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**Recreation, Parks and Open Space Plan  
Update:  
*Middletown Millennium Plan***

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**2005**

# ***Acknowledgments***

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# **Table of Contents**

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**Chapter 1: Introduction**

**Chapter 2: Middletown Township Profile**

**Chapter 3: Land Use, Cultural and Natural Resources**

**Chapter 4: Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenways**

**Chapter 5: Recreation Opportunities**

**Chapter 6: Administration and Management**

**Chapter 7: Financing**

**Chapter 8: Putting the Pieces Together**

**Chapter 9: Goals and Recommendations**

**Chapter 10: Action Plan**

**Maps**

**Figures**

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# Introduction to the Plan

The **Middletown Millennium Plan: Recreation, Parks, and Open Space Plan Update** sets forth a vision for how the Township can conserve and make the best use of its parks, recreation facilities, and open space. The previous **Recreation, Parks and Open Space Plan** was adopted in 1991.

The Plan represents Middletown's commitment to parks and recreation in response to the public's expressed opinions. It is based upon consensus achieved through a public participation process that brought together elected and appointed officials, township management, community organizations, and the citizens.

A changing population, limited remaining open space and growing demands on parks and recreation combine to show that a new strategy for enhanced community service through parks and recreation is essential. Improvements will take time, commitment, and investment from public and private partners and can be phased in as resources allow.

The Township will use this plan as a guide. It does not serve as law but rather as a blueprint for action. The Millennium Plan creates a vision for the future, not merely a tune-up for what exists today. Just as the community develops and evolves, so must parks and recreation in order to serve the needs and interests of the people of Middletown Township throughout their lifetime.

## **Benefits of Parks and Recreation**

- **Increased property values**
- **Deterrence of crime and substance abuse**
- **Establishment of strong family bonds, the foundation of our society**
- **Environmental protection and preservation of natural resources**
- **Fostering of healthy lifestyles that add years to life and life to the years**

## **Planning Process**

Middletown Township retained Gannett Flemming and Toole Recreation Planning, a team of community and recreation planners and landscape architects to work with the Township in the development of this plan. The plan consisted of an assessment of Middletown's parks and recreation system; development of conclusions and recommendations; establishment of goals and implementation strategies; and an action plan with a time frame. The planning process addressed five areas.

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

## **Public Participation**

The public participation process included Plan Study Committee who served in advisory capacity for the project, key person interviews, public forums and a community public opinion survey. The process provided valuable information from those in the community who are involved in various parks and recreation related efforts as well and the general public. Through these components, both the needs of the general citizens and the needs of community organizations that provide recreation services were addressed.

The planning process focused on how to achieve a balanced park and recreation system with the resources and opportunities available in Middletown Township. A balanced park and recreation system provides:

- Opportunities for citizens of all ages, interests, and abilities throughout their lifetime.
- Services and facilities for both the general citizenry and organized groups.
- Programs that include a range of interests such as the arts, culture, music, drama, dance, social activities, volunteer opportunities, fitness and wellness, intellectual stimulation, and individual and team sports.
- Year-round recreation.
- Both active and passive parks and recreation facilities.
- Safe and convenient access to parks and recreation throughout the Township.

## **Planning Goals**

The planning goals included the following objectives:

1. Establishing the parks and recreation facilities as a true parks and recreation system, not merely a discrete number of individual sites.
2. Assessing the needs and desires of the public for recreation services and opportunities.
3. Examine how to manage and conserve natural resources as well developed facilities.
4. Assessing facility maintenance and maintenance needs for a planned system.
5. Evaluating facilities with respect to improvements, additions, and priorities.
6. Determining how to set forth a course of action that will bring a host of organizations and interests to work collaboratively towards a common vision for Middletown Township.
7. Basing decisions on public opinion, resources, and alternatives.
8. Engaging in discussions that lead to possibilities of creating a great public park and recreation system, not just a quick fix for current issues.

## The Update as a Guide

**The Middletown Millennium Plan** will help to guide township decision-making about parks, open space, recreation facilities, and programs. The recommendations do not have the force of law but instead reflect the direction in which the Township desires to move forward in enhancing the quality of life for the people of Middletown.

## Uses of the Plan

The plan functions in both a legal and an advisory capacity. It may help Middletown Township to acquire future funding from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; federal and county grant programs; and foundations. The standards support the township's Mandatory Dedication of Land Ordinance and subdivision and land development ordinances by providing standards for community parks and recreation.

### **Advisory**

*This plan serves as a reference document for overall township planning and management.* It provides a vision for Middletown as a green and connected community with year-round recreation opportunities for people of all ages, interests, and abilities – not just the maintenance of existing conditions. The recommendations of this plan are based upon an investigative and educational process to identify recreation initiatives and opportunities that are important to Middletown Township.

The plan is intended to be a living document that will play a role in the decisions the Township makes about parks, recreation, financing, management, open space preservation, and related planning efforts. The plan should be reviewed annually prior to budget season. Through this review, accomplishments, needs, and emerging opportunities should be determined. Actions should be adapted to changing circumstances in the Township's pursuit of the goals identified. Budgets should then be based on the formulation of an action plan for the upcoming fiscal year. This proves to be a sound way of targeting resources to community needs.

## **Grant Assistance**

State grant programs are in place to provide grants for plan implementation if the Township wishes to pursue grant funding. By adopting a plan that reflects public participation and sets forth a clear vision of the future, Middletown will be able to undertake the actions recommended and seek the financial support of various grant programs. The principle sources of funds for parks and recreation include the following:

**Growing Greener** is the largest investment in Pennsylvania's environment in modern history. This fund is being supported through state funds including funds from tipping fees at landfills. Growing Greener addresses the environmental challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century: loss of open space and farmland, tainted waterways, abandoned mines, aging sewer systems, and repair state parks and forests. Growing Greener 2 is currently under discussion in the state legislature for re-authorization at the \$800 million level.

**Keystone Community Grant Program** provides funding for projects related to local park, recreation and conservation; river conservation; rails-to-trails, land trust acquisition and planning projects; and heritage parks. This would be included in the Growing Greener 2 re-authorization.

**Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century** is a federal program known as **TEA-21**, which is expected to be re-authorized by Congress in 2005. Administered through the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, the program addresses transportation alternatives to automobiles. Project funding has been extremely popular and now needs congressional reauthorization in order to fund grants in the future. Projects are transportation-related including pedestrian and bicycle facilities, education programs for pedestrians and cyclists, landscaping and beautification, historic preservation, rehabilitation of historic structures for transportation, preservation of abandoned rail corridors, control/removal of outdoor advertising, archeological planning, mitigation of water pollution due to highway run off, and establishment of transportation museums.

In addition to the programs described above because of their underlying park and recreation missions, there are other grant programs that the Township could pursue such as Community Development Block Grants and Pennsylvania Arts Commission grants.

**TAG** - Technical Assistance Grants are available through the Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society for short term consultations on topics related to municipal parks, recreation and open space. The grants provide for the time of a park and recreation professional for a three day duration including the development of written report with recommendations. No match is required.

## **Legal**

Once adopted by the Township, the plan can serve a legal function. The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code provides planning requirements that can be adopted by municipalities. The MPC stipulates that the municipality provides a defensible basis for sound decision-making regarding land use. The municipality must adopt planning documents and ordinances. MPC Section 503(11) provides municipalities the authority to require a developer to dedicate public land for park and recreation purposes. In order to obtain the dedication, that is requiring the developer to turn over common open space as a condition of final approval, the municipality must first meet general conditions. According to township officials, Middletown will have met these conditions and established the requirements for mandatory dedication of parkland. These conditions include:

- Adopting a recreation plan that defines principles and standards for determining developer obligations.
- Providing direction in the parks and recreation plan to ensure that the amount and location of land or fees bear a reasonable relationship to residents of the proposed development.
- Adopting a Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance that reflects the recreation plan's principles and standards and includes definite standards to determine the open space or fee requirements. This update is consistent with township efforts.

## **Readers Guide to the Plan**

Chapters two through six provide the assessment of the community of Middletown Township, parks and recreation facilities and greenways; programs and services; administration and management; and financing. Each of these chapters provides an analysis of the findings and recommendations for future actions. Chapter nine sets forth an orderly approach to meeting township parks and recreation needs, goals and recommendations based upon the Vision for Middletown Township. Chapter ten presents the Implementation Schedule.





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# Middletown Township Profile

## Facts and Figures

### Background and Location

**History:** Incorporated in 1692, one of the oldest municipalities in Bucks County. Middle Lots, then Middle Township became Middletown Township in 1724. The earliest settlers the Swedes and the Dutch followed by the English and the Germans. The first industries were gristmills, saw mills, shipbuilding and farming. In 1950, the population was only 4,987. Residential development exploded after World War II on land once used for crops and pasture. Between 1950 and 2000 the population increased by 785% to 44,141 while Bucks County grew by 313% to 597,635. The Township is the home of retail, service and office establishments including Sesame Place, Levittown, Oxford Valley (the largest shopping center in Bucks County), Lincoln Highway auto sales area, and St. Mary Hospital.

**Location:** Located in the heart of Lower Bucks County, the most heavily populated urbanized area of the county. Situated between Philadelphia and Trenton. Adjacent to two exits of the Pennsylvania Turnpike and crossed by I-95, U.S. 1, Route 413 linking the community to locations throughout the Greater Philadelphia Region and the interstate highway system.

**Area:** 19.4 square miles.

**School District:** Neshaminy School District encompasses Middletown and Lower Southampton Townships. It has ten schools of its 14 schools in Middletown Township: Elementary: Pearl Buck, Samuel Everitt, Oliver Heckman, Herbert Hoover, Walter Miller, Albert Schweitzer. High School: Neshaminy. Middle School: Maple Point, Neshaminy and Carl Sandberg. Four private Schools: George School (9-12 grades), Newtown Friends (K-8 grades), Woods Services (physically handicapped children), and Queen of the Universe (K-8 grades).

### Government

**Type:** Middletown Township is organized on the basis of the council-manager plan form of government. The Township Manager is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the Board of Supervisors. The manager is appointed on the basis of competence and administrative talents. Although not a separate department of local government, the office of the Township Manager directs

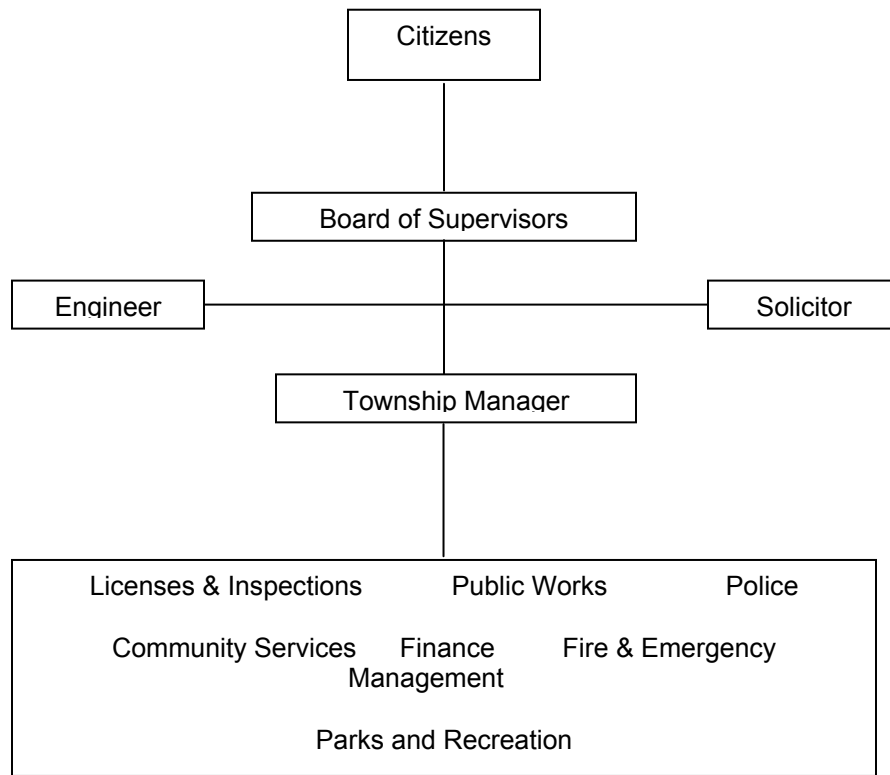
and coordinates the activities of the various departments. The Manager has the authority to hire and fire Township employees and to administer municipal affairs. Council-manager government provides the practical bridge between legislative policy-making and the management and delivery of local government services.

**Elected Officials:** Five member Board of Supervisors serving six year staggered terms.

**Appointed  
Officials:**

Park & Recreation Board is responsible for overseeing the equipping, supervision, and maintenance of the Townships' parks, establishing and conducting a variety of recreation activities, and planning for recreation opportunities in the Township. Other boards include: Zoning Hearing Board, Emergency Services Board, Environmental Advisory Board, Cable & Telecommunications Advisory Board, Youth Aid Panel, Arts & Cultural Commission, Traffic Impact Fee Advisory Committee, Duty Tow Arbitration Panel, Country Club Committee, Planning Commission, Historic Preservation Commission, Drug & Alcohol Commission, Water & Sewer Advisory Board, Teen Task Force, Technical Code Board of Appeals, Community Recreation Board, Finance Panel, Styer Farm Committee, Disabled Persons Advisory Committee

**Figure 1 - Middletown Township Municipal Organization**



**Middletown Township Population Statistics**

**2000 Population:** 44,141, a 2.5% increase since 1990.

**Gender:** 51.3% female and 48.7% male.

**Race/Ethnicity:** 93.9% Caucasian. Asian is the largest minority group at 2.4% followed by 2.1% African American, Hispanic/Latino at 1.7% and .8% other. While the actual percentage of minority residents is small, it is important to recognize the trends. The Asian population increased from 1.5% of the population in 1990. Hispanic Latino population increased from 1.2% of the population. The African American group increased from 1.6% to 2.1% of the population.

