

Chapter 1: Plan Overview



Balance

... Where we live work and play



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The **Doylestown Community Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan** will guide park and recreation improvements in the Doylestown community over the next ten years. It addresses all aspects of public recreation from facilities to finances, from programs to parks, and from ideas to options.

Building Upon Success

This plan recognizes that Doylestown Township and Doylestown Borough have worked creatively and successfully in establishing a connected parks, recreation, and open space system. This plan calls on the community through its elected officials to continue to make the kind of bold decisions and investment in parks and recreation made over the last 20 years. By implementing the parks and recreation strategies suggested in this plan, the Doylestown community will enhance the sense of place here and foster feelings of community that will attract and retain businesses, residents, and visitors for decades to come. Throughout the public participation process, the residents expressed the vision of a green and connected community, conservation of natural resources, year-round recreation, safe places to walk and bike, facilities for the arts and sports, and recreation opportunities for people of all ages and interests.

Doylestown consistently ranks as one of the best places to live in Pennsylvania as well as in the United States according to **Money** magazine. The National Trust for Historic Preservation named Doylestown Borough as one of the ten best small towns in America. The parks and recreation opportunities, cultural institutions, and the sheer beauty and charm of the community are contributing factors to the high quality of life in our community.

The **Doylestown Community Park, Recreation, and Open Space Plan** creates a vision for the future, not merely a tune-up for what exists today. It provides a vision for Doylestown as a green and connected community with year-round recreation opportunities for people of all ages, interests, and abilities. The recommendations of this plan are based upon an investigative and educational process to identify recreation initiatives and opportunities that are important to the people who live, work and visit here.

This plan is timely. It is driven by a strong community participation process in which elected and appointed officials came together with citizens in a public conversation about how to improve the community through parks, recreation, and open space. As the Township completes its development and the Borough continues its notable revitalization, a fiscal “belt-tightening” is underway. Finding ways to provide services and facilities in response to ever increasing public expectations in an emerging climate of fiscal austerity is the major challenge

of this plan. The Township and the Borough have a track record of success in creative and productive collaboration that is supported by the generous time and commitment of elected and appointed officials and dedicated citizens. They contribute their time, expertise, and energy for parks, recreation, the arts, culture, special events, sports, and bike path development. Strengthening community connections is an important aspect of this plan for parks and recreation over the next ten years.

Parks and Recreation:

- **Builds lifelong respect for health and fitness**
- **Increases property values**
- **Deters crime and substance abuse**
- **Protects the environment and preserves natural resources**
- **Establishes strong family bonds, the foundation of our society**
- **Attracts and retains businesses and residents**
- **Connects the mind, body and spirit of people leading active lifestyles**

Planning Process

This plan was rooted in public participation and consisted of an assessment of the Doylestown community parks and recreation systems; development of conclusions and options; establishment of goals and implementation strategies; and creation of an action plan with a time frame for implementation. The planning process addressed five areas.

1. Community recreation needs
2. Parks and recreation facilities
3. Programs and services
4. Administration, management, and maintenance
5. Financing

Public Participation

The public participation process included five components: a study committee, key person interviews, focus groups, a community public opinion survey, and public meetings. This process provided valuable information from those in the community who are involved in various parks and recreation related efforts, as well as the general public. Through these components, the needs of both the general citizens and community organizations that provide recreation services were considered.

The planning process focused on how to achieve a park and recreation system that will serve the community well by providing the following:

- Opportunities for residents of all ages, interests, and abilities throughout their lifetime.
- Services and facilities for both the general citizenry and organized groups, year-round.
- Programs that include a range of interests such as the fine and performing arts, social activities, volunteer opportunities, fitness and wellness, intellectual stimulation, environmental education, and individual/team sports.
- Both active and passive parks and recreation facilities.
- Safe and convenient access to parks and recreation throughout the community.
- An economic development tool to position the Doylestown community for business in the 21st Century.

Planning Goals

The Plan Study Committee along with municipal parks and recreation boards and municipal officials set forth the following planning objectives at the outset of the project:

1. Use public input to help establish the future direction for park acquisition, development, and recreation programming.
2. Work towards achieving a balanced park and recreation system that serves the needs of the entire community.
3. Set priorities for the plan recommendations. Move ahead in an orderly, practical, results-oriented manner.
4. Identify issues and make recommendations for reasonable, achievable solutions.
5. Define opportunities for enhancing inter-governmental cooperation, developing and sustaining other partnerships with emphasis on community/school collaboration.
6. Identify resources and alternative funding and management strategies for plan implementation.
7. Solidify the role of municipal government in providing recreation programs and opportunities in this community that hosts a multitude of recreation providers.
8. Incorporate park maintenance in the mainstream of parks and recreation planning.
9. Build upon previous plans and programs developed by Doylestown Township and Doylestown Borough.

Related Plans

The **Doylestown Community Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan** incorporates information from previous and ongoing planning efforts related to state, regional, and municipal plans. These include the following:

Pennsylvania's Recreation Plan 2004-2008 established the following statewide goals for parks and recreation based upon extensive citizen participation and study of recreation needs throughout the Commonwealth:

- Create healthy and livable communities through conservation, parks and recreation.
- Conserve open space, natural, and cultural resources.
- Connect and link community destinations through parks, recreation, and bike paths and increase opportunities for quality outdoor experiences.
- Care for existing facilities for present and future generations through proper maintenance and stewardship.
- Build capacity for parks and recreation through partnerships and innovative ways of doing business to empower stakeholders to help meet recreation needs.
- Institute more cooperation and coordination among all levels of government, schools, and the private sector to ensure the effective and efficient provision of natural, cultural, historic, and recreation resources, facilities and programs.
- Promote the economic, tourism, and societal benefits of parks and recreation and their impact on the quality of life.

Back to Prosperity: A Competitive Agenda for Renewing Pennsylvania (2004) was developed by the Brookings Institution and is serving as an action plan for the Commonwealth. The report calls for strategically investing in the state's older communities such as the cities, boroughs, and first ring suburbs. Doylestown Borough is cited as a model community in this publication as a vibrant borough in a state where other boroughs are experiencing population decline and empty town centers.

Horizons, The Year 2025 Regional Land Use Plan for the Delaware Valley (2003) is the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission's plan for preserving farmland, natural resources and open space. It calls for the:

- Protection of natural resources.
- Creation of connections between existing parks, streams, and woodlands to establish an interconnected network of open space.
- Creation of connections between existing and emerging population centers to parks and open space.
- Provision of additional land for recreational activities.
- Conservation of open space for its visual aesthetic, scenic vistas and opportunities for relief from the man-made that connects people to the natural environment

Bucks County Park and Recreation Plan (1986) makes recommendations for parks and recreation facilities throughout Bucks County. This included the recommendation for two linear parks: one following the Neshaminy linking towns with a band of open space in the stream corridor and the other through the Pine Run area.

Neshaminy Creek Watershed Conservation Plan (1997) established a conservation management plan for the Neshaminy Creek in collaboration with Doylestown Township, Doylestown Borough, Chalfont Borough, and New Britain Borough. The plan recommends a greenway for recreation and creek protection.

Doylestown Township Strategic Plan (1999) developed a strategy for making local government services responsive to the health, safety, and welfare needs of the community through the professional management of the Township. The plan suggests developing alternative revenue sources, promoting communication, building a sense of community, and increasing efficiency and effectiveness in municipal operations.

Doylestown Township Open Space Plan (1998) identified vulnerable natural resources and open space, prioritized open space to be protected and offered a strategy for implementation. The plan is now being updated. Goals included: preservation of the Neshaminy Creek corridor, Fordhook Farm, Delaware Valley College farmland, and farmland preservation in the northern portion of the Township.

Doylestown Borough Open Space Master Plan (1999) inventoried open space and parkland both protected and vulnerable, and cultural and historic resources. The plan identified priorities for the protection of vulnerable land that would be important for parks in neighborhoods and for connections for the Bike & Hike path. A focus of the plan was establishing parks in every neighborhood as well as participating in the establishment of a regional open space system. The plan also made recommendations for the Doylestown Community Bike & Hike System and a pathway connecting Doylestown to New Hope.

Doylestown Borough Comprehensive Plan Revision (1997) created a strategic plan to guide the stewardship, management, and growth of the Borough through 2007. The plan made recommendations for parks, open space, and trail connections. This included providing parkland in the northwest section of the Borough, keeping the town center “clean and green” and connecting the community through bike paths.

Doylestown Township Comprehensive Plan (1989) addressed township growth, natural resource protection, recreation, transportation, community facilities and services. This plan made the recommendation for the purchase of land in the center of the Township for a park, the development of a greenway along the Neshaminy, and the preservation of the Pine Run Reservoir as a natural area.

Doylestown Community Joint Comprehensive Pedestrian/Bicycle Transportation Plan (1994) sets forth a plan to safely connect the principle population centers, places of work, schools, commercial areas, historic and cultural sites, parks and recreation areas, mass transit, and other inter modal connections in Doylestown Township and Doylestown Borough. Twelve miles of bike path have been constructed. Another 10 miles are planned.

Central Bucks Athletic Facilities: Report on Facilities Availability and Cooperative Use Options (1994) examined the availability and adequacy of recreation facilities in the Central Bucks area and looked at ways the development use and maintenance of recreational facilities might be accomplished more efficiently and equitably. The study made recommendations for coordinated field administration, scheduling and maintenance, continued acquisition of fields by municipalities, and allocation of costs based on municipal youth population shares and field contributions.

Doylestown Township Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan (1992) updated the 1972 plan and made recommendations to: preserve important natural and cultural features; develop Central Park; meet the requirements for the mandatory dedication of park land; and provide adequate recreation facilities and programs throughout the Township.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is this plan a law?

No, it is a guide. The elected and appointed officials in the Township and the Borough will use the plan to make informed decisions and set policy relative to parks and recreation.

What will the plan do?

Doylestown Community Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan will focus planning on community issues that can be addressed through parks and recreation. It provides a common framework for decision-making and sets forth recommendations and strategies to improve the quality of life in the community.

What will the plan *not* do?

The plan does not mandate or require actions. It does not preclude adding new projects based upon trends, evolving needs, and opportunities. The intent of the plan is to provide an overall framework and guidelines to improve the community through parks and recreation.

How will the plan be used?

The plan is intended to be a living document that will play a role in the decisions the municipalities make about parks, recreation, financing, management, trails, and related efforts. This plan serves as a reference document and a framework for overall municipal and collaborative planning and management.

The municipalities should review the plan annually prior to budget season. Through this review by designated officials, accomplishments, needs, and emerging opportunities should be determined. Actions should be adapted to changing circumstances in the pursuit of the goals identified. Budgets could then be based on the formulation of an action plan for the upcoming fiscal year. The plan will facilitate the municipalities and other interested entities working together on projects and programs in an effort to target resources to community needs.

A key factor in making Pennsylvania attractive as a place for businesses and workers to come and stay is quality of life. The industries Pennsylvania needs to retain and attract have a choice of where to locate. Increasingly, they judge a location not by traditional measures – tax rates, access to markets, the quality of the workforce – but as a place where the workers they need will want to call home. This means a clean, safe environment, vibrant towns and neighborhoods, opportunities for outdoor recreation and entertainment and abundant open space.

State Budget Message 2004

How will the plan be implemented?

The recommendations will be phased in over the next ten years. An important objective of this plan is to foster the already successful tendency of the Borough and the Township to work collaboratively in parks and recreation. Expanded collaboration will result in maximizing the limited resources of the two communities through cost savings, attention to duplicated efforts, enhanced public service, and more accomplishments than either jurisdiction could do on its own. The municipalities will be more competitive in securing grants and other non-tax revenue sources. Recommendations range from those that cost little to large projects that would require grants and other resources.

Why is it important to have a quality park and recreation system?

Parks and recreation attract and retain businesses and increases property values. Recreation is the chief factor in establishing healthy family bonds, the foundation of our society. Recreation deters substance abuse and crime. Recreation adds years to our lives and life to our years. Parks protect our natural resources and provide clean air and water.

