in a sub-division; 50' optimum; and 200'+ width desirable.

**Service Area:** Most desirable location is in conjunction with trail system planning.

**Facilities:** Developed for particular transportation mode most commonly for biking, hiking and in-line skating. Greenways can also be developed for canoes and cars.

**Findings:** The Schuylkill River Trail, Wissahickon Trail network, including portions of Fort Washington State Park.

These standards and evaluations provide a frame of reference for establishing standards for parks in Whitemarsh Township. Because the community

TABLE 3-1 PROPOSED CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM WHITEMARSH TOWNSHIP PARKS, RECREATION AREAS, AND OPEN SPACE			
Category	Parks for Proposed Classification	Acres	
		Existing	Proposed <sup>2</sup>
Mini – Park		-	
Recreation Nodes	Leeland	3.1	
Neighborhood Park	Cedar Grove, Valley Green	17.9	10
Regional/Community Park	Miles	21.9	
Special Use Facility			15 <sup>3</sup>
TOTAL TOWNSHIP-OWNED ACTIVE RECREATION		42.9	67.9
Natural Resource Areas/ Preserves	Kline Park, McCarthy Park	73.9	30 <sup>4</sup>
TOTAL TOWNSHIP		116.8	214.7
School/Athletic Complex	High School/Elementary Complex, Victory Fields, Whitemarsh Elem.	93 <sup>1</sup>	
TOTAL ACREAGE		209.8	307.7

*1 Gross Acreage includes only school sites located within the Township's boundaries*

*2 Over the next 5 to 7 years*

*3 Soccer Complex*

*4 Conservative estimate based on recommendations in the Township's Open Space Plan*

# FACILITIES

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is heavily developed in specific areas and sparsely developed in others, working within the resources available requires tailoring the standards to serve the community in the most effective way possible.

According to NRPA guidelines, the Level of Service guideline is a ratio expressed as acres/1000 population, which represents the minimum amount of public ground space needed to meet real time recreation demands of the citizens of a community. While Pennsylvania does not have a standard for active park acreage, Maryland offers a comparison of 30 acres per thousand.

In Whitemarsh Township, the current Level of Service for public parks is approximately seven acres per thousand people. Under the previous NRPA guidelines, the minimum active recreation acreage was at least six to ten acres per thousand. Although this is within the minimum range, when considering projected growth within the Township, the allocation shrinks. In addition, over half of this land consists of Kline Park which is entirely passive and most residents do not know this park exists. If you take this into consideration, the Township is only providing 3.5 acres of true parkland per thousand residents.

Based on calculations performed as part of the Township's Open Space Plan, it is projected that the Township's ultimate build-out, under the current zoning, could yield as many as many as 4,000 new households or approximately 10,500 new residents. Although this is not likely to happen for a long period of time, it is reasonable to assume that the Township will experience significant growth over the next ten years. Using only the number of units that have been approved by the Township, but have not yet been constructed, they will yield an additional 1,800 residents. Using

these numbers, if the Township does not increase its amount of parkland, the allocation would drop to 6.2 acres per thousand residents.

## Township Parks

The public participation process showed that Whitemarsh Township residents desire a comprehensive system of parkland to meet community recreational needs. It should include neighborhood parks, community parks, school/athletic complexes/community parks, special purpose facilities, natural resource areas/preserves and greenways.

Parkland can serve many purposes in a community: active recreation opportunities for individual groups and sports leagues, areas of scenic beauty for the enjoyment of nature, and protection of open space and significant natural resources. Where it is possible, it is often very beneficial to accommodate a mix of these types of uses in each park, therefore providing each service area with mixed recreational options. In Whitemarsh Township, parkland functions for all of these purposes in some fashion or location.

The **Existing Facilities and Service Areas Map** illustrates the following:

- Parks and schools in Whitemarsh Township,
- Service areas for each park (.25 mile, .5 mile and 1 mile respectively)
- Recreational lands including municipal parks, schools, and private recreation lands,
- Barriers to parkland accessibility,
- Existing trail/greenways within or bordering the Township.

## Active Recreation Land

Parkland for active recreation serves the needs of individuals, families, groups and leagues that participate in athletics, as well as children who enjoy playing in a playground or practicing sports. Miles Park is the Township's one primary park which provides a majority of the active recreation facilities to the residents. Miles Park, located at Joshua Road and Germantown Pike, provides a comprehensive set of recreation facilities and is perceived as the main park in the Township. Valley Green Park, Leeland Park, Cedar Grove Park, Kline Park and McCarthy Park are all areas that are significantly smaller or have limited active recreation facilities. Table 3-2 represents a completed inventory of facilities located within Township parks and on school district properties in Whitemarsh Township. In addition to the Township's parks, the school district's Victory Fields Complex has additional active recreation facilities. Although a large facility, it is heavily used for Colonial School District activities, and therefore it provides a very limited amount of additional active recreation capacity for Township residents.

## Passive Recreation Land

The need for passive recreational opportunities has been identified as a key issue that is desired by a majority of Pennsylvanians, according to the Pennsylvania State Outdoor Recreation Plan. Over 82 percent of citizens statewide list walking and hiking as their preferred recreation activity. Based on comments received through community survey, the needs and desires of Whitemarsh Township residents seemed to be consistent with these goals. For example, biking was a recreation activity that was noted as a very popular activity within the Township.

The Schuylkill River Trail is the key area for providing passive recreation within the Township. Kline Park has the potential to further expand upon this facility by connecting into the core of the Township. Kline Park is the largest of the Township's parks with over 58 acres of land located between two residential developments and a physical connection to Cedar Grove Park.

Cedar Grove Park, as well as Leeland Park, provides several opportunities as small neighborhood parks with passive recreation amenities.

## Assessment of Existing Parks

The planning team conducted field visits to assess the parks and recreation facilities as part of this planning project. Consideration was given to the following:

- User groups
- The mix of uses and facilities
- Support facilities provided
- Layout and functionality of facilities for park users
- Accessibility to the site and a facilities compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- Safety concerns and compliance with the Guidelines for Public Playground Safety of the Consumer Product Safety Commission
- The overall character and aesthetic of each park and all of the parks as a system

The following is an evaluation of each of the parks in Whitemarsh Township.

# FACILITIES

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## Cedar Grove Park

### *Size:*

11.05 Acres

### *Features:*

Cedar Grove Park functions both as a neighborhood park and as a specialty facility, with the inclusion of the Arts Center. The site is located in southwest portion of the Central District, along Cedar Grove Road. This park has:

- Softball Field (1)
- T-ball Field (1)
- Practice Area
- Playground
- Picnic Tables (3)
- Passive Open Space
- Benches
- Restroom
- Art Center in former farm house
- Indoor recreation space in former barn
- Trash receptacles
- Parking (+/-25 spaces)

### *Issues, Constraints and Opportunities:*

- This park is has a wonderful mix of passive and active recreation in a pleasant setting. The former farmstead building complex provides a unique image for the park.
- The park should have a formal master plan developed to maximum site potential.
- The active recreation areas suffer from a utilitarian aesthetic. The park should have landscaping and canopy trees added to make a more “park-like” setting.

- A walking path or trail should be developed around the perimeter of the site, including linking to the existing trail along Cedar Grove Road, the proposed trail through Kline Park and to the top of the hill in the park, across the PECO right-of-way to the nearby residential neighborhood.
- The proposed improvements to the Arts Center and Barn, based on the recently DPKA feasibility study should be implemented.
- Parking issues should be addressed, possibly by creating a new circulation roadway behind the farmhouse and barn buildings.
- The basketball court is in poor condition and should be reconstructed or removed.
- Adjacent land should be acquired and incorporated into the park if possible. This includes the triangular parcel of land that is currently part of a proposed land development project located across Wells Street from the park, which could be used for parking.

## **Kline Park**

### *Size:*

56.92 Acres

### *Features:*

This park is essentially a passive park/nature reserve. It is located in the Central District of the Township and is not widely known to the public as a park. It is mostly used by residents in the adjacent residential area, located between the park and Ridge Pike. The park extends to the south and west to a point very close to Cedar Grove Park.

### *Issues, Constraints and Opportunities:*

- Due to the topography of the site, there are limited options for the utilization of this site. There is a trail planned to connect from Ridge Pike down to Cedar Grove Park. The topography will likely limit this to a pedestrian only trail.
- Although there are limited opportunities to add programmed uses to this site, a master plan should be developed which evaluates the possibility of introducing some new facilities in the upper portion which is more level and therefore potentially more conducive for such activities.
- A more prominent gateway into the park should be developed in the area of Wisteria Lane and Birch Drive.
- The informal path network should be mapped and signed for visitors.

# FACILITIES

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## Leeland Park

### Size:

3.07 Acres

### Features:

The park is located in a section of the Township that is near the border with Conshohocken Borough. The neighborhood is densely developed and follows an urban street grid. The park functions as a small neighborhood park/recreation node. The park includes

- Softball Field (1)
- Basketball Court (2)
- Playground
- Benches
- Trash receptacles
- Informal parking area (+/-10 spaces)

### Issues, Constraints and Opportunities:

- This park is located in an area where there is a high need for parkland, due to the density of residential development.
- The park should have a formal master plan developed to maximum site potential.
- The location of the park, specifically in relation to the adjacent homes, creates potential conflicts between park activities and private land owners. The ballfield is the facility with the greatest potential for conflicts (fly-balls).
- This park should be considered as an urban town square with some minimal active recreation facilities. It should be primarily passive, functioning as a neighborhood gathering space with a playground, landscaped “community” gardens and a gazebo or bandstand.
- The ballfield should remain, but as an informal facility for neighborhood “pick-up” games and

should not be programmed for organized sport activities. Removing the programmed nature of the park should ease parking issues that occur during organized events.

- Additional low-impact recreation uses could be introduced to the site, such as bocce ball courts and volley ball.
- Architectural lighting should be included. Unlike most of the Township’s parks which are larger and in a suburban context, this park should be considered as more of 24 hour public space. As a result the entire site should be covered with a uniform level of night lighting, similar to architectural lighting that would be used in a streetscape or college campus setting.
- The site needs landscaping and other aesthetic improvements, such planting beds and canopy trees. Buffering between the rear lots along Jones Street and the park should help to mitigate user impacts on private land owners.
- A central gathering space, possibly integrated into a design for a new playground and incorporating a paved plaza and fountain should be considered.

## McCarthy Park

### *Size:*

17 Acres

### *Features:*

This park is primarily a passive natural area located adjacent to the Plymouth Whitemarsh High School and Colonial Elementary School Victory Fields Athletic Complex. The site includes the following:

- Pathway connection through to the library located on Joshua Road.
- Stormwater Retention Basins

### *Issues, Constraints and Opportunities:*

- Due to the orientation of the site behind the Victory Fields Complex, it is located at a significant distance from the parking lot. The addition of some parking should be considered.
- There are trail connections into and through portions of the site. A comprehensive trail loop should be developed. This loop could also include exercise stations.
- This park was partly constructed to increase stormwater retention within this area of the Township. The site is being considered for additional stormwater management facilities, which may be able to be designed in a manner that would also provide for increased recreation opportunities.

# FACILITIES

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## Miles Park

### Size:

21.90 Acres

### Features:

Miles Park is the Township's premiere park facility. It functions both as a community park and as an athletic complex. The park is located at the intersection of Germantown Pike and Joshua Road, at the core of the Central District within the Township. This location allows it to potentially serve the largest group of residents within a quarter-mile walking radius, of any park in the Township. Several of the ballfields and courts are lighted. This park includes the following facilities:

- Baseball Field (4)
- Softball Field (2)
- Soccer Field (1)
- T-ball Field
- Practice Area
- Basketball Court (2) Half (2) Full
- Playground
- Passive Open Space
- Seating/Bleachers
- Benches
- Pathways
- Restroom (1) – Located in emergency services building
- Trash receptacles
- Parking (+/-65 spaces)

### Issues, Constraints and Opportunities:

- This park serves as the hub of recreation activity within the Township and is intensely used. For its size the site has an enormous amount of facilities located within its boundaries.
- The location along Germantown and at the intersection of Joshua Road, makes it both a focal point of activity and identity for the Township.
- The site has the appearance of being cramped, both visually and functionally. This is most apparent when multiple events are taking place within the park, generating a major demand for parking at the site. Although the Township is currently developing plans for a larger parking area, this adds more elements to the cramped park. Should new parks be developed in the Township, removal of some facilities from Miles Park to reduce the cramped appearance may be advisable.
- Park needs permanent restroom facilities, which have been planned and designed.
- Overall, the park lacks positive aesthetic qualities. Landscaping improvements, including canopy trees, hardscaped sitting areas or plazas and planting areas should be considered.
- The Township has planned and designed a large pavilion. Based on the heavy use that this park experiences, such a facility should be very successful and adds a passive facility to the site that complements the existing active recreation activities. The architectural treatment of the pavilion is extremely important, since it will be the icon-like element that will ultimately define the image of the park.
- A physical path connection should be created between the park and Miles Road or Hillside

Road. This would provide direct access to the park for neighboring residents. It would also dramatically shorten the pedestrian trip between Miles Park and the Victory Fields/McCarthy Park complex, especially for camp programs.

- A stronger visual and functional connection should be established between the park and the adjacent recreation building. This could include developing a trail connection from the center of the park to the facility and creating a formal entry or gateway into the park that aligns with building entrance.
- The gateways into the park should be treated as special events, with architectural treatments and special landscaping, signing, etc.
- Pedestrian and bicycle improvements should be considered for the intersection of Germantown Pike and Joshua Road to facilitate safer crossing at this point.
- Although the park closes at 10:00 pm., the introduction of architectural lighting in some areas may help in creating night visibility into the park and reduce vandalism.
- An alternative planting/management scheme for the stream that runs through the park should be studied.

# FACILITIES

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## Valley Green Park

### Size:

6.84 Acres

### Features:

This park functions as a small neighborhood park and it is located on the border with Springfield Township. More than 45% of the service area extends into the adjacent township and it is likely that as many Springfield residents utilize the park as Whitemarsh residents. To the north, the service area is restricted by Pennsylvania State Route 309. To the south, the service area extends nearly to Bethlehem Pike. To the west, the service area extends to the western most part of Redcoat Drive. This park includes the following elements:

- Baseball Field (1)
- Practice Area
- Basketball Courts (2 half courts)
- Playground
- Passive Open Space
- Benches
- Portable Restroom Facilities
- Trash receptacles
- Parking – unpaved (+/-31 spaces)

### Issues, Constraints and Opportunities:

- The 1998 Plan for Valley Green Park has only been partially implemented. The remaining elements should be constructed, especially a small pavilion.
- The site lacks adequate utilities which limits the park's utilization for programmed activities. Utilities should be extended into the site and permanent restroom facilities and drinking

fountains should be considered.

- The site was re-graded to address stormwater management issues. The stormwater management basin should be replanted with native plant material to increase plant and animal habitat and to improve the aesthetics of the park.
- The park is not easily accessible by pedestrians. Sidewalks should be constructed along the boundary of the park and should be extended to connect with existing sidewalks along Redcoat Drive.
- Route 73, which borders the park along its southern edge is a heavily trafficked roadway, therefore creating a barrier to pedestrian activity from the south. Improvements to the intersection, including prominent crosswalk striping should be considered, which would enhance pedestrian safety.
- The parking area should be paved and striped, possibly with pervious paving to minimize stormwater runoff.
- Additional landscaping and plantings should be considered to improve the aesthetics of the park.
- A pedestrian trail should be constructed around the perimeter of the park.
- The half-court basketball courts should be converted into one full-court facility.
- Some minimal lighting should be installed in the parking area.

## Colonial School District Victory Fields Athletic Complex

### Size:

23 Acres

### Features:

This facility is primarily an athletic complex and it is centrally located within the Central District of Whitemarsh Township. Due to its physical connection to the Colonial School District Offices, and Plymouth Whitemarsh High School and Colonial Elementary School, and McCarthy Park, the complex serves a major recreation destination within the Township. The park/athletic complex includes the following:

- Baseball Field (1)
- Softball Fields (3)
- Soccer Field (4)
- Practice Area
- Tennis Court (8)
- Passive Open Space
- Seating/Bleachers (tennis)
- Benches
- Pathways (lighted)
- Portable Restroom Facilities
- Former radio tower control building (currently vacant)
- Trash receptacles
- Paved Parking (+/-150 spaces)
- Stormwater Retention Basins

### Issues, Constraints and Opportunities:

- This complex represents a major expansion of recreation facilities within the Township within the last ten years. It includes a diverse mix of high quality recreation facilities.
- Despite the fact that the site is adjacent to the Township-owned McCarthy Park, its primary focus is on active recreation. Some additional improvements, such as a pavilion, restrooms and a playground should be considered, possibly on the McCarthy Park portion in order to better integrate the two sites together and to begin to create the feeling of a public park and not just an athletic complex.
- Should the McCarthy Park portion be developed with active facilities, a parking lot should be considered which could be accessed from Franklin Way.
- There are trail connections into and through portions of the site. A comprehensive trail loop should be developed. This loop could also include exercise stations.
- Equipment storage, separate from the school district, is needed within the complex.
- Although some areas have extensive landscaping, much of the site is devoid of landscaping, especially canopy trees. A comprehensive planting plan should be developed for the site.
- This park was partly constructed to increase stormwater retention within this area of the Township. Any improvements must be evaluated to be sure that they do not comprise the capacity that has been created and, if possible, should further reduce stormwater runoff.

# FACILITIES

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## **State and County Parklands**

The State of Pennsylvania operates Fort Washington State Park. The park takes its name from the temporary fort built by George Washington's troops in the fall of 1777, before heading to Valley Forge. The park is popular with hikers and picnickers. Birders enjoy the seasonal migration of raptors from the Observation Deck. The park consists of several non-contiguous tracts of land totally 493 acres located in the Stenton/Wissahickon District of the Township. The facility is abundant with trails and pathways and also includes playgrounds and picnic facilities. There is one softball field located within the park.

Montgomery County owns two large pieces of parkland within Whitemarsh Township. Spring Mill Park consists of two parcels of land, 5 acres and 15 acres in size that are located in the Riverfront District of the Township. The land is currently passive in nature, with no formal facilities. The site is currently difficult to access and the Township's Open Space Plan targets a property located between the parcels for acquisition. The result of this acquisition would create an opportunity to greatly improve accessibility and provide an area for parking. The County's Comprehensive Park Plan targets this park for a master planning effort.

The County also owns a significant amount land located in the northern portion of the Township, in the Stenton/Wissahickon District. The land consists of multiple parcels along the Wissahickon Creek and intertwined with Fort Washington State Park. This land is primarily passive and includes trails and pathways.

## **Recreational Facilities**

Recreation facilities should be provided within a community to meet the demands of individuals, community groups, and organized leagues. Evaluation of existing trends, and input from user groups, consideration of municipal demographic trends, and exploration of recreation trends and leisure activities have been completed to define the appropriate number of park facilities needed within the community. The following is a discussion of findings from the recreation facility analysis.

### **Baseball Fields**

There are two lighted 90' fields on Township property at Miles Park and the Plymouth Whitemarsh High School has three 90' fields, one of which is lighted.

### **Softball Fields**

There are five softball fields on Township property. Two fields located at Miles Park, one at Leeland Park, one located at Cedar Grove Park and one located at Valley Green Park. The school district has two fields located at the Plymouth Whitemarsh High School / Colonial Elementary School Complex.

### **Soccer Fields**

There is one soccer field located at Miles Park. Because of the heavy utilization, it appears to be heavily compacted. The goal posts should be movable, to allow for field realignment to reduce maintenance and wear patterns. Consideration should be given to increasing the amount of practice area so that the regulation fields are reserved primarily for competitive play. Four fields exist at Victory Fields and McCarthy Park and the school

district has these fields on a rest rotation which limits their utilization to only two at any one time. There is one illuminated field and a practice area at the Plymouth Whitmarsh High School / Colonial Elementary School Complex.

## **Football Fields**

There is one field at the Plymouth Whitmarsh High School/Colonial Elementary School Complex, which is the lighted stadium field.

## **Basketball Courts**

There are nine basketball courts on Township property. There are two full courts and two half courts at Miles Park. These courts are lighted and heavily used and in good condition. There are two half courts at Valley Green Park in good condition. There are two full courts at Leeland Park, formerly lit and in very poor condition. There is one full size court at Cedar Grove Park in poor condition. This court is sometimes used for parking. The court was not engineered for automobile traffic and suffers from this use. There are two full courts and two half courts at the Plymouth Whitmarsh High School/Colonial Elementary School Complex, and one full court at Whitmarsh Elementary School.

## **Tennis Courts**

There are eight courts at Victory Fields. These courts are not lighted. There are no tennis courts on Township-owned property.

## **Roller Hockey Courts**

There are no roller hockey courts within the Township.

## **Volleyball**

There are no volleyball courts within the Township.

## **Swimming Pools**

The Township does not own any swimming pool facilities. There is one swimming pool at the Plymouth Whitmarsh High School / Colonial Elementary School Complex.

## **Playgrounds**

The Township has installed new play equipment at Miles Park, Cedar Grove Park, Leeland Park and Valley Green Park. All of these facilities are in excellent condition. It is important to maintain the safety surface in depth and width to comply with safety standards and to have a regular safety inspection program. There are playgrounds located at both of the public elementary schools within the Township.

## **Indoor Recreation**

There are no Township-owned active indoor recreation facilities. The Township does have the recreation building which it utilizes for its special programs and its summer camp. There are three gymnasiums at the Plymouth Whitmarsh High School / Colonial Elementary School Complex. The Township also has the barn located in Cedar Grove Park which it uses for children's programs and the Art Center which has two meeting rooms and one art room.

## **Golf Course**

All of the golf courses within the Township are private courses. The Township has six 18-hole private

# FACILITIES

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courses, however, which is an extremely high number based on the size and population of the Township, which shows that the course are drawing membership from a much larger area.

viewing areas should be developed to provide points of interest along the journey.

## **Trails**

The Township has several recreation trails. The main trail, The Schuylkill River Trail, is located along the Schuylkill River at the southern boundary of the Township. The portion of the trail which is located in the Township is approximately three miles long, but it connects with a larger system which extends from Center City Philadelphia to Valley Forge National Park and beyond. The opportunity to create connections to this trail and to create a larger, more accessible trail network throughout the Township exists. There is also a ½ mile bike path along Germantown Pike between Joshua Road and Colonial Elementary School. There is a trail that circumnavigates Victory Fields and McCarthy Park. This trail is presently connected to the surrounding neighborhoods at three points. A trail exists along Cedar Grove Road from Cedar Grove Park towards the Schuylkill River, although it ends at River Road. Additional small trail connections exist including the trail that connects Whitemarsh Elementary School to the new Hills at Whitemarsh residential community. The Cross County Trail is a new trail plan that is currently being engineered and will roughly parallel the freight railroad tracks in the center of the Township and connect to the Wissahickon Greenway and Fort Washington State Park.

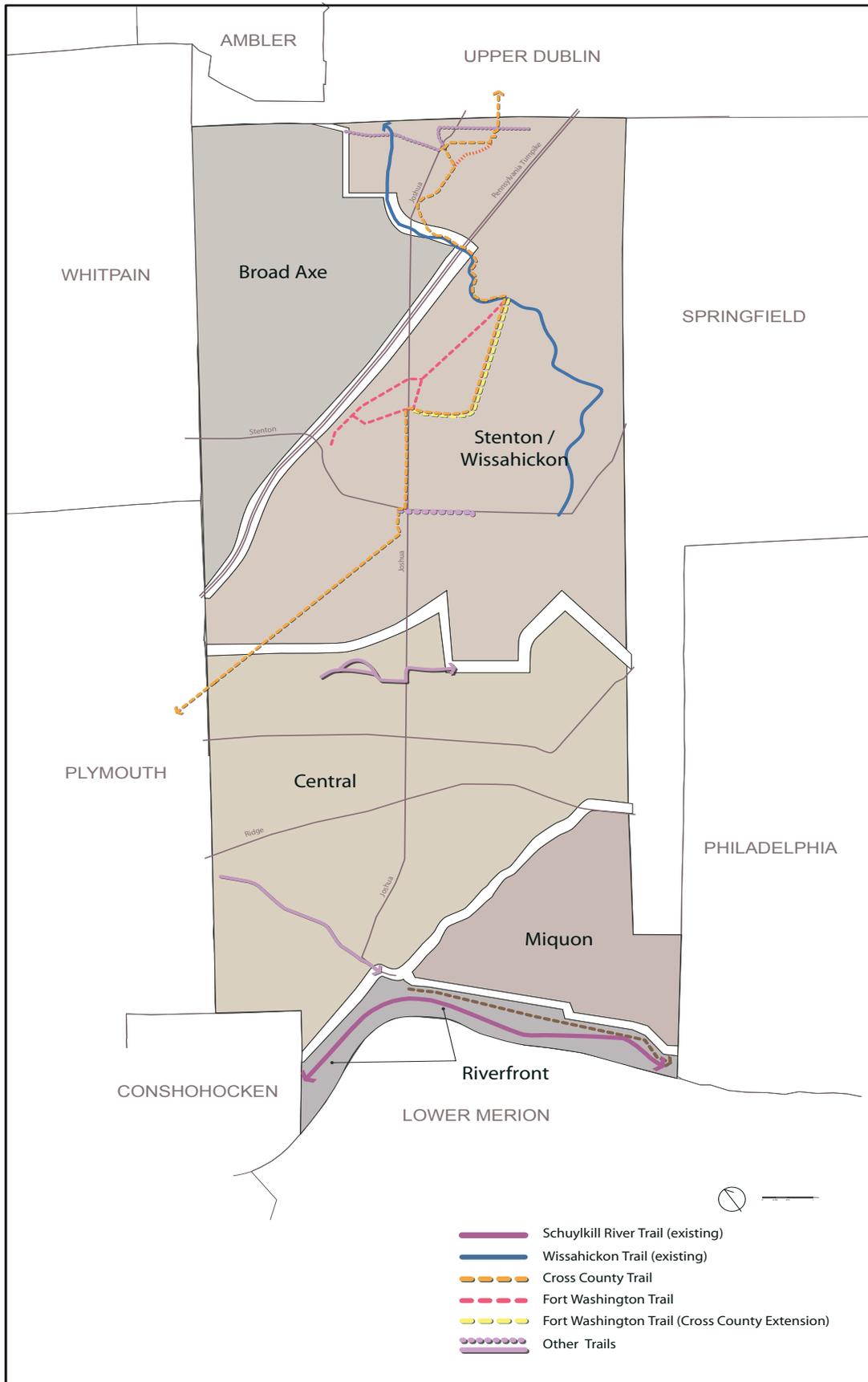
Trails should be provided in every park for recreation purposes. These trail facilities should be designed to meet ADA requirements, including the creation of an accessible route from parking areas and drop off point to recreation facilities. Additionally,

## Summary

- Most of the Township's parks are in good condition; however, they suffer from a lack of good aesthetics. The parks are very utilitarian in their appearance and lack amenities which make them distinguished. All of the parks need additional architectural treatments such as gateways, distinguished lighting and signing. The parks also need additional canopy trees and landscaped areas to make them more desirable places.
- Most of the active recreation fields suffer from over use. This can be seen in the amount of compacted, worn turf and erosion that is present in many locations.
- Miles Park is over programmed and the removal of some facilities should be considered in the long term, as new facilities are developed.
- The system lacks facilities that fulfill youth and young adult interests, such as skateboarding, roller hockey, rock climbing, etc. The park system is very traditional and is primarily focused on ball sports.
- The Township should work with the Colonial School district to continue to improve and expand the potential of the Victory Fields/McCarthy Park complex. The site could include additional passive uses, such as pavilions, play equipment, etc. to allow it serve as a complete community park and not just as an athletic complex. An increase in activity to the site, especially on the McCarthy Park portion, will require an increase in parking located closer to that area.
- Fort Washington State Park consists of a large amount of public parkland. Partnership with the State that could increase the accessibility and utilization of the facility could be mutually beneficial
- The County-owned Spring Mill Park site represents a highly under-utilized piece of publicly-owned land within the Township. With its close proximity to the Schuylkill River and the Schuylkill River Trail, the site could be expanded to provide greater recreation opportunities in the area.

# FACILITIES

Map #3 Existing Trails by District



# FACILITIES

TABLE 3-2  
RECREATION FACILITY INVENTORY

Township/Park	Cedar Grove Park	Kline Park	Leeland Park	Miles Park	Valley Green Park	Victory Fields & McCarthy Park	Plymouth Whitemarsh High/Colonial Elem. School Complex	Whitemarsh Elementary School	Total
<b>Acreage</b>	11.05	56.92	3.07	21.90	6.84	23.0 / 17.0 (Township-owned)	56.9	13.2	209.88
<b>Active Recreation Facilities</b>									
<b>T-ball</b>	1			1				1	3
<b>LL Baseball - 60'</b>				3		1 (Lighted)			5
<b>Baseball -90'</b>				2 (Lighted)			3 (1 is Lighted)		4
<b>Softball</b>	1		1	2	1	3	2		10
<b>Soccer full size</b>				1		4	1 (Lighted)		6
<b>Practice Area</b>				1	1		2		4
<b>Volley Ball Courts</b>									0
<b>Football field</b>							1 (Lighted - Stadium)		1
<b>Basketball courts</b>	1		2	2 Full, 2 Half	2 Half		2 Full, 2 Half	1 Full	14
<b>Tennis courts</b>						8			8
<b>Playground</b>	1		1	1	1		1	1	6
<b>Swimming pool</b>							1		1
<b>Roller Hockey</b>									0
<b>Exercise trail</b>				1					1
<b>Consession Stand</b>				1			1		2
<b>Gym</b>							3		3
<b>Track</b>							1		1
<b>Passive Recreational Facilities</b>									
<b>Passive open space</b>	X	X			X	X			-
<b>Picnic Tables</b>	X			X					-
<b>Pavilion</b>				1 (small)					1
<b>Paths/walkways</b>		earthen foot paths		X		X			-
<b>Support Facilities</b>									
<b>Facility Lighting</b>				X			X		-
<b>Drinking water</b>				2		X	X		-
<b>Maintenance/Storage</b>	X			X		X (former radio building - school-owned)			-
<b>Restrooms</b>	Permenant (Barn. - limited access)			1 (Emerg. Bldg.)	1 (portable)		school (limited)	school (limited)	-
<b>Parking Spaces</b>	25 +/- (paved)	on-street	10 +/- (unpaved)	65 +/- (paved &unpaved)	31 +/- (unpaved)	150+ (paved)	utlizes large school lot	utlizes large school lot	-
<b>Other Facilities</b>	Arts Center and Barn			Recreation Building					-