**Median Age:** 37.8 years, (about the same as Bucks County) up from 33.4 in 1990.

**Projections:** Stable.

## Households and Housing

**Households:** 15,321.

### Family

**Households:** 11,665 (76.1% of the 15,321 households). In 1990, family households comprised 67 % of the total households. This is a reversal of trends in other communities where the trend is towards decreasing percentage of family households.

### Persons per

**Household:** 2.81 down from 2.88 in 1990, signaling the trend towards smaller households.

### Owner Occupied

**Housing Units:** 77.4%, an increase from 74.6% in 1990.

### Median House

**Value:** \$155,000 compared with Bucks County at \$163,200 and \$138,800 in Middletown in 1990 compared with \$140,000 in Bucks County.

## Socio-Economic Characteristics

### 1999 Median

**Income:** *Household:* \$63,964. (\$59,727 in the County)  
*Family:* \$71,271 (\$68,727 in the County)  
*Per Capita:* \$25,213 (\$27,430 in the County)

**Poverty:** 3.3% of individuals, less than Pennsylvania's rate of 7.8%. and Bucks County at 4.5%.

**Education:** Among those 25 years and older, 90.6% have at least a high school diploma. About 30.3% of those over 25 have a bachelor's degree or higher. These are higher than the county for high school education but somewhat lower compared with the county for bachelor's degrees.

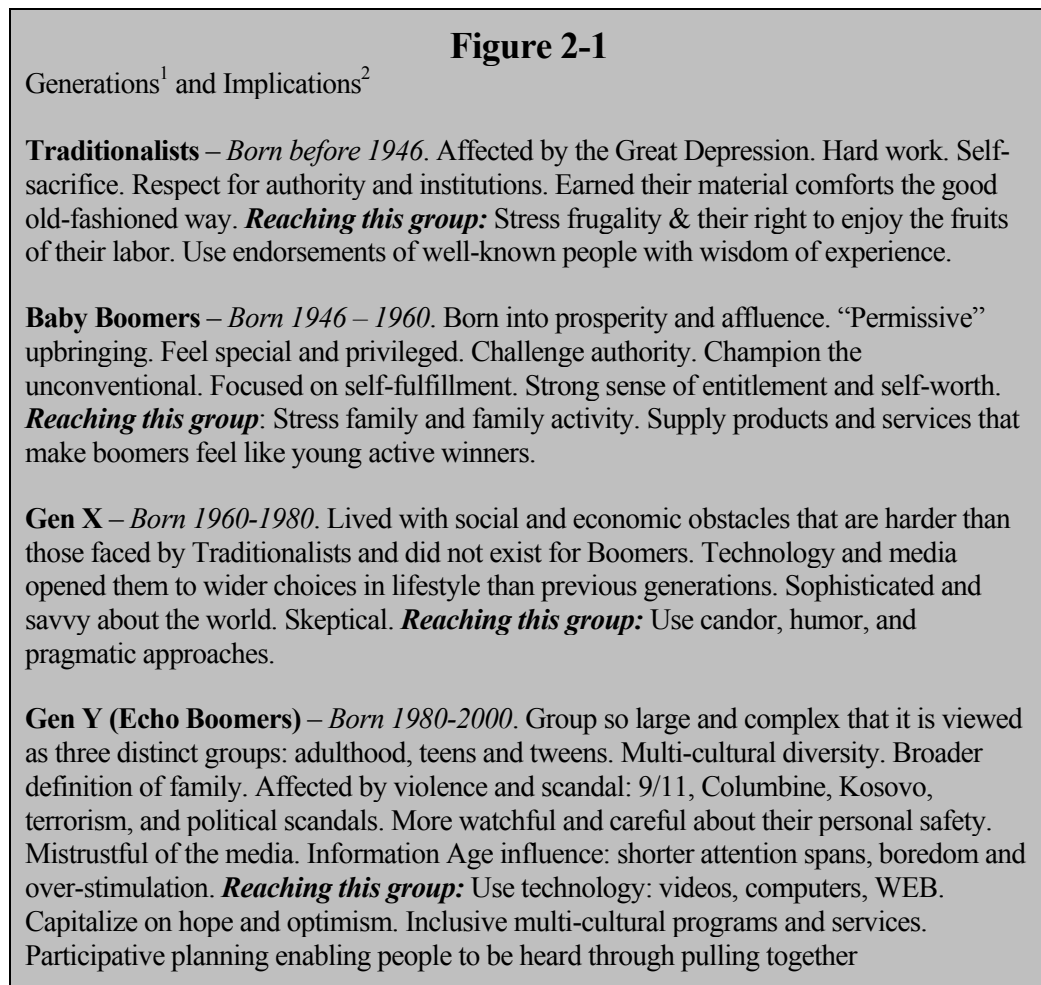
**Employment** 40% (increase) in management, 31% (decrease) in sales, 11% in production, 10% (decrease) in service and 8% in construction.(decrease) No farming in 2000.

**Grandparents:** In 255 households, the grandparents are responsible as caregivers.

## ***Different Generations - Different Views of the World***

Longer lives have produced several generations with different views of the world: Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Gen X and Gen Y. Their formative experiences have molded specific preferences and beliefs among these different age groups. Each group has its own attitudes, sensibilities, hot buttons and cultural expectations. Clarifying the needs and desires of all generations is essential in public service. Finding out how to reach and involve different generations of people in everything from programs and services to funding in parks and recreation in a positive manner is complex. For example, one generation alone, Gen Y, has three segments: adults, teens and children.

For program planning and public outreach, understanding potential client groups is essential. Figure 2-1 presents information about various generations along with implications for program and service planning and in devising outreach strategies to implement this plan.



<sup>1</sup> Paul, Pamela. September 2001. *Getting Inside Gen Y*, **American Demographics**, Volume 23(9) pp 42-49

<sup>2</sup> Smith, J. Walker and Clurman, Ann. 1997. **Rocking the Ages: the Yankelovich Report on Generational Marketing**. (New York, NY: Harper Business).

## Community Trends

For its first 268 years, Middletown Township was an agricultural community growing to a population of only 4,987 in 1950. In just the ten years between 1950 and 1960, Middletown development established 61 percent of its current population. In the past 54 years, the Township has become a highly developed suburban community that serves as a residential community with a strong regional retail focus. The Township has a mix of single-family homes, retirement communities, townhouses and apartments. In the 1990's more single family housing was developed increasing its share from 68 percent to 70 percent, consuming more land in the community.

Because of the tremendous growth and the love of the community for its open space, the Board of Supervisors took some bold steps in preserving open space. The Township is acquiring the Stone Farm, one of the last large parcels remaining in the Township. The acquisition attests to the commitment of elected officials and the citizenry to land preservation in Middletown Township.

## Population Trends

The Township has nearly completed its development and growth is expected to continue but at a slower pace. Table 2-1 presents the township's population by age group. The major change expected for Middletown is the aging of its citizenry as the baby boomers head into retirement and life expectancy continues to increase. This will require an adjustment in recreation planning with a focus on clients of all ages. The Township experienced major shifts in population in the 1990's in three age categories: 20-44, 45-64, and 65+. The U.S. Census Bureau considers any change of 2.5 percent or higher a significant change. The 20-44 group decreased by six percent. This is an important negative trend to address, as this is an important group in terms of economics and vitality in a community. Recent developments in the Greater Philadelphia Area show that the region is trying to capture this demographic group as evidenced by promotional programs such as MTV geared advertising. As the 20 to 44 group decreased significantly, the 45 to 64 group increased by five percent. The 65 and older group increased by 2.5 percent. People in the middle and pre-retirement age groups moving into the older age groups over the next twenty years are also high proportionately than the state as a whole. Based upon educational and income levels, it is likely that these citizens will tend to be a healthy, active, and engaged population well into advanced years.

Age Group	Middletown 1990 Population %	Middletown 2000 Population %	Change 1990-2000 %	Bucks County 2000	PA 2000 %
Under 5	7.8	5.8	-2.0	6.4	5.9
5-19	22.5*	23.1	+6	21.4	20.6
20-44	40.5	34.5	-6.0	35.3	18.8
45-64	18.4	23.4	+5.0	24.3	29.7
65+	10.5	13.0	+2.5	12.4	15.6
Median Age	33.4	37.8	+4.4 years	37.7	38.0

Source: Penn State Data Center and U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000 Census. \* Changes in reporting required extrapolation.

The population projections show continued growth but to a lesser extent than the past several decades. Through 2010, growth is projected at 8.5 percent followed by 8.8 percent growth in the following decade.

## Population Target Groups

The Middletown Township Parks & Recreation Department can use population figures to target age group planning. Table 2-2 presents the raw number of citizens by age group.

<b>Table 2-2 Middletown 2000 Population Age Group Raw Numbers</b>	
<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Number</b>
Under 5 Years	2,567
5 - 14 Years	6,732
15 - 19 Years	3,478
20 - 34 Years	7,263
35 - 54 Years	14,900
55 - 64 Years	3,452
65 - 84 Years	5,039
85 Years+	710

Source: Penn State Data Center and U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000 Census

## Family Structure

One of the marked changes in Pennsylvania's population in recent years has been the alteration of the family structure. Households have experienced a decline in married couples and households with children. Households with single people, single heads of households, and single parents have increased. Between 1990 and 2000, the:

- Percentage of married-couple householders in Middletown decreased from 67.0 percent to 63.3 percent.
- Householders living alone increased from 17.8 percent to 19.4 percent.
- Percentage of non-family households increased from 21.7 percent to 23.9 percent.
- U.S. Census Bureau began to track the number of grandparents as caregivers. In Middletown, 255 households indicated that the grandparents were responsible for grandchildren, representing about 10 percent of the total households in Bucks County having grandparents as caregivers. The Township has about 7 percent of the county's population.
- Proportion of households with all working parents is significant. About 60 percent of households with children under the age of six in Middletown have all parents working.



- Residents spend about 26 minutes commuting to work.
- Most women work: 61.2 percent of females over 16 years are in the work force.

## Income

Middletown Township has a higher median family and household income than the State and the County but a lower median per capita income. The township's median income levels did not increase as much during the 1990's as did that elsewhere in the County or State. People with higher income levels tend to participate more in recreational activities and outdoor recreation than other groups. Table 2-3 presents median per capita income information.

<b>Table 2-3 Median Per Capita Income 1999</b>					
<b>Area</b>	<b>Household</b>	<b>% Change 1990-1999</b>	<b>Family</b>	<b>Per- Capita</b>	<b>% Individuals in Poverty</b>
Pennsylvania	\$40,106	37.9	\$49,184	\$20,880	11.0%
Bucks County	59,727	37.7	68,727	27,430	4.5%
Middletown	63,964	36.8	71,271	25,213	3.3%

Source: Penn State Data Center and U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000 Census

## Education

Educational attainment is the strongest indicator of an individual's income potential, attitudes, and spending habits. The trend nationally is toward higher levels of education. Overall Middletown Township has comparatively higher educational level than Bucks County and Pennsylvania. Table 2-4 presents educational attainment levels for the Township, County, and the State. Middletown Township residents have higher educational attainment than other Pennsylvanians in terms of high school graduates and residents with a Bachelor's degree. Percentage wise, there are fewer people in the Township with advanced or professional degrees compared with the County but more than at the state level and to a significant degree. The County itself has a high percentage of high educational attainment.

<b>Table 2-4 Educational Attainment of People 25 Years and Older 2000</b>			
	<b>High School Graduate + %</b>	<b>Bachelor's Degree %</b>	<b>Advanced or Professional Degree %</b>
Pennsylvania	38.1	14.0	8.4
Bucks County	57.3	19.8	11.4
Middletown Township	60.3	19.9	10.5

Source: Penn State Data Center and U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000 Census

## Race

While Middletown Township is a homogenous community, the face of community is changing as shown in Table 2-5, Racial Composition. Although the Township is less diversified than the County or the state, the diversity among ethnic groups is increasing. The Caucasian proportion of the community is 93.9 percent, down by 2.4 percent from 96.5 percent in 1990. The largest increase was in the Asian segment.

	Middletown Township		Bucks County		Pennsylvania	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
White	96.5	93.9	93.9%	92.5%	88.5%	85.4%
African American	1.6	2.1	2.7	3.3	9.1	10.0
Latino – of any race*	1.2	1.7	1.6	2.3	1.8	3.2
American Indian	.1	.4	.09	0.1	.1	0.1
Asian	1.5	2.7	1.5	2.3	1.1	1.8

\*Numbers do not total 100% because the Latino group includes multiple races.  
Source: Penn State Data Center and U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000 Census

## Housing

Housing is an indicator of affluence. Generally those who can afford to own their own homes are more affluent than those who rent. Middletown Township mirrors Bucks County in terms of occupancy by homeowners and people who rent. The median housing value in Middletown is lower than the County and higher than the State. Middletown Township has a higher percentage of housing structures with 20 or more units (6.2 percent) compared with 5.4 percent across the state but lower than the county rate of 9.4 percent. Housing values make Middletown Township one of the more affordable communities in Bucks County. About 17 percent of renters pay more than 35 percent of their income for rent. Table 2-6 shows housing information.

	Middletown Township	Bucks County	Pennsylvania
Owner Occupied %	77.4%	77.4%	71.3%
Renter Occupied %	22.6	22.6	28.7
Detached single family homes %	70.8	64.1	55.9
Median House Value	155,000	163,200	\$97,000
Median Gross Rent	796	\$736	\$531

## **Public Involvement**

Preparing the Middletown Township Parks and Recreation Plan involved a five-part citizen participation process including the Plan Study Committee, key person interviews, forums, public meetings and a community wide public opinion survey. This approach enabled the Township to:

1. Obtain input from specific community groups who are key stakeholders in recreation such as community groups, athletic groups, the Neshaminy School District, elected and appointed officials, the private sector, and the Parks & Recreation Department.
2. Direct the process from the perspective of knowledgeable and committed people in the community through the Plan Study Committee. The Committee was able to provide knowledge, perspective, and know-how to the planning process, the foundation for a practical and achievable plan.

## **Plan Study Committee**

The Plan Study Committee served as advisors for this plan. The members provided contacts, advice, ideas, and suggestions; presented concerns; and channeled the process to target Middletown Township's goals.

## **Key Person Interviews**

The Middletown Township Parks and Recreation Department and the Study Committee identified the key stakeholders in the community to participate in the interviews. The interviews were tailored to the specific mission or interests of the person being interviewed with respect to the parks and recreation plan. Interviews were conducted both in person as well as via telephone. Over 25 interviews provided information on a variety of issues related to parks, recreation, greenways, trails, nature centers, financing, partnerships, county and community planning, historic preservation, municipal operations, indoor recreation, and planning. The interviews helped to shape the plan's recommendations by offering a variety of viewpoints on parks, recreation, open space, and township goals regarding quality of life. Those interviewed represented the following:

- Township Supervisors
- Sports Leagues
- School District
- Churchville Nature Center
- Styer Farm
- Park & Recreation Board
- Township Staff
- Parks & Recreation Department
- Township Police
- Township Planners
- Heritage Conservancy
- Middletown Community Foundation
- Bucks County Planning Commission
- Bucks County Parks & Recreation Department
- Bucks County Area Office on Aging
- Park Patrons

- Park Neighbors
- People with special needs
- Recreation Leaders
- Charter School

## **Public Opinion Survey**

A direct mail random sample survey of 1000 households was conducted in Middletown Township in order to gather public opinion about parks, recreation and conservation for the plan. The survey involved residents who otherwise might not participate in the planning process. Questions focused on public attitudes regarding recreation, parks, recreation facilities and the level of support for financing parks and recreation. The planning team used the findings of the survey to develop and refine policy directions, goals and strategies in recreation, park and open space planning.

## **Survey Process**

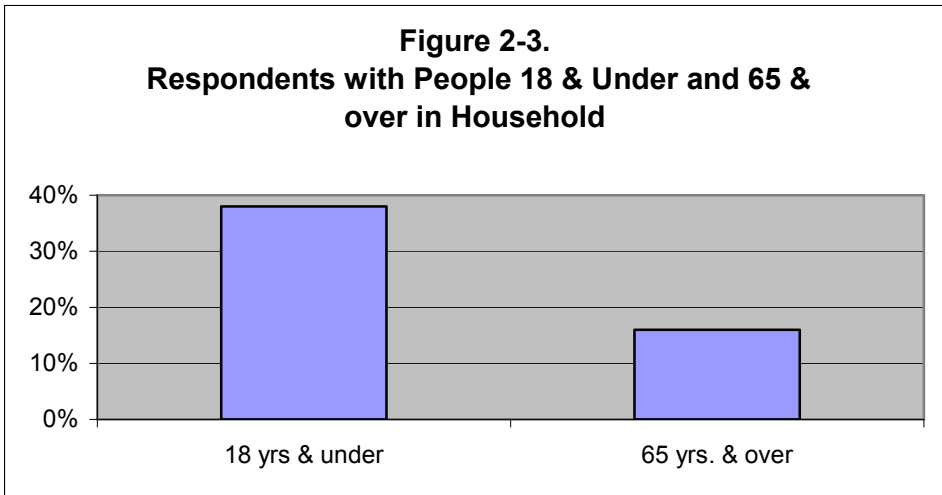
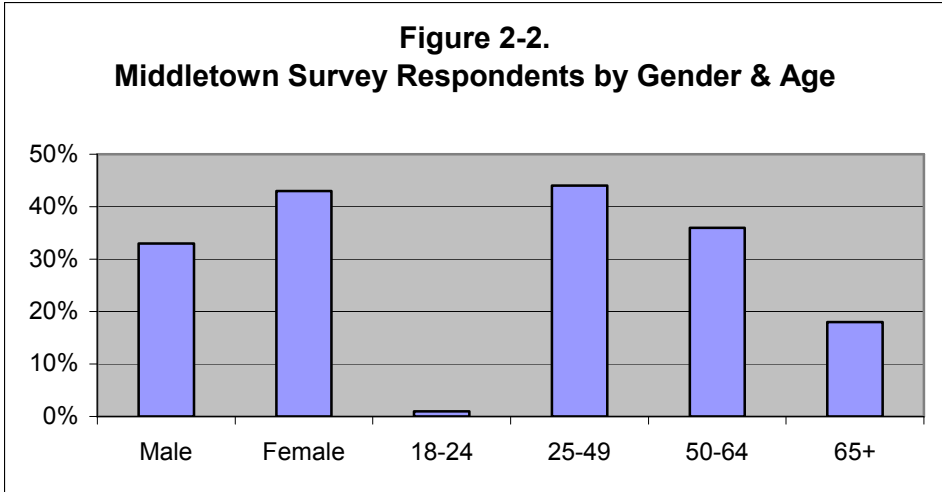
A random sample of 1,500 households was selected in Middletown Township. The planning team in conjunction with the Study Committee and the Parks & Recreation Director developed the survey instrument. Those sampled received a cover letter, the survey instrument and an addressed postage paid reply envelope. Surveys were then tabulated by a professional data tabulation service. All data were entered into a software program.

## **Survey Return**

The survey produced 323 completed questionnaires in time for tabulation. After eliminating the non-response surveys due to non-deliverable addresses or deceased individuals, the survey yielded a 34 percent return.

## **Respondents**

Figure 2-2 shows the age and gender characteristics of the survey respondents. Households with people 18 and under were over represented at 38 percent compared with the 26.2 percent in Middletown's population, as were people 65 and older at 16 percent compared with 13 percent in the population.



## Key Findings

### *Activities*

Type of activity choices the respondents selected from included: league sports (e.g. baseball, soccer, etc.); non-league sports (e.g. golf, tennis, etc); exercise and fitness; nature study; special events (concerts, holiday events); performing arts (music, arts, drama, dance); and studio arts (crafts, painting, pottery)

#### **Top Three Activity Types**

- Exercise and Fitness (44%)
- Special Events (38%)
- Non-league sports (25%)

#### **Top Three “Would like to do” Activities**

- Special events (29%)
- Performing arts (25%)

- Studio arts (24%)

### ***Level of Recreation Service to People in the Community***

Respondents were asked to rate the level of service to age groups including: pre-schoolers; elementary school, middle school, high school, adults, young adults, retired adults. They were also asked to rate the level of service to families, people with disabilities and the overall level of service.

- About 1 out of 2 knew enough about the community recreation services to provide a rating
- Of the fifty percent who could rate the services, one in every two rated the level of service as “just right”. This ties into a theme of the findings that people in the community want more information. Those who are aware rate the level of services available favorably.
- Only 1-2% responded that there were not enough services
- Highest not enough: Adults (23%); Families (22%) Retired Adults & High School Students (19%). These percentages need to be considered within the context of the 50 percent of the survey respondents who knew enough about the services to these groups to rate them.

### ***Park Use***

Respondents were asked to indicate how often they use the parks.

- 75 percent of the respondents use the parks daily, monthly or seasonally.
- 20 percent stated that the parks are important even if they never use them.
- Only 3 percent say they never use the parks and are not interested.

### ***Park Impressions***

Respondents were asked to rate the parks on the basis of cleanliness, attractiveness, safety, location, their awareness of township parks according to excellent, good, fair, poor and no impression.

- Nearly 70 percent rate parks as good to excellent overall.
- Lowest scores were on types of facilities (43%) and awareness (46%)

### ***Outdoor Recreation Facility Preferences***

Respondents were asked to indicate the timeframe for when the following *outdoor* recreation facilities should be developed or expanded. The following facilities are presented in rank order of preference:

Facility	Immediately/Within 5 Years
Walking paths	82%
Bike paths	79%

Natural areas	73%
Playgrounds	72%
Picnic pavilions	69%
Creek access for canoeing & kayaking	65%
Community gardens	62%
Basketball courts	60%
Ball fields	60%
Tennis courts	59%
Outdoor pool	54%
Street hockey courts	45%
Amphitheater	44%
Ice rink	42%
Off leash dog park	42%

It should be noted that 40 percent of the respondents indicated that a dog park should never be built exceeding the outdoor pool at 21% and the ice rink at 25%. All other facilities received scores of fewer than 19 percent for “never” build.

### ***Indoor Recreation Facilities***

Respondents were asked to indicate when they thought *indoor* recreation facilities should be developed. These included: senior adult center, teen center, gymnasium, indoor pool, fitness/exercise center, activity rooms, and meeting rooms.

- Teen, adult and fitness centers scored highest
- More than four out of five responded that the facilities should be built across the ten year time line

### ***Future Focus for Middletown Township Parks and Recreation***

Respondents were asked to indicate what Middletown Township should focus on in the future. The respondents were asked to rate each element listed in the potential responses as “High Priority”, “Priority”, “Low Priority” or “Not Necessary”. In terms of the elements that respondents rated as “High Priority”, protecting natural resources outranked all other topics as a high priority at 55% with upgrading facilities a distant second at 34%.

The following list presents the rank order of the elements that respondents rated as “High Priority” and “Priority” combined.

- Protecting natural resources – 81%
- Upgrading existing facilities –74%
- Expanding programs and services was second overall – 64%
- Constructing trails – 59%
- Providing access to creeks for recreation – 55%
- Building an indoor recreation center – 46%
- Developing new parks – 42%

### *Paying for Parks and Recreation in Middletown Township*

Middletown Township citizens pay about \$10.09 per person per year in taxes for parks and recreation. Respondents were asked if they would be willing to pay to improve parks and recreation in Middletown Township.

- Half of respondents were willing to pay \$5 more annually. Another 14 percent thought maybe. Only 20 percent would not pay this.
- About 27 percent would be willing to volunteer, which indicates that additional people in the community could be tapped for assistance.

	Yes	No	Maybe
a. Pay \$5 more a year.	50%	30%	14%
b. Pay \$10 more a year.	39%	31%	9%
c. Contribute a donation as a “Park Friend”	31%	2%	23%
d. Donate to a park improvement project	30%	30%	23%
e. Volunteer for a specific project	27%	1%	23%

### **Findings of Public Participation Process**

Overall the public participation process revealed a great deal of pride and enthusiasm for Middletown Township Parks & Recreation. Those interviewed made the following points:

1. **Citizens rate the parks high.** About 70 percent of the community survey respondents noted the parks as good to excellent. About 20 percent of the respondents reported that the parks are important even if they do not use them! About one out of two survey respondents are willing to pay \$5 more per person per year for parks and recreation with 14% stating that they might be willing to pay more. Only 20 percent said they would not be willing to pay any more. The Township is fortunate in having county parks and Tyler State Park nearby in addition to the municipal parks. Fixing up what the community already has is important to the citizens, more so than building new parks.
2. **Protecting natural resources is important.** Key Person Interviews, meetings and the public survey all found that this is the area that the Township needs to focus on in the future.
3. **Parks have been developed randomly and are without one big area that could serve as a true community park.** There is a need to make all of the parks more park like, especially Middletown Community Park, which is more of an athletic complex with a utilitarian design but without standard field sizes.
4. **Connecting the parks into a true park system is important.** Bike paths and greenways rank among the top facility preferences in the Township. The challenge is the crossings. Focusing on creating bike path systems within township areas constrained by the major highways may be the way to go. Creating the Middletown Greenway should be a goal of this plan.
5. **Top Outdoor Recreation Preferences** - Pathways for walking and biking emerged at the top of the list for facility preferences in the Township. Safe places for children to bike are especially important
6. **People want to know more about parks and recreation and township opportunities including the parks, programs, pathways, and events.** Although the Parks & Recreation Department does



a considerable amount of work in promoting all of these items through the newsletter, the WEB site and the media, this is a common finding in similar townships elsewhere.

7. **Need sports fields.** Sports trends show growth in leagues, participation at lower and higher ages, more girls playing, new sports emerging and play going year round rather than in traditional sports seasons.
8. **Not enough gyms.** There is only one undersized gym in the township that is available for recreation sports.
9. **Find Ways of Making the Best Use of What We Have** - The comment to make the best use of what we have was the over-riding theme of the comments. People are satisfied that the Township has been doing all the right things in terms of land acquisition, development, services and so on. It is now time to settle in and look at the future to determine how Middletown Township can achieve an efficient and effective balance for citizens of all ages and interests while conserving precious natural resources and responsible use of public lands.
10. **Expanding programs and services ranked second in priority to protecting natural resources as the future focus for Middletown Township.** Client groups to target include families and adults. Program areas with the most interest are fitness and wellness, special events and the arts.
11. **Year-Round Recreation is a Priority** - Focus has been on outdoor recreation. There is a need for indoor facilities for a variety of activities ranging from gyms for youth sports to fitness and wellness facilities for the aging population and facilities and services in the arts, culture, and family recreation. Teen and senior centers ranked high in the indoor facility question. Overall, the respondents wanted to see all indoor recreation facilities presented in the survey within the next ten years.
12. **Financial Support** – Half of the survey respondents indicated that they would be willing to pay more annually per person for parks and recreation with another 14 percent expressing that they might be willing to do this. Only 20 percent said they would not. Clearly this is an indication that people in the community value parks and recreation enough to pay more.
13. **Promotion of Opportunities is Necessary** - Many people do not know what is available. Developing an orchestrated marketing program would be important. The Township already has methods and regularly provides information to the public. The dilemma of not only disseminating information but also finding ways of making the information recognizable is the challenge of today's park systems.
14. **Partnerships are important** – Conservation opportunities along with nature based recreation and the Styer Farm all lend themselves to potential partnership opportunities. Regional connections with adjoining municipalities for bike paths could be explored since there is no county bikeway plan. Organized sports are a good example of how the township works successfully with other community providers.

## Analysis

Middletown Township is a highly desirable community in which to live, raise a family, and retire. The most significant demographic factor related to planning for parks and recreation is the “graying” of the citizenry. The fastest growing segment of the population is the age group over 55. This shift in

population will require a fundamental re-thinking in the design and type of recreation facilities in Middletown Township.

The groups of most concern to the community regarding parks and recreation services are teens, seniors, and families. There is consensus that children ages 6 to 12 are well served and that sports are effectively provided through partnerships between the Township and community organizations.

The public opinion process found that the public has positive regard for Middletown's Parks and Recreation Department. The public appreciates the quality of services, the appearance of the parks, and the responsiveness of the Department. There is a need for all providers to work closely together in order to assure that the public as a whole is served through the public estate.

While the public has a favorable public perception of the township's system, they want to see the best use made of all land and facilities. They indicated that the Township has accomplished significant preservation of land and focus should now be directed towards developing and improving existing properties.

Facilities that the public sees the Township lacking include indoor recreation facilities, trails and paths, and place for teens to hang out. The public would like to see services expanded beyond sports and beyond the focus on children and youth ages 5 to 14.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

1. **Middletown Township is a highly desirable community in which to live in Bucks County.** Parks and recreation contribute to the quality of life here.
2. **Bring natural resource conservation into a central focus in the Department.** This should include all aspects of services including planning, advertising, programming, and park enhancements.
3. **Focus on Planning for an Active Aging Population.** Since growth has slowed in Middletown, the Township needs to focus planning efforts on the changing composition of the population: primarily towards an active aging population and families.
4. **Prioritize Services to Senior Active Adults, Families, and Teens.**
5. **Develop a township biking, walking and non-motorized boating system.**
6. **Maximize Use of All Facilities.** Park improvements should be directed towards enhancing what already exists, adding playgrounds and lifetime facilities.
7. **Explore the Establishment of an Indoor Recreation Center.** Consideration should be given to establishing a community recreation center for people of all ages, interests, and abilities. The citizens should be able to use the center throughout their lifetime and on an expanded basis upon retirement. It should provide space for a variety of interests including fitness and wellness, sports, the arts, family activities, teens, seniors, public meeting space and others as determined in a building program to be established in the facility planning and public participation process. Public opinion shows that the door is open for discussions about an indoor recreation center. The citizens need to know more about the nature of the center, facilities that could be included, and financing of capital and operating costs. A strategy should be established about the timing and level of further exploration of this issue.

- 8. Balance Facility Development for Lifetime and Self-Directed Recreation.** The Parks and Recreation Department needs to achieve balance in its facilities and services: continue in providing the excellent services to children and youth, begin to focus on teens, families, and the aging population, continue to provide facilities for sports while improving the parks to be more useable and attractive for drop-in recreation for individuals, families, and friends. Shifting from facility development supporting organized athletic programs to facilities for walking, biking, and lifetime wellness is crucial.
- 9. Work with the high level of citizen support for parks and recreation to advance this plan.** With a 70 percent approval rating combined with the 50% willing to pay more/15% maybe willing to pay more, the Township can move ahead with park improvements and the financial and human support necessary to match the size of the Township.

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# Land Use, Cultural and Natural Resources

Cultural resources help form the total fabric of a community. They serve to link the past with the present and the future. The preservation of significant historic resources helps define a community and distinguish it from other similar communities.

## Land Use

Current land use is an important consideration in the placement of parks and recreation facilities. The **Land Use Map** presents Middletown Township's land use pattern. As the map indicates, a significant amount of Middletown Township is developed.

Middletown Township's land use classifications include:

- Residential (single-family, mixed unit multi-family, and age restricted)
- Agricultural
- Preserved Agricultural
- Public Open Space/Drainage
- Light Manufacturing
- Institutional
- Commercial
- Vacant

The main issues regarding land use are the limited open space remaining, the distribution and concentration of uses, and the circulation barriers that exist between uses. As a result of the Township's proximity to major regional transportation corridors, specifically I-95, Route 1, PA 413 and I-276 (The Pennsylvania Turnpike), the Township has experienced a significant amount of development during the last twenty years.

Much of the development that occurred was single-family homes on land located in the northern portion of the Township. Developments such as Lakeview Estates, Luxembourg Estates and Hampton Bridge represent typical suburban "subdivisions" of larger single-family homes that are common throughout the region. The Township is generally divided into three areas, north and south by the topography, and west by location, being that it is somewhat detached from the rest of the Township. The northern portion of the Township, essentially from Route 1 north, is located within the Piedmont Upland, an area of small rolling hills, while the southern portion of the Township, essentially from Route 1 south, is

located within the Atlantic Coastal Plain, an area of flat land adjacent to the Delaware River.

The southern portion of the Township contains older residential subdivisions, including Levittown, and the majority of the retail and commercial development within the Township. Generally, it is easy to walk between neighborhoods in this area and the development pattern is focused towards a system of interconnected roadways and sidewalks that cater to pedestrians as well as the automobile. Parks in this area are generally smaller and are situated along creeks or greenways, creating an interconnected parks system that provides substantial interconnected linear green space.

In contrast, the northern area contains the most recent residential development and is the only part of the Township that has substantial undeveloped properties. For the most part, the development pattern in the northern area is typical of the development pattern used within the last decade and includes larger lots, cul-de-sacs, and more noticeable separation of uses. Although the developments themselves are interconnected, in general there is no interconnection between different developments. The parks in this area are generally quite large, with significant public park /open space area located around Lake Luxembourg. Similar to the parks in the southern end, many of these park parcels are located along a creek, stream or greenway, which provides a substantial interconnected green space.

The third area in the Township contains the land to the west. This part of the Township is somewhat detached from the northern and southern sections because the Boroughs of Langhorne, Langhorne Manor, Pennel and Hulmeville are located “within” the municipal limits of Middletown Township and essentially split it from north to south. Similar to the southern portion of the Township, this area has a significant amount of older residential development and some mixed unit multi-family residential. Generally, it is easy to walk between neighborhoods and the development pattern is focused towards a system of interconnected roadways and sidewalks that cater to pedestrians as well as the automobile. There are some smaller parks, with one larger park area to the northeast corner. These parks are interspersed within the landscape and are not as interconnected as the parks in the northern and southern sections of the Township.

Some open space and potential park areas have been set-aside in the newer developments in the north end, but they generally have not been located or designed as integral components of a neighborhood. As a result of physical properties within the Township, including Lake Luxembourg and the many creeks and streams, and the Township’s Open Recreation Zoning District, a significant amount of land surrounding Lake Luxembourg and many of the creeks within the Township, has been set aside as un-developable land.

The schools in the Township are located in each of the three areas (north, south and west) within the Township. There are 6 elementary schools, five of which are in the southern area, the sixth is in the northern area. There are two junior high schools, one in the southern area, one in the northern area. There is also a middle school located in the northern area which contains the school district administrative offices. There is one high school in the Township located in the western area. This property houses the bus garage, transportation offices and grounds and maintenance offices.

Parks and recreation facilities should be located near residential areas with convenient safe access by park visitors. Fortunately, the older portions of Middletown Township have a street network that is a variation of the traditional grid pattern. This enables connections

from one neighborhood to another, unlike more recent development that is oriented towards cul-de-sacs that fragment the community and do not allow for pedestrian and bicycle interconnectivity. The ability to interconnect neighborhoods is also further hindered by U.S. Route 1 and Interstate 95, which crisscross the Township from east to west and north to south, respectively.

## Zoning and Land Development Ordinances

The Township has in place a number of ordinances that govern land development. Municipalities may include in their zoning and land development ordinance provisions that require open space, parks, and recreation facilities along with the development of residential and nonresidential uses within their communities. These requirements are authorized under various sections of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (Act 247 of 1968, as amended). The Planning Code also enables municipalities to protect certain natural features of the land, including flood plains, steep slopes, wetlands and other resources.

### Middletown's Zoning Ordinance

Middletown Township's Zoning Ordinance regulations include specific provisions related to open space, park and recreation facilities, and natural resource protection. The ordinance has numerous references to park and recreation facilities.

The Township's ordinance defines the following park and recreation uses and natural features:

**Floodplain** – areas adjoining streams, ponds or lakes subject to the one hundred (100) year recurrence-interval flood. The areas considered to [be] floodplain within Middletown Township shall include those areas identified as being subject to the one hundred (100) year flood in the Flood Insurance Study for Middletown Township prepared by the Federal Insurance Administration dated June 1979 and the accompanying Flood Boundary and Floodway Map dated December 4, 1979. This Floodplain definition is further defined to delineate areas within the floodplain as Floodway, Flood Fringe and Approximate One Hundred (100) Year Floodplain

**Forestry** – the management of forests and timberlands when practiced in accordance with accepted silvicultural principles, through developing, cultivating, harvesting, transporting and selling trees for commercial purposes, which does not involve any land development. Clear cutting or selective cutting of forest lands for a land use change are excluded from this definition.

**Lakes and Ponds** – natural or artificial bodies of water which retain water year-round. Artificial ponds may be created by dams, or result from excavation. Lakes are bodies of water two (2) or more acres in extent. Ponds are bodies of water less than two (2) acres in extent.

**Lake and Pond Shorelines** – the landside edges of lakes and ponds from established shoreline to an upland boundary. Land and pond shorelines shall be measured one hundred (100) feet from the spillway crest elevation.

**Open Space** – open space is land which shall be kept open in perpetuity and shall be restricted from future development. Open space shall be permanent and inviolate. To qualify as open space, such land shall be used only for open space uses; recreation, amenity, buffer, or resource protection. Open space shall not include land occupied by non-recreational buildings or structures, roads or road rights-of-way, easements, paving lots, land reserved for future parking lots, stormwater detention basins or retention basins, or the yards or lots of dwelling units.

**Pre-commercial Timber Stand Improvement** – a forest practice, such as thinning or pruning, which results in better growth, structure, species composition or health for the residual stand but which does not yield a net income to the landowner, usually because any trees cut are of poor quality, too small or otherwise of limited marketability of value.

**Steep Slopes** – areas where the average slope exceeds eight (8) percent which, because of this slope, are subject to high rates of stormwater run-off and, therefore, erosion and flooding.

**Stream** – any natural or artificial channel of conveyance for surface water with an annual or intermittent flow within a defined bed and banks.

**Tree Protection Zone** – an area that is radial to the trunk of a tree in which no construction activity shall occur. The tree protection zone shall be fifteen (15) feet from the trunk of the tree to be retained, or the distance from the trunk to the dripline, whichever is greater. Where there is a group of trees or woodlands, the tree protection zone shall be the aggregate of the protection zones for the individual trees.

**Watercourse** – any natural or artificial stream, river, creek, ditch, channel, canal, waterway, gully or ravine in which water flows in a definite direction or course, either continuously or intermittently, and has a defined bed and banks.

**Wetland** – areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions including swamps, marshes, bogs and similar areas.

**Wetlands Margin** – the transitional area extending from the outer limit of the wetland

**Woodlands** – one-quarter (1/4) acre or more of wooded land where the largest trees measure at least six (6) inches diameter at breast height (dbh) or four and one-half (4.5) feet from the ground. The woodland shall be measured from the drip line of the outer trees. Woodlands are also a grove of trees forming one (1) canopy where ten (10) or more trees measure at least the (10) inches diameter at breast height (dbh).

The Township's zoning ordinance includes the following provisions:

**Neshaminy Creek Watershed Peak Rate Overlay Districts** – These stormwater management districts act as overlay districts so that land development and disturbance activities are controlled by the underlying zoning district regulations and by the provisions of the Stormwater Runoff Peak Rate Districts of the Neshaminy Creek Watershed Stormwater Management Plan. These standards are applied within this Overlay District through the use of Stormwater

Runoff Peak Rate Districts and require any land development or disturbance defined herein to develop a stormwater management plan.

**Stormwater Runoff Districts for all Areas Except Neshaminy Creek Watershed**

– The remainder of the Township of Middletown not included in the Neshaminy Creek Watershed Peak Rate Overlay Districts, excluding the Neshaminy Creek Watershed, does not permit development and disturbance, through this overlay district, for stormwater runoff. All areas of the Township not included in the Neshaminy Creek Watershed are in the RR-1 District. The land development and disturbance activities are controlled by the underlying zoning district regulations, by the provisions of the Stormwater Runoff Districts (described below) for all areas except The Neshaminy Creek Watershed, and by the Township’s Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance.

**Natural Resource Protection Standards; Open Space and Buffers** – This overlay district requires all uses and activities established after the adoption of this chapter to comply with the following natural resource protection standards. These protection standards are applied throughout the Township for floodplain areas, floodplain soils, steep slopes, woodlands, tree protection areas, watercourses, wetlands, wetland margin, lakes and ponds and lake and pond shorelines. In general, these districts regulate the amount of activity, development and disturbance that is allowed within areas regulated by this section. The following natural resources are protected as specified, under this section of the zoning ordinance:

**Floodplain** – areas identified as within the floodplain of the one hundred (100) year recurrence interval flood. These areas shall not be altered, regarded, filled or built upon except in conformance with the Floodplain Regulations of this chapter. Minor road crossings may be permitted when design approval is obtained from the Township and the PA Department of Environmental Resources, when no other reasonable access is available.

**Floodplain Soils** – areas subject to periodic flooding and listed in the Soil Survey of Bucks and Philadelphia Counties, Pennsylvania, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil conservation Service, July, 1975, as being “on the floodplain” or subject to “flooding.” The following soil types are floodplain soils: Alluvial land (Ae), Alton gravelly loam, flooded (AIA), Bowmansville silt loam (Bo), Hatboro silt loam (Ha), Marsh (Mh), Pope loam (PoA), Rowland silt loam (Ro). These areas shall not be altered, regarded, filled or built upon except in conformance with the Floodplain Regulations of this chapter. Minor road crossings may be permitted in floodplain soils when design approval is obtained from the Township and the PA Department of Environmental Resources, when no other reasonable access is available.

**Steep Slopes** - areas where the average slope exceeds eight (8) percent which, because of this slope, are subject to high rates of stormwater run-off and, therefore, erosion and flooding. For areas with slopes of eight (8) percent to fifteen (15) percent, no more than fifty (50) percent of the area can be altered, regraded, cleared or built upon. For areas with slopes of fifteen (15) percent to twenty five (25) percent slopes, no more than thirty (30) percent of the area can be altered, regraded, cleared or built upon. For areas with slopes of twenty five (25) percent or greater, no more than fifteen (15)



percent of the area can be altered, regraded, cleared or built upon. The ordinance further states that areas of steep slope that are less than three thousand (3,000) square feet are exempt from these standards.

**Woodlands** – areas consisting of one-quarter (1/4) acre or more of wooded land where the largest trees measure at least six (6) inches diameter at breast height (dbh) or four and one-half (4.5) feet from the ground. Woodlands in environmentally sensitive areas can not be altered, regraded, cleared or built upon over more than twenty (20) percent of the area. Environmentally sensitive areas include floodplains, floodplain soils, steep slopes, wetlands, wetland margins and lake or pond shorelines.

### **Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance**

The subdivision and land development ordinance defines open space:

**Open Space** – Land which shall be kept open in perpetuity and shall be restricted from future development. Open space shall be permanent and inviolate. To qualify as open space, such land shall be used only for open space uses; recreation, amenity, buffer, or resource protection. Open space shall not include land occupied by non-recreational buildings or structures, roads or road rights-of-way, easements, parking lots, land reserved for future parking lots, stormwater detention basins or retention basins, or the yards or lots of dwelling units.

Section 423 of Chapter 22, Part 4, Open Space in Subdivisions, Residential Developments and Mobile Home Parks, states that “All subdivisions, multi-family residential land developments and mobile home parks shall meet the open space requirements of this Chapter and of the Middletown Township Zoning Ordinance [Chapter 27].” The land development plans must show the area to be used as open space, designate the use of the open space, the type of maintenance to be provided, and provide a planting plan or schedule. The actual open space shall be physically delineated from private lots from open space through the use of monuments. Open space may be created in the following forms: Lawn – mowed grassy areas with or without trees that can be used for a variety of purposes; Natural Area – Areas of undisturbed vegetation that may contain a pathway. Meadows are permitted as long as they are maintained with minimal maintenance to prevent weed infestation; Recreation Area – Specific recreation use including, but not limited to, tennis, swimming, shuffleboard, playfield and tot lot. Stormwater management controls such as detention or retention basins shall not be included as areas designated for open space.

The acceptable methods of ownership to “...preserve, own or maintain open space” are: condominium agreements, homeowners associations, fee simple dedications, or by transferring the open space area to a private conservation organization.

Section 424 of Chapter 22, Part 4, Recreation Areas and Community Facilities, states that “Where deemed essential by the Board of Supervisors...[they] may require the dedication or reservation of such other areas or sites of a character, extent, and location suitable to the needs created by such development for schools, parks, other neighborhood purposes, and recreation areas.” These regulations pertain to single-family developments, multi-family developments and cluster developments. Any land development of less than 30 units may

be exempted at the option of the Board of Supervisors. The specific park and recreational activities must be specified on the development plans, readily accessible to all development residents or for Township recreation areas, to the general public, and a minimum area of 45,000 square feet. These areas shall not be traversed by utility easements unless underground, and shall not contain any of the following: a stormwater management drainage facility, sewage treatment or disposal facility, water storage tank, well pump house, or any similar use. This section also lists requirements for land dedicated to the Township and the fee-in-lieu of open space or recreation areas.

## Cultural Resources

For planning purposes, significant historic resources fall into two broad categories that then can be further defined. These are the National Register of Historic Places and the local register of historic places.

### National Register of Historic Places

This broad category of resources includes properties which may be equally significant, but which have never been reviewed for their inclusion on the National Register. Determination of National Register eligibility is either due to a requirement of a federal or state program, or because of the desire of the property owner. According to the Pennsylvania Historic Architecture and Archaeology website (ARCH), which provides up-to-date information on National Register Nominations and National Historic Landmark Properties in Pennsylvania, there are two sites within Middletown Township that are listed on the National Register. The first site is Edgemont at 212 Bridgetown Pike. This is a formal, federal-style structure constructed in 1824. The second site is Beechwood, a restored stone and frame building at the Woods School on 469 East Maple Avenue.

### Local Register of Historic Places

The second broad category of historic resources includes properties designated on a local register of historic places. There is a local register of historic places for Middletown Township, and it lists 113 properties of significant historical value. These properties were not field checked to determine whether or not they still survive.

Parcel	Location	Name
22-004-004	Route 413	Worth Farm (Sharon House)
22-004-004	Route 413	George School Barn – George School
22-004-004	Route 413	Cottage House – George School
22-004-004	Route 413	Tate House – George School
22-004-004	Route 413	Friends Meeting – George School
22-004-007-2	Langhorne Newtown Road	Secrest House – Bernatowicz
22-004-023	Langhorne Newtown Road	John and Jean Davis – small structure
22-005-005	Langhorne Newtown Road	Werner House
22-005-007	Route 413	Stone Meadows Farm
22-005-012	Fulling Mill Road	Edward C. Jr and Mary Pahlman
22-005-015-4	Fulling Mill Road	Pasquale Deon
22-009-132	Maple Avenue	Joseph Fowler
22-012-502-1	Fairhill Road	Kellet Place
22-013-144-1	Brownsville Road	Nicholas Waln House

22-013-145	Brownsville Road	John J. Jr and Brenda Brogan
22-013-173-025	Old Lincoln Highway	Dan L. Harmon & Kyle A Mattmuller
22-013-174	Old Lincoln Highway	Vergis House
22-013-303	Old Lincoln Highway	Maguire House
22-015-001	Old Lincoln Highway	Jobson House
22-016-002	Old Lincoln Highway	Timothy O'rourke
22-016-006-001	Old Lincoln Highway	Burnhetter Place
22-016-017-1	Highland Avenue	Zacca Place
22-016-107	Highland Avenue	Comfort Manor
22-020-006	Highland Avenue	J. Hibbs and Jane Buckmas
22-020-042-3	Hulmeville Road	Robert A and Carol A. Roach
22-021-007	West Maple Avenue	Middletown Friends Meeting
22-021-007	West Maple Avenue	Middletown Friends Meeting Cemetery
22-021-015	Fite Terrace	Twin Ash Farm (Morrow Place)
22-021-016	Langhorne Newtown Road	Godfrey Kirk House (Boone Place)
22-021-019	Core Creek Park	Trainor House – Park House
22-021-021	Langhorne Newtown Road	Mill House
22-021-025	Langhorne Newtown Road	Tannery
22-021-026	Bridgetown Pike	Edgemont*
22-021-027	Langhorne Newtown Road	LoBue Place
22-021-031	Bridgetown Pike	Alan and Fern W. Bennett
22-021-032-1	Bridgetown Pike	Cow Barn
22-021-041	Langhorne Yardley Road	Earl and Dolores Zimmerman
22-021-042-3	East Winchester Avenue	Abe and Hope D. Eckert
22-021-043	Langhorne Newtown Road	Hyman Co Korman
22-021-044	Langhorne Yardley Road	Mahon Place
22-021-045-1	Langhorne Yardley Road	Alvey House
22-021-046-1	Langhorne Yardley Road	Lewis and Janice Schaeffer
22-021-049	East Winchester Avenue	Home Farm – Attleboro Mansion
22-021-055	East Maple Avenue	Beechwood-Woods Schools*
22-021-062	Langhorne Yardley Road	Zachmann
22-021-063	Wood Lane	Ernie Buehl
22-021-076	North Flowers Mill Road	Wildman House
22-021-084		Ridgewood-Woods Schools
22-021-086	Flowers Mill Road	John C. VMD Widenmeyer
22-023-008	West Maple Avenue	Fotheringham Court
22-023-028-1	Old Lincoln Highway	Robert L and Nancy Messinger
22-023-043	West Richardson Avenue	Tea House
22-026-009	Hulmeville Road	John R and Florence Bridge
22-026-019	Hulmeville Road	Robert E and Sharon K Keene
22-031-005	Langhorne Yardley Road	Hammock Villa
22-031-006	Tollgate Road	Miller House-Matthew Place
22-031-007	Tollgate Road	Penn Oak Tree
22-031-012	Ellis Road	Richard Walton and Kathleen W Jimenz
22-031-014/015	Silver Lake Road	Camel Back Bridge
22-031-015	Ellis Road	Village Farm
22-031-016	Banks Road	Core Creek Farmhouse
22-031-020	Silver Lake Road	Charles F. and Phyllis Naylor
22-031-027	Village Road	Milnor House
22-031-028-1	Village Road	Subers Family Homestead
22-031-029-3	Silver Lake Road	Donald C. and Debra Bergen
22-031-030	Langhorne Yardley Road	Maple Point School
22-031-33	Woodbourne Road	Fulmer House
22-031-036	Langhorne Yardley Road	Moon Nursery
22-031-037	Langhorne Yardley Road	Old Yardley Hotel

22-031-041-1	Langhorne Yardley Road	John C and Patricia Wall
22-031-042	Langhorne Yardley Road	Stanford Price
22-031-051	Woodbourne Road	Walter Styer
22-031-054	Langhorne Yardley Road	Lechlieter Farm
22-031-055	Langhorne Yardley Road	Alex and Mary Chalmer
22-031-055-1	Langhorne Yardley Road	Margaret and Reuben Anders
22-031-059	Langhorne Yardley Road	James D and Barbara A Russell
22-031-063	Polo Road	Joseph and Adele Guzikowski
22-031-064	Polo Road	Edward Guzikowski
22-031-073	Woodbourne Road	Lawn Barn
22-031-076	Woodbourne Road	Michael L and Lois B Lentine
22-031-078	Woodbourne Road	Henry and Mildred Ejdys
22-031-088	Woodbourne Road	Owen L and Bertha R Wiley
22-033-006-1	Neshaminy Street	Miquelez Farm
22-036-001	Walnut Road	Spring Valley Farm
22-036-293	Cypress Avenue	Allen and Catherine Duncley
22-037-041	Durham Road	Edward and Catherine Crawford
22-038-006	Main Street	Steven C and Alberta M Laborde
22-039-013	Durham Road	Basara Farm
22-039-014	Durham Road	Harold Z and Margaret Winder
22-040-007	South Flowers Mill Road	Old Flowers Mill
22-040-008-1	South Flowers Mill Road	Brickman Industries
22-040-008-6	Old Lincoln Highway	Beim Investment Stone
22-040-015	Woodbourne Road	Pickering Estate
22-040-040	East Lincoln Highway	Edgehill School
22-041-001	Bellevue Avenue	Casmirri's Restaurant
22-044-061-3	First Street	Deward Galgano
22-048-013	Woodbourne Road	Arda Corporation
22-049-002	Trenton Road	Lawrence and Glenna Herson
22-049-015	Durham Road	James A Celotto
22-049-020	Trenton Road	Eugene T. Yeager
22-049-077	Durham Road	Riggs House
22-051-194	Trenton Road	Dewin S and Lillian D Vile
22-053-282	Frosty Hollow Road	Old School House
22-059-014	Durham Road	John J and Alma M Carrol
22-059-020	New Falls Road	Wislar House
22-060-110	Frosty Hollow Road	Ramon L and Phyllis N Granados
22-062-340	Quincy Drive	James Headley Place
22-071-001-1	Green Valley Road	Douglas B and Elizabeth Rendall
22-073-265	Healy Way	Healy House
22-074-010	Janney Terrace	Charles David and Judy Callahan
22-074-127	Heaton Mill Road	Canby House
22-081-377	Dillworth Lane	Styler House

Source: Middletown Township, Bucks County – Comprehensive Plan, 1994

\* - National Register Listed Property

In addition, there is one Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission marker within the Township. The marker signifies the Levittown development created in the Township in the 1950's and is located along the Levittown Parkway at US 13.

## Natural Resources

The basis for protection of natural resources is found in the Commonwealth's Constitution, in judicial decisions and in the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code. In 1968, the Constitution was amended by a vote of the people of Pennsylvania to state in Article 1, Section 27:

**The people have a right to clean air, pure water and to the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic and aesthetic values of the environment. Pennsylvania's public natural resources are common property of all people including generations yet to come.**

The Pennsylvania courts have had to evaluate questions of how this constitutional provision would apply and who would assume the role of protector of these rights of the people. The Commonwealth Court stated that, although the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources has certain responsibilities, the local governments of the Commonwealth have been delegated authority for land use planning as well as the preservation of open space and natural features under the Municipalities Planning Code. The constitutional mandate must rely on various statutes of the Commonwealth for implementation. The state laws specify responsibilities for different aspects of natural resource protection. The court also stated, in exercising this responsibility, municipalities must permit reasonable development of property as well as managing the public natural resources. The court emphasized that controlled development, rather than no development, should be the focus and is the responsibility of local governments.

The Pennsylvania legislature, through the Municipalities Planning Code, has charged the local governing bodies with the responsibility for protecting citizens' health, safety and welfare through comprehensive planning and land use ordinances. Over the years, particularly in the 1978 and 1988 amendments, increased emphasis has been given to the protection of natural resources. The Code, which was substantially revised in December of 1988, as Act 170 of 1988, includes these provisions:

1. Section 301(1). A municipal comprehensive plan shall include a land use plan for the preservation of flood plains and other areas of special hazard.
2. Section 503(2)(v). A subdivision and land development ordinance may include provisions for insuring that land that is subject to flooding, subsidence or underground fires either shall be safe for the proposed use or that these areas shall be set aside for uses which do not endanger life or property.
3. Section 603(b)(5). Zoning ordinances may be enacted to protect and preserve natural resources.
4. Section 604(1). Zoning ordinances may be designed to preserve the natural, scenic and historic values in the environment and to preserve forests, wetlands, aquifers and flood plains.

5. Section 605(2)(ii), (iii) and (vii). Under the zoning ordinance, all uses of the same nature must be treated in a uniform manner within any one zoning district except that special provisions can be made for areas identified as natural or artificial bodies of water, places of relatively steep slope or grade, areas of hazardous geological or topographic features, flood plain areas, agricultural areas and other places having a special character or use affecting or affected by their surroundings.
6. Section 606. The zoning ordinance shall include or reference a statement of community development objectives relating to the need for protecting natural resources.
7. Section 609.1(c)(2) and (3) and Section 916.1(c)(5)(iii) and (iv). In evaluating a substantive challenge by a landowner to the zoning ordinance, the governing body or the zoning hearing board shall determine the suitability of the site for the intensity of use proposed by the site's soils, slopes, woodlands, wetlands, flood plains, aquifers, natural resources and other features. It shall also evaluate the impact of the proposed use on the site's soils, slopes, woodlands, wetlands, flood plains, natural resources and natural features, the degree to which these are protected or destroyed, the tolerance of the resources to development and any adverse environmental impacts.

### Critical Natural Features

Through a township's comprehensive plan, conservation goals and development guidelines, that protect environmentally sensitive areas, may be adopted. Middletown Township's most recent comprehensive plan was adopted in 1994. As a result of that Plan, protection policies and standards have been included in the zoning ordinance. Specific natural features are identified for protection. The Middletown Township Zoning Ordinance Part 21.C – Neshaminy Creek Watershed Peak Rate Districts and Part 21.D - Stormwater Runoff Districts for all areas except Neshaminy Creek Watershed, provide protection areas of flood plain subject to and necessary for the containment of flood waters, and to prevent excessive development in areas unfit by reasons of flooding, unsanitary conditions, and related hazards. It also recognizes the inter-relationship between its natural resources and the health, safety and general welfare of the community. Part 21.C and Part 21.D also states that a primary goal of the Overlay District is to:

*“[control] land development and disturbance activities...[through] the underlying zoning district regulations and [these districts].”*

In addition to the protection that the Zoning Ordinance provides, other areas of concern are:

#### **Flood Plains, Flood Plain (Alluvial) Soils and Watercourses**

Flood plains and flood plain soils are areas adjoining streams that are subject to a one hundred-year recurrence interval flood. Flood plains are identified in the study of municipalities associated with the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). Flood

plain soils are those low areas adjoining drainage areas and water bodies that are subject to flooding. These are delineated as alluvial soils, local alluvium, flood prone soils or soils subject to flooding in the Soil Survey of Bucks and Philadelphia Counties, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service, 1975 or more recent updates. Since smaller streams were not studied under the federal program, flood plain soils are good indicators of flood plain in these areas.

For purposes of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), a flood plain is defined by the 100-year or base flood, which has a one percent chance of being equaled or exceeded in a given year. A flood plain is further delineated into areas as follows:

**Floodway** - the watercourse channel and adjacent land areas that must be reserved to carry the base-flood without cumulatively increasing the base-flood elevation more than a designated height. One foot is the maximum increase allowed by the NFIP.

**Flood Fringe** - the part of the base-flood plain outside of the floodway.

**Approximate Flood Plain** - land subject to flooding where the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has not determined the extent of the flood plain through detailed study and mapping.

Floodways and flood fringes are both parts of the flood plain. The floodway is derived from a calculation, which assumes complete obstruction of the flood fringe; it theoretically shrinks the flood plain limits until a one-foot rise in the base-flood elevation is produced. In this reserved area, obstructions causing any rise in the base flood elevations are prohibited by the NFIP. The flood fringe, on the other hand, may be developed under NFIP regulations; however, structures must be elevated or floodproofed up to the base-flood elevation.

Flood plain or alluvial soils are important in areas where FEMA has not identified and calculated the floodway or flood fringe. In these unmapped areas, the flood plain soils indicate where flooding has occurred in the past. Unless a hydrological study is undertaken to prove that flooding has not occurred in recent times, these flood plain soils should be considered part of the flood plain and regulated as a floodway.

The primary function of flood plains is to accommodate floodwater. Some flood plain areas absorb and store large amounts of water and become a source of aquifer recharge. The natural vegetation supported by moist flood plains helps trap sediment from upland surface runoff, stabilize stream banks (thereby reducing soil erosion) and provides shelter for wildlife and proper stream conditions for aquatic life.

The major objective of flood plain regulation is to reduce flood hazards. Structures built in the flood plain not only face risks of flood damage but also become obstructions that raise flood levels and increase water velocities. This is especially true in the floodway portion of the 100-year flood plain, where high velocity flows occur. Development within the flood fringe, while permitted by the NFIP, is

discouraged by FEMA. Filling in fringe areas can cause loss of major areas that store floodwaters, increased flood levels and increases to the rate and amount of runoff. Development in this flood fringe can also increase the magnitude and frequency of normally minor floods.

In 1978, the Pennsylvania Flood Plain Management Act (Act 166 of 1978) was enacted. This legislation requires local governments to exclude hospitals, nursing homes, jails, new or substantially expanded mobile home parks and subdivisions and storage of specified hazardous material from flood plain areas. This act also requires municipalities with flood prone areas to participate in the National Flood Insurance Program.

These flood plain limitations do not preclude development of all kinds, however. Agricultural uses, private and public recreational uses, (e.g., golf course, ball fields, driving ranges, picnic grounds, wildlife and nature preserves, swimming areas, passive open space, hunting and fishing areas, hiking trails) and uses incidental to residential structures (e.g., lawns, gardens and play areas) are permitted.

Protection of the flood plains and flood plain soils has several effects. It preserves the ecological balance between land and water. It allows water to be stored and absorbed, protecting buildings downstream. It provides protection against runoff from development and, in many cases, makes expensive flood control structures unnecessary. Flood plain protection preserves aesthetic qualities of the stream valley. Watercourses, a key element of the draining system, should be kept in a free-flowing condition.

FEMA encourages municipalities to preclude development and filling of flood fringe areas. However, necessary road and utility crossings should be permitted. Current and future residents, businesses and industries should then be provided with the greatest possible protection from loss of life and property damage resulting from flooding.

### **Findings: Flood Plains**

The Middletown Township Zoning Ordinance provides two related overlay districts: Part 21.C – Neshaminy Creek Watershed Peak Rate Districts and Part 21.D - Stormwater Runoff Districts for all areas except Neshaminy Creek Watershed. These two districts act as overlays to the underlying districts shown on the Township’s Official Zoning Map. For preliminary and final major subdivision or land development plans, Section 303.C and Section 304.C the Township’s Zoning Ordinance requires the preparation of a natural features map which indicates floodplain areas and floodplain soil areas. Should any conflict between the provisions or requirements of the overlay districts exist with the underlying district, the more restrictive provisions apply. The following is detailed definition of each of the areas and their associated districts’ requirements.

**Neshaminy Creek Watershed Peak Rate Overlay Districts** – These stormwater management districts act as overlay districts so that land development and disturbance activities are controlled by the underlying zoning district regulations and by the provisions of the Stormwater Runoff Peak Rate Districts of the Neshaminy Creek Watershed



Stormwater Management Plan. These standards are applied within this Overlay District through the use of Stormwater Runoff Peak Rate Districts and require any land development or disturbance defined herein to develop a stormwater management plan. The four districts are: One Hundred (100%) Percent Release Rate (RR-1), a Seventy-five (75%) Percent Release Rate (RR-3), Provisional Direct Discharge (DD) and Provisional Lower Reaches One Hundred (100%) Percent Release Rate (LR). These stormwater management provisions are instituted for the following “regulated activities”: Subdivision and/or land development, construction of new or additional impervious surfaces, construction of new buildings or additions to existing buildings, diversion of piping of any natural or man-made stream channel and for the installation of stormwater systems or appurtenances thereto.

Due to the limited impact on stormwater runoff, the following activities are exempt from stormwater plan preparation requirements; however stormwater must still be managed consistent with the Township’s Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance: Any regulated activity which would create less than two thousand five hundred (2,500) square feet of additional impervious cover (any area proposed for gravel or crushed stone is considered impervious), any land disturbance associated with agricultural activities operated in accordance with a conservation plan or erosion and sedimentation control plan approved by the Bucks County Conservation District or the U.S.D.A. Soil Conservation Service; any land disturbance associated with forrest management operations which are following the Department of Environmental Protection’s management practices contained in its publication “Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control Guidelines for Forestry” and is operating under an adequate erosion and sedimentation control plan approved by an applicable agency; any land disturbance associated with mining operations approved in accordance with all applicable rules and regulations of the Department of Environmental Protection and operating under an erosion and sedimentation control plan approved by an applicable agency; and any use of land as a garden for home consumption.

*Environmental Performance Standards* – All land development and disturbance activities located in the Stormwater Runoff Peak Rate Districts, described above, shall control the stormwater runoff for the following: Soil Erosion and Sedimentation – All land development and disturbance activities located in the Stormwater Runoff Peak Rate Districts shall protect streams, lakes, ponds, and watercourses from sedimentation damage and control erosion in accordance with the requirements of the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance. In addition, floodplain regulations prevent encroachment, alteration or improvement of any kind within any watercourse channel located in the stormwater management districts until all adjacent municipalities which may be affected by such action have been notified by the applicant, proof of the notification is submitted to the Township, all required permits or approvals have been obtained in accordance with the stormwater management provisions of the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources, Bureau of Dams and Waterway Management .

**Stormwater Runoff Districts for all Areas Except Neshaminy Creek Watershed** – The remainder of the Township of Middletown not included in the Neshaminy Creek Watershed Peak Rate Overlay Districts, excluding the Neshaminy Creek Watershed, does not permit development and disturbance, through this overlay district, for stormwater runoff. All areas of the Township not included in the Neshaminy Creek Watershed are in the RR-1 District (defined below). The land development and disturbance activities are

controlled by the underlying zoning district regulations, by the provisions of the Stormwater Runoff Districts (described below) for all areas except, the Neshaminy Creek Watershed, and by the Township's Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance. The Stormwater Runoff District(s) consists of the One Hundred (100%) Percent Release Rate District (RR-1). These stormwater management provisions are instituted for the following "regulated activities": Subdivision and/or land development, construction of new or additional impervious surfaces, construction of new buildings or additions to existing buildings, diversion of piping of any natural or man-made stream channel and for the installation of stormwater systems or appurtenances thereto.

Due to the limited impact on stormwater runoff, the following activities are exempt from stormwater plan preparation requirements; however stormwater must still be managed consistent with the Township's Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance: Any regulated activity which would create less than two thousand five hundred (2,500) square feet of additional impervious cover (any area proposed for gravel or crushed stone is considered impervious), any land disturbance associated with agricultural activities operated in accordance with a conservation plan or erosion and sedimentation control plan approved by the Bucks County Conservation District or the U.S.D.A. Soil Conservation Service; any land disturbance associated with forest management operations which are following the Department of Environmental Protection's management practices contained in its publication "Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control Guidelines for Forestry" and is operating under an adequate erosion and sedimentation control plan approved by an applicable agency; any land disturbance associated with mining operations approved in accordance with all applicable rules and regulations of the Department of Environmental Protection and operating under an erosion and sedimentation control plan approved by an applicable agency; and any use of land as a garden for home consumption.

*Environmental Performance Standards* – All land development and disturbance activities located in the Stormwater Runoff Peak Rate Districts, described above, shall control the stormwater runoff for the following: Soil Erosion and Sedimentation – All land development and disturbance activities located in the Stormwater Runoff Peak Rate Districts shall protect streams, lakes, ponds, and watercourses from sedimentation damage and control erosion in accordance with the requirements of the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance. In addition, floodplain regulations prevent encroachment, alteration or improvement of any kind within any watercourse channel located in the stormwater management districts until all adjacent municipalities which may be affected by such action have been notified by the applicant, proof of the notification is submitted to the Township, all required permits or approvals have been obtained in accordance with the stormwater management provisions of the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources, Bureau of Dams and Waterway Management .

**Flood Plain** – areas adjoining streams, ponds or lakes subject to the one hundred (100) year recurrence-interval flood. The areas considered to [be] floodplain within Middletown Township shall include those areas identified as being subject to the one hundred (100) year flood in the Flood Insurance Study for Middletown Township prepared by the Federal Insurance Administration dated June 1979 and the accompanying Flood Boundary and Floodway Map dated December 4, 1979. This Floodplain definition is

further defined to delineate areas within the floodplain as Floodway, Flood Fringe and Approximate One Hundred (100) Year Floodplain.

**Flood Way** – that portion of the floodplain including the watercourse channel and adjacent land areas which must be reserved to carry the one hundred (100) year-recurrence interval flood without cumulatively increasing that flood elevation more than one (1) foot.

**Flood Fringe** – that portion of the flood plain which is outside the floodway.

### **Riparian Buffers**

In addition to the protection of a delineated flood plain area, there should be consideration given to stream corridor protection standards that would prohibit clearing and paving, except for essential access roads and utilities, within a certain distance of each stream bank. The Township's 1994 Comprehensive Plan Resource Management section lists the preservation of floodplains, creeks, natural drainage channel and the vegetation immediately adjacent to these features as important natural features that if not protected are a potential problem.

### **Findings: Riparian Buffers**

The zoning ordinance does not define or provide protections specifically for riparian corridors. However, for preliminary and final major subdivision or land development plans, Section 303.C and Section 304.C the Township's Zoning Ordinance requires the preparation of a natural features map which indicates lake and pond shorelines and "other natural resources." In addition, at the request of the Township Zoning and Planning Officer, examples of implemented riparian buffer ordinances were provided for consideration in a pending local ordinance adoption during the creation of this plan.

While buffer areas to wetlands, floodplains, ponds and lakes have been created, the zoning ordinance should be amended to include requirements for the protection of riparian areas so that trees, understory growth, slopes, wetlands, and floodplains are protected from disturbance. The removal of native vegetation from the area within the buffer zone should be prohibited except for limited areas where utility or road crossings are needed and that need has been demonstrated to the Township's satisfaction.

### **Wetlands**

Wetlands are lands that are saturated during the spring to autumn growing seasons. Wetlands are commonly known as marshes, swamps and bogs. Other less obvious wetlands occur in shallow depressions. In recent years, there has been growing concern about loss of wetlands and the resulting ecological, aesthetic and economic losses. A number of Federal and Commonwealth agencies are involved in wetlands regulation.

According to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, there are three criteria for locating or determining existence of wetland conditions: vegetation, soil and type of

hydrology. Certain types of trees and plants are common in wetland areas; characteristic of such vegetation are shallow root systems, swollen trunks or roots growing above soil surface. Wetlands soils are dull gray in color due to the lack of oxygen. A stream or drainage swale in close proximity is a good indicator but not always present. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources defines wetlands as, *"Those areas that are inundated and saturated by surface or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions, including swamps, marshes, bogs and similar areas."*

A preliminary determination can be made by checking the National Wetland Inventory Maps prepared by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. However, the scale of this information is not suitable for site planning or development purposes. Another general method is the combined use of two basic criteria. These are hydric soils with a slope of one percent or less. Hydric soils are saturated, ponded or flooded long enough during the growing season to develop conditions that favor growth of wetlands vegetation. On these soils, where there are shallow slopes that do not provide adequate drainage, wetland conditions are likely to exist. A specific wetlands delineation, prepared by a qualified expert, is the best form of determination. Such a study must be approved by the municipality to be acceptable.

Protection of wetlands is important for several reasons. Wetlands play a key role in maintaining and improving water quality by filtering chemical and organic wastes. Wetlands store water during storms and floods, thereby reducing hazards to life and property. Wetlands provide for groundwater recharge. Finally, wetlands are important habitats. Many threatened or endangered plants and animals depend on wetlands for survival.

In light of the topography and drainage characteristics in many areas of the Township, it is important that wetland portions of the natural drainage system continue to be protected under municipal regulations. Ordinances should require preparation of a delineated plan by a qualified professional. No encroachment, except for needed access roads, should be permitted in wetland areas. However, any encroachment will require approval of the Army Corps of Engineers.

#### **Findings: Wetlands**

The zoning ordinance states that wetlands shall not be altered, re-graded, filled, piped, diverted or built upon, except where State and Federal permits have been obtained. Section 2502.1 requires a site plan which illustrates all natural resources on the site and the proposed use of the site, shows all encroachments and disturbances necessary to establish the proposed use on the site, and the calculations that indicate the area of the site with natural resources and the area of natural resources that would be disturbed or encroached upon. In addition, Section 303.4.C and Section 304.4.C the Township's Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance requires the preparation of a natural features map which indicates wetlands and marshy areas.

### **Wetland Margins**

In addition to protection of wetlands, it is recommended that a buffer area or margin area also be protected. The existence and quality of the wetland is directly related to conditions of wet soil areas around these bodies. Disruption of hydrology, contamination of groundwater, accelerated run-off and sedimentation directly affect wetlands.

#### **Findings: Wetland Margins**

The zoning ordinance requires that no more than twenty percent (20%) of such areas be altered, regraded, filled or built upon. The wetlands margin area in the Zoning Ordinance is defined as the area that extends 100 feet from the wetland boundary or to the limit of the hydric soils, whichever is less. In addition, any Department of Environmental Resources regulations under Chapter 105 concerning wetlands margin activities shall be met.

### **Lakes and Ponds**

Lakes, ponds and their shore areas function in a similar manner to wetlands and wetland margin areas. Whether natural or man-made, ponds moderate stream flow during storms and flood conditions and provide habitat for aquatic life as well as water sources for wildlife. These water bodies are scenic amenities and generally enhance property values.

#### **Findings: Lakes and Ponds**

Lakes and Ponds are specifically protected by the zoning ordinance which restricts these areas from being altered, regraded, filled, piped, diverted or built upon.

### **Lake and Pond Shorelines Areas**

Shore areas, measured from shorelines, serve as filters or buffers against potential surface and groundwater pollution that would degrade the water body. In addition to environmental considerations, open space around water bodies has major aesthetic and recreational value.

#### **Findings: Lake and Pond Shorelines Areas**

Lake and Pond shorelines are protected by the zoning ordinance which requires that no more than twenty percent (20%) of such areas be altered, regraded, filled or built upon. The zoning ordinance defines land and pond shorelines as those areas that are within one hundred (100) feet of the spillway crest elevation.

### **Steep Slopes**

These are areas where the average slope exceeds eight percent. These slopes are subject to higher rates of stormwater runoff and erosion. Slopes are calculated in gradients as a percentage indicating the height of the vertical rise relative to a constant horizontal distance. A fifteen percent slope, for example, is equivalent to a rise of fifteen feet over a distance of one hundred feet. For purposes of this plan, slopes are grouped into three categories: 8 to 15 percent, 15 to 25 percent, 25 percent or greater.

Development on these slopes accelerates erosion by removing or disturbing the existing groundcover and topsoil. Removal of the vegetation destroys the groundcover that absorbs rainwater, anchors soil and buffers or dissipates the impact of rainfall on topsoil. Erosion produces sediment that pollutes surface water. Over time, accumulated sediments narrow stream channels and fill in pond and lake bottoms. This restricts the capacity of waterways to handle flood flows and thereby increases the incidence and severity of flooding. Limiting construction, re-grading and the amount of impervious surfaces allowed on steep slopes will greatly reduce the adverse environmental impacts of new development.

#### **Findings: Steep Slopes**

The Township's zoning ordinance provides protections of steep slope areas for all uses of land, including changes to the landscape. The zoning ordinance regulates the amount of land that can be altered, regraded, cleared or built upon, with different requirements for different steep slope categories. For slopes eight percent (8%) to fifteen percent (15%), no more than fifty percent (50%) of such areas can be altered, regraded, cleared or built upon. For slopes fifteen percent (15%) to twenty five percent (25%), no more than thirty percent (30%) of such areas can be altered, regraded, cleared or built upon. For slopes of twenty five percent (25%) or greater, no more than fifteen percent (15%) can be altered, regraded, cleared or built upon.

#### **Woodlands**

Woodland resources serve multiple purposes. They moderate environmental conditions, support wildlife as habitat and provide recreational opportunities. They also have significant aesthetic value. The environmental functions of woodlands are particularly important. Trees and shrubs anchor soil and reduce erosion and sedimentation in streams. The vegetative cover softens the impact of falling rainwater, enables groundwater recharge and reduces the volume and rate of runoff. Woodlands also play a role in filtering air pollutants and moderating microclimates. Additionally, woodlands provide visual and sound buffering.

Woodlands can benefit from proper timber management and can normally withstand impacts of limited development. However, when woodlands are located in environmentally sensitive areas, such as steep slopes over fifteen percent grade, along tributaries and in flood plains, around wetlands and shore margins, even minor disturbances can lead to serious environmental disruptions. The remaining wooded areas of the Township are integral elements of the community.

In addition to environmental, stormwater management and erosion control considerations, this policy is intended to preserve the sense of wooded areas as elements in the diverse and urbanizing landscape.

#### **Findings: Woodlands**

The Township's zoning ordinance includes protection standards for woodland areas. The Natural Resource Protection Standards break woodlands into two groups, those woodlands that are in environmentally sensitive areas and all other woodland areas. Environmentally sensitive areas are defined in the ordinance as being areas which are

floodplains, floodplain soils, steep slopes, wetlands, wetland margins and lane or pond shorelines.

For woodlands located in environmentally sensitive areas, the ordinance states that no more than twenty percent (20%) of woodlands in these areas shall be altered, regraded, cleared or built upon. For all other woodland areas, no more than 50% of woodlands which are not located in environmentally sensitive areas shall be altered, regraded, cleared or built upon, however where more than twenty percent (20%) of such woodland areas are altered, regraded, cleared or built upon, more stringent requirements must be met.

The additional requirements for other woodland areas where more than twenty percent (20%) such woodland areas are to be altered, regraded, cleared or built upon are:

- The woodland area removed in excess of twenty percent (20%) shall be replaced at a rate of one hundred (100) trees per acre
- Several species of trees shall be utilized and shall have a minimum caliper of two and one-half (2.5) inches.
- Trees shall be planted in a random pattern forming continuous canopies, at least one-half (0.5) of the required replacement trees shall be planted in one (1) continuous canopy.
- Replanting shall be done in accordance with a plan prepared by a licensed landscape architect and approved by the Township Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.
- Replanting shall occur on-site, however off-site replanting shall be permitted on another property within the Township where on-site replanting is deemed impractical.
- All tree replanting areas shall be deed restricted from future tree removal.
- Buffer plantings and landscaping required by this chapter or the subdivision and land development ordinance shall not be counted towards meeting this requirement except to supplement the required buffer plantings.

The zoning ordinance further protects woodlands, specifically the individual trees, through the Tree Protection Zone. These zones, defined as an area that is fifteen (15) feet from the trunk of the tree to be retained or the distance from the trunk to the dripline, whichever is greater, are areas that are radial to the trunk of a tree and which restrict any construction activity from occurring. Although the required area to be protected may be shown on a development plan, damage from machinery, grade changes affecting root stability and aeration, soil compaction from temporary roads and materials stockpiling, result in loss of woodlands in a few short years.

In addition to the protection of existing woodlands, consideration should be given to landscaping for future generations and reforestation of environmentally sensitive areas. A mix of native plant material is preferred to planting of a single type of vegetation or widespread use of berms as a buffering method. New plantings should blend with vegetation typical in the Township. Wherever possible, native plant material should be used. Proper standards, design guidelines and definitions of vegetative material and natural vegetation should be developed for these purposes, which are consistent with standards, developed for the Township owned parkland and open space.

## Scenic Resources

Views and vistas in Middletown are associated with the areas along the creeks that run throughout the Township. Remaining views of the limited undeveloped lands and views along local stream valleys are priority scenic resources for the community. As scenic resources are often related to other significant natural resources, scenic value is an important supporting criterion when evaluating areas for open space protection.

Efforts should be made to improve the aesthetic qualities of existing and future development by enhancing gateways, streetscaping, buffering negative uses and creating greenways. The creation of a street tree committee is one mechanism that could be utilized to upgrade older developed areas and aid in creating uniform street tree planting standards throughout the Township.

## Geological Features

The total land area of Middletown Township has eight underlying geologic formations. The following discussion of geologic formations was taken from the DCNR online database of the *1980 Bureau of Topographic and Geologic Survey Map 1, Geologic Map of Pennsylvania*.

Trenton Gravel (Qt) – Gray or pale-reddish-brown, very gravelly sand interstratified with crossbedded sand and clay-silt beds; includes areas of Holocene alluvium and swamp deposits.

Stockton Formation (Trs) – Light-gray to buff, coarse-grained, arkosic sandstone; includes reddish-brown to grayish-purple sandstone, siltstone, and mudstone.

Stockton conglomerate (Trsc) – Quartz cobbles set in a poorly sorted, sandy matrix; includes conglomeratic sandstone.

Allentown Formation (Cal) – Medium to medium-dark-gray, thick-bedded dolomite and impure limestone; dark-gray chert stringers and nodules; laminated; oolitic and stromatolitic; some orange-brown-weathering calcareous siltstone at base.

Lockatong Formation (Trl) – Dark-gray to black, thick-bedded argillite containing a few zones of thin-bedded black shale; locally has thin layers of impure limestone and calcareous shale.

Brunswick Formation (Trb) – Reddish-brown mudstone, siltstone, and shale, containing a few green and brown shale interbeds; red and dark-gray, interbedded argillites near base. Youngest beds in Brunswick may be Jurassic in age.

Beekmantown Group (Ob) – Includes, in descending order, the Ontelaunee (Oo), Epler (Oe), Rickenbach (Ori), and Stonehenge (Os) Formations.

Diabase (Jd) – Medium to coarse-grained, quartz-normative tholeiite; composed of labradorite and various pyroxenes; occurs as dikes, sheets and a few small flows. Includes the dark-gray York Haven Diabase (high titanium oxide) and the slightly younger



Rossville Diabase (low titanium oxide). In chilled margins, the Rossville is distinguished from the York Haven by its lighter gray color and distinctive, sparse, centimeter-sized calcic-plagioclase phenocrysts.

Pensauken and Bridgeton Formations, undifferentiated (Tpb) – Dark-reddish-brown, cross-stratified, feldspathic quartz sand and some thin beds of fine gravel and rare layers of clay or silt.

Bryn Mawr Formation (Tbm) – High level terrace deposits; reddish-brown gravelly sand and some silt. Age uncertain.

Felsic gneiss (fgp) – Light, medium grained; includes rocks of probable sedimentary origin.

Mafic gneiss (mgp) – Dark, medium grained; includes rocks of probable sedimentary origin; may be equivalent to “Xmgp” in places.

Mafic gneiss (Xmgh) – Dark, medium grained; includes rocks of probable sedimentary origin; may be equivalent to “mgp” in places.

Chickies Formation (Cch) – Light-gray, hard, massive, Skolithos-bearing quartzite and quartz schist; thin, interbedded dark slate at top; conglomerate (Hellam Member) at base.

Wissahickon Formation (Xw) – Includes oligoclase-mica schist, some hornblende gneiss, some augen gneiss, and some quartz-rich and feldspar-rich members due to various degrees of granitization.

Franklin Marble (Fm) – White, coarsely crystalline; disseminated graphite flakes.

Ultramafic rocks (Xu) – Includes serpentine, steatite, and other products of alteration of peridotites and pyroxenites.

Granitic gneiss and granite (Xgr) – Includes Springfield Granodiorite (granitized Wissahickon) in Philadelphia area.

## **Topography**

Middletown Township is divided into two Physiographic Sections, the northern section of the Township which is located within the Piedmont Upland Section and the Southern section is located within the Lowland and Intermediate Upland Section. In the Piedmont Upland Section to the north, the topography is low to moderate, meaning that the typical relief is between 300 and 1,000 feet. In the Lowland and Intermediate Upland Section, the topography is very low, meaning that the typical relief is between 0 and 100 feet. The area between these two physiographic sections is called the Fall Line and distinguishes the change in topography from very low relief of the Lowland and Intermediate Upland Section to the more moderate relief of the Piedmont Upland Section.

The Township is somewhat affected by the topographic layout of the land, however the differences in topography are minor. There are many creek valleys winding their way through neighborhoods within the Township and some cases dividing neighborhoods. Mill Creek, a significant creek which originates in the middle of the Township, flows southward through Levittown. The Neshaminy Creek is also a significant creek and it form the western boundary of the Township. Other creeks of importance include Core Creek, a tributary of the Neshaminy Creek, and the Queen Anne Creek, a tributary of the Mill Creek. There are also many other smaller creeks that are of significant importance to the Township.

## **Soils**

Two indicator soil characteristics were reviewed to determine vulnerable resources and primary sites for open space protection. Hydric soils, soils experiencing permanent or periodic inundation of water, or soil saturation to the surface, at least seasonally are indicated on the **Comprehensive Resources Map**.

### **Hydric Soils**

Soils with hydrologic components are hydric soils. These soils are saturated, flooded or ponded long enough during the growing season (one week or more) to potentially develop conditions suitable to the growth of aquatic vegetation in the soil's upper layers (20").

Slow runoff, poor permeability and high clay content characterize hydric soils. The water table for hydric soils rises to the surface during wet seasons. They are frequently found in concave positions at the base of slopes, in depressions, and in poor drainage areas. Hydric soils do not imply that the area where they are located is necessarily wetlands, but are indicators of possible wetlands. The presence of hydric soils is one of the three major criteria, in addition to hydrology and vegetation, in the determination of wetlands.

There are a significant amount of hydric soils in the Township, most notably the areas along the Neshaminy and Mill Creeks and Lake Luxembourg, but there are also areas of hydric soils located throughout the interior portions of Middletown.

### **Prime Agricultural Soils**

The Municipalities Planning Code states as one of the purposes of land use controls in Pennsylvania, the preservation of "prime agricultural and farmland considering topography, soil type and classification, and present use." A recent trend in land use in some parts of the county has been the loss of some prime farmland to industrial and urban uses. The loss of prime farmland to other uses puts pressure on marginal lands, which are generally more erodible, droughty, and less productive and cannot be easily cultivated. Agricultural soils and farming activities are important considerations in the open space planning process, as these resources are important areas to consider for permanent protection.

Prime farmland is defined as having an adequate and dependable supply of moisture from precipitation or irrigation. The temperature and growing season are favorable.

The level of acidity or alkalinity is acceptable. Prime farmland has few or no rocks and is permeable to water and air. It is not excessively erodible or saturated with water for long periods and is not frequently flooded during the growing season. The slope ranges mainly from 0 to 6 percent. More detailed information about the criteria for prime farmland is available at the local office of the NRCS.

There is no substantial amount of agricultural soil within the Township, however small pockets of such soils have been identified in the northern and western sections of the Township. There are two parcels in the northern end of the Township that are classified as agricultural.

### **Surface Waters**

Two major creeks and many smaller creeks drain the Township. The Delaware River, located a few miles to the south and east of Middletown Township, is the main drainage basin for the Township and the region. The major creeks in the Township are Mill Creek, originating in the center of the Township and running south through the Township, and the Neshaminy Creek, running from north to south and creating the Township's western border. There are also many minor streams running north to south within the Township. Lake Luxembourg is a significant water body located within the northern end of the Township. Watershed areas are indicated on the **Comprehensive Resources Map**.

### **Findings: Ordinance Standards for Resource Protection**

The current Township ordinances provide significant natural resource protection, which is consistent with general planning practices, other agency requirements, and enabling legislation provided in the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code.

### **Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Inventory (PNDI)**

The Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Inventory (PNDI) information system indicated the possible presence of fifteen resources of special concern. These resources include the following:

*(See Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Inventory Map for an itemized list of species.)*

### **Agricultural Areas**

The two agricultural land use parcels remaining in the Township are identified on the **Generalized Land Use Map**. One parcel is at the northwestern corner of the Township. The second parcel is the parcel located at the northwestern corner of the Township on the municipal boundary.

## **Summary**

Middletown Township, covering about 19.4 square miles, is a substantially developed outer-ring suburb of the City of Philadelphia. Development includes a mix

of land uses, mostly residential, but does include a substantial commercial corridor along Lincoln Highway that includes the Oxford Valley Mall. The Township has key issues regarding land use: traffic congestion and the limited amount of remaining open space.

While there is a significant amount of open space currently protected, protecting remaining undeveloped parcels of land will help to provide additional open space for resource protection, recreation and community connections. It will also help reduce the potential for additional development that would contribute to traffic congestion.

The Township has a brief window of opportunity in which to secure any remaining open space that is now undeveloped. The plan for acquisition will need to stretch into future decades, as developed parcels that benefit the Township, in terms of expanding public open space or protecting resources, come on the market. Creating linkages to interconnect the community will be challenging but is a very important consideration. Examples exist where links are possible because of walkways and street endings that adjoin parcels of land. There are a number of mechanisms available for land and resource preservation including acquisition, easements, rights of way and others.

The Township has to carefully consider how and where it will expand its public lands. Creating a comprehensive “system” of parklands which is evenly distributed throughout the Township should be a used as strong criteria when considering the purchasing of new parcels. In addition, the goals of regional connections and natural resource protection should be the goals of the Township. Strategies are being implemented in watershed areas to protect ecosystems and created greenway, and Middletown Township has the opportunity to work with Bucks County initiatives and adjoining municipalities to enhance the watersheds by developing greenways and a buffer system that would extend throughout the county.

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# Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Facilities

## Parks and Recreation Facilities

Middletown Township controls 136.5 acres of dedicated parkland for active recreation, a 100.1 acre country club and golf course, a 107 acre preserved farmland/orchard and 523 acres of open space and “drainage” parcels within its boundaries. Also, the Township is host to 1,380 acres of Bucks County parkland and 519.7 acres representing the outdoor facilities and structures of eleven of the fifteen school sites that comprise the Neshaminy School District, including a 125 acre environmental nature study center. These combined areas represent approximately 21.8% (2703.4 acres) of the Township’s total 12,416 acre landmass, servicing a local population of 44,141, found in 15,321 households and 11,659 families and a regional population within Bucks County of 597,635 (Census Of 2000, United States Census Bureau).

Extremely fortunate to have forged partnerships with multiple agencies, the Township provides an admirable program of recreation services and facilities for its residents while adhering to a stringent operations and development budget. If county parks or school district supports were to disappear, the level of available recreational services may be drastically altered and fall short of existing and future demand. 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 this assessment include: the amount of park acreage, service areas of the parks, access by the community, 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 Middletown 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 Middletown Township,
4. Exploring trends in recreation facility use.

## Middletown 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 and the public forums provided the basis for consideration of standards specific to the needs of Middletown Township. The assessment of such standards included an analysis of the amount and distribution of existing and planned recreation resources, analysis of service area and determination of park classification for Middletown's parks. Development of standards unique to Middletown 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. Middletown's recreation standards are based on the NRPA park classification system described below.

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

The Township has a fairly diverse mixture of parks, especially with regard to type of facilities and size. The Township is additionally fortunate in having regional parklands and public open space with prime resources, such as Core Creek Park with Lake Luxembourg and its major active and passive recreation facilities, Playwicki Park and County and Township protected open space along the Neshaminy Creek, a water navigable by canoe and kayak for its full length along the western boundary of the Township. The schools and expansive nature study center of the Neshaminy School District that are resident in the Township comprise a second complementary component of the existing parks and open space inventory. All these facilities combined represent an impressive array of active recreation and open space that suggest a natural regional cooperation within Middletown to benefit the Township residents and the nearby regional public. Despite the sometimes conflicting issue of regional service versus local service priorities, it has been a consistent goal of past local parks planning and will be an equally important goal in this Plan to emphasize the continued coordination of both regional and local efforts to provide needed recreation services and open space areas for the burgeoning populations of Lower Bucks County and Middletown Township expediently efficiently and with careful fiscal responsibility.

It is important to evaluate the location of facilities within the community as a whole and the extent to which they are accessible from a local perspective. Convenient and safe access should be planned for all parks and recreation areas. Middletown Township is literally the crossroads of Lower Bucks County. The challenges that exist are the barriers created by major highways, such as U.S. Route 1 and Interstate 95 and heavily-trafficked State roadways and rail alignments, such as Business Route 1, Route 413 and Woodbourne Road and CSX and SEPTA Regional Rail Lines, as they bisect the overall

community into smaller areas. Geographically, this transportation network is a major delineator of boundaries between the sub-areas within the Township.

The degree to which people are able to walk to recreation opportunities is primarily a function of when the area was developed. Though incorporated in 1692 as Middle Lots and Middle Township and renamed Middletown in 1724, the areas that were developed into the early 1900's, designed for a culture that was significantly more dependent on walking as part of the daily routine, are not within the present township area. This era of development was primarily focused within the Boroughs of Langhorne, Langhorne Manor, Penndel and Hulmeville. The present Middletown grew from a population of 4,987 in 1950 to 26,936 in 1960, primarily as a result of the development of Cobalt Ridge, Deep Dale, and Forsythia Gate, three of the 40 separate neighborhood sections through 4 different municipalities that comprised Levittown, Pennsylvania, the largest planned community constructed by a single builder in the United States. Levittown epitomