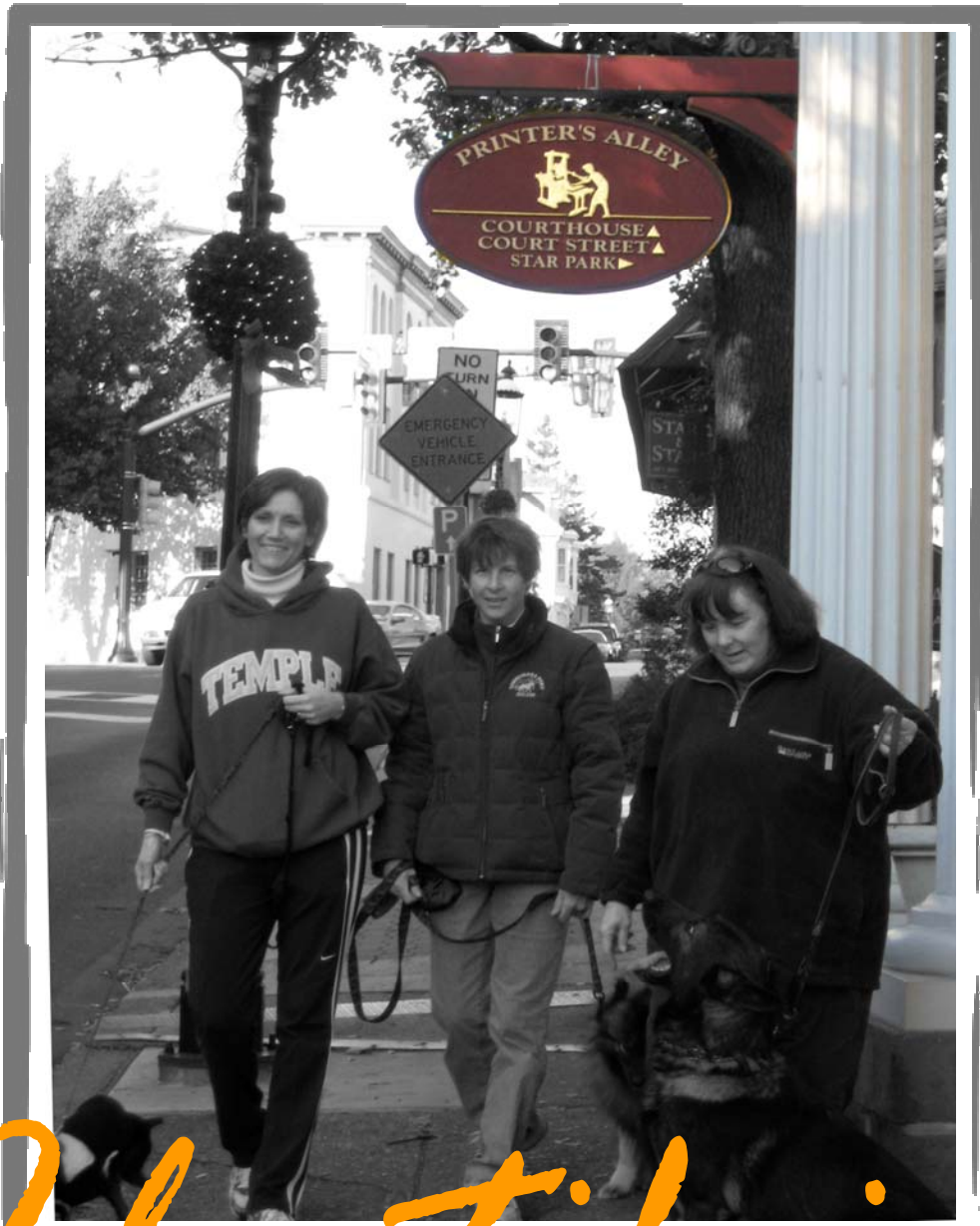


Chapter 6: Putting the Pieces Together



Identifying
... *With your community*



Chapter 6: Putting the Pieces Together

The preceding chapters examined the individual components of Doylestown's parks, recreation, and open space system. This chapter draws on all aspects of the planning process. The inventory, analysis, goals, and potential actions need to be combined with the resources of Doylestown Township and Doylestown Borough to develop realistic strategies and defined priorities.

The Doylestown Community in Focus

The Doylestown Community is a highly desirable place in which to live, work, own a business, raise a family, visit, and retire. The population of 26,920 is expected to increase to 30,010 people (11.5%) over the next 14 years. Doylestown Township and Doylestown Borough have invested millions of dollars in parks and recreation funded through grants, partnerships, and local tax funds. Accomplishments include:

- Acquisition and development of Central Park
- Complete revitalization of the downtown of the Borough
- Creation of three new pocket parks: Historical Society Park, Star Park, and Wood Street Park.
- Preservation of over 300 acres of open space
- Planning and construction of the 12 mile Bike and Hike Path with another 12 miles to go
- Receipt of 20 awards for top quality services, facilities and management

The Township and the Borough's relationship is a statewide model of collaboration and joint ventures for projects and programs. From the bottom up and the top down, the sense of collaboration pervades all aspects of management and staff. Formal collaboration in projects such as the performing arts series and the Bike and Hike path are matched on a daily basis with staff working together and helping each other out in park maintenance, capital improvements, and planning efforts.

The Next Ten Years

The Doylestown Community operates with a strong commitment to fiscal responsibility. Achieving a balance of parks and recreational opportunities that meets the broad-based needs of the entire community is the crucial goal. "Something for Everyone" was the mantra repeated throughout the planning process. Parks and Recreation in Doylestown could encompass a broad base of services and facilities that people use throughout their lifetime and on an expanded basis once they retire. This includes children, youth, teens, adults, senior citizens, families, the arts, sports,

fitness and wellness, and scheduled recreation as well as drop-in recreation that people undertake on their own terms at their own pace.

Doylestown Township is nearly built-out but still has land remaining that could be developed. Land in Doylestown Township is very expensive and highly desirable for development. Property owners regularly receive offers from developers. Options for land conservation include donations, acquisition, bequests, life estates, conservation easements, and farmland preservation funds. Since it is likely that the remaining large parcels would be developed at some time in the future, working with landowners and developers now to negotiate conservation-by-design types of development could result in some open space preservation as well as rights-of-way for trail and greenway connections.

As an older municipality, the Borough has been nearly fully developed and is undergoing re-development on significant properties such as the former Mrs. Paul's site, and the PennDOT site. Property values are continuing to escalate in the Borough. The Borough has been able to retain its beautiful architecture and recycle buildings such as the former prison into the James Michener Art Museum through private investors and municipal support. The Borough has done a fine job of securing the amount and type of parkland needed to serve the Borough. Because of this, the Borough has been the home to local recreation in the Central Bucks area for decades before suburban communities started to acquire and develop their own parks. Good planning has enabled the development of a school/municipal sports complex within borough borders. Rounding out the park system with neighborhood parks in the remaining neighborhoods without parks and completing the Hike and Bike Path will be the Borough's major park and recreation facility development challenges.

The Neshaminy Creek is a potential destination for recreational purposes, principally for trails, walkways, and water-based activities. It could become a key portion of a future greenway from Peace Valley Park to the Delaware River as part of a county greenway plan.

The Doylestown Community has the makings of a high quality parks and recreation system. The major challenge for Doylestown over the next ten years will be to find ways to better use existing facilities, add and rehabilitate sports fields, develop a plan to manage the downtown as a park, consider a community arts center, complete the hike and bike path, preserve remaining open space (including additional parkland), and sustain and enhance the quality of its facilities and services at the high standard now in practice. Another important focus emerged in the planning process: the establishment of a formalized planned maintenance management system, including sports turf management and the conservation of natural resources. Public opinion clearly underscored the support for the Doylestown Community in the conservation of the natural and scenic beauty of the community. Sports groups attested to the need for higher quality maintenance and additional facilities. The level of the municipal investment in parks and recreation facilities mandates the establishment of a system to formally plan, direct, control, and evaluate maintenance management. Maintenance is important for the residents - and especially important from a tourism perspective. As a major factor in the local economy, maintaining facilities in an attractive, clean and safe manner will insure return visitors and word-of-mouth advertising.

The positive assets of Doylestown Township and Doylestown Borough will serve as the foundation for implementing this parks, recreation and open space plan. These assets include in no particular order:

- 1. Collaborative Venture** – The municipalities work together collaboratively in many areas. The large open Township and the compact Town Center complement each other and serve the community well. In addition to the municipalities working together, a host of community organizations provide important public service including the Bike and Hike Committee, the sports organizations, scouts, Council on the Performing Arts, CB Cares and faith based organizations. The Hike & Bike Committee and the Community Council on the Arts are joint municipal committees.
- 2. Parks** – Central Park serves as a regional park and is a model park for other communities. The Borough's town center serves as a park. For a jurisdiction its size, the Borough has a surprising number and type of active recreation facilities ranging from Fanny Chapman Pool and Chapman Park to the William E. Neis Park and War Memorial Park.
- 3. Natural and Cultural Areas** – The Township and the Borough have preserved significant natural and cultural resources of the community. Features such as the Cultural District and the Town Center along with natural areas such as Neamand Park with its 131 acres and Mercer Woods offer both cultural heritage and natural resource-based recreation opportunities right within the community.
- 4. Community Connections** – The Bike and Hike Committee with the full support of the Township and the Borough is achieving its goal of creating a pedestrian friendly, safe, and convenient bike path that connects the community.
- 5. Taking care of what we have** – The large financial investment in parks, recreation facilities, and the Bike & Hike Path require ongoing maintenance and management.
- 6. Programs and Services** – The Borough and the Township offer recreation opportunities that get people interested in leading active, healthy lives. These are rooted in a program planning philosophy of “mind, body, and spirit” to enrich the lives of the residents throughout their lifetime.
- 7. Professional Management** – Professional management empowered by elected officials to “get the job done” needs to continue.
- 8. Community Support** – This community loves its parks, recreation facilities, and programs. Elected and appointed officials recognize the importance of parks and recreation as an essential public service.
- 9. Financing** – In an era of fiscal austerity, increasing school taxes due to district growth and the need for new schools, the Borough and the Township have

undertaken major capital projects over the past 20 years including the acquisition and development of Central Park, the development of the Hike and Bike Path (with grants and volunteer support), creation of the mini-parks and alley projects in the Borough, and the preservation of important tracts of land. Funding is expected to be much more challenging in the future as the community is built out.

Future Direction

- **Build on success** – Capitalize on the significant achievements that took well over 100 years to achieve. Do not rest on the accomplishments. Keep pace with changing demographics. Invest at a level to maintain facilities as a community asset.
- **Explore the potential to merge additional parks and recreation functions in the Township and the Borough.** Build upon successful models such as the Bike and Hike Path and the Council on the Performing Arts.
- **Achieve balance in the system** – active and passive recreation as well as programs in all areas of recreation at a basic level to get people interested in leading active healthy lives at all times in the life cycle.
- **Complete the Hike and Bike Path.** Build the next 12 miles and work to connect to the region.
- **Build a permanent amphitheater in Central Park.**
- **Obtain additional land create more sports fields and explore sports facility lighting.** A sports complex of at least 75 acres should be acquired and developed to meet the needs of over 5,000 residents involved with organized sports. Work with the Central Bucks School District to develop a regional approach to sports fields since the district is a major provider of facilities; sports groups operate district wide not municipally. Sports groups should participate in the planning process as partners both financially and as key stakeholders. Investigate the option of installing lighting at existing and future parks to enable extended use of playing fields to meet the current and future demand.
- **Encourage the exploration of an arts center to the next level beyond the construction and into the management, operation, and financing.** This effort should be headed by a non-governmental organization. This would not be a municipal venture. It could move ahead with a two-year plan regarding the potential of the PennDOT site as a potential location. With a community based organization at the helm, capitalize on the planning of the past 18 years to move into actual feasibility planning focused on options for an arts center building, a building program, capital development costs, operation costs, revenue sources for construction and operations, and the management and programming structure. Expand the concept from a performing arts center to an arts center to include a variety of cultural arts would make it a broad-based center. Adopt a two year schedule to get a plan in place with the PennDOT site as the target. Develop an

18 month strategic action time schedule with specific dates and responsibilities to make this happen.

- **Expand programs in accordance with staff capacity.**
 - **Formalize a working arrangement on program planning between the Township and the Borough.** The Directors and the Boards could work out a formal process for program planning to foster complementary programs. This does not have to be complicated; it could be as simple as an annual work session to scope out programs for the year and a process of regular communication about upcoming programs to get in sync.
 - **Develop Doylestown Arts in Parks and Recreation (DAPAR).** Create a pilot program targeted at fostering life-long interest in the arts in collaboration with the arts community in Doylestown.
 - **Create an Environmental Education Program as the next focus area.** Consider working in partnership with the Central Bucks School District and the Peace Valley Nature Center in developing this program area.
 - **Establish a community fitness and wellness program to foster lifelong active healthy lifestyles.** Consider partnering with Doylestown Hospital on this initiative.
- **Create, sustain and enhance strategic alliances with the Central Bucks School District, Delaware Valley College, and Doylestown Hospital regarding parks, recreation, and open space.** Position Doylestown Community Parks & Recreation as a partner with the School District and the College rather than a “permittee” of facilities. Rather than being an applicant to use school facilities, assume a different role: that of partner for identified programs with the Central Bucks School District.
- **Formalize the Park Maintenance Management System.** Consider getting software to develop a workload cost tracking system. Develop a sports turf management program for sports fields. Consider naturalizing areas to reduce maintenance wherever possible.
- **Provide adequate financing for parks, recreation, and open space.**
 - Capital: Consider a long-term financing program for land acquisition, open space acquisition, trail connections and recreation facility development.
 - Operating: Strive to meet or exceed the statewide average per capita investment in operating parks and recreation.
- **Leadership and Image of Parks & Recreation**
 - **Evolve leadership.** Assume the role of a change maker in the community. Be at the table for major community initiatives.

- **Foster collaboration** – Take the initiative to forging partnerships and collaboration especially with the Central Bucks School District, Delaware Valley College, and Doylestown Hospital.
- **Demonstrate an active and conspicuous presence in the community.** This means beyond municipally sponsored programs, to involvement in those sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce, the arts, sports and so on.
- **Develop and maintain effective working relationships with a variety of key stakeholders.** Sports, arts, civic organizations and others.
- **Build the image – Create a professionally designed logo** and place it on all possible parks and recreation system materials and equipment. Consider a joint municipal parks & recreation newsletter/program guide and WEB site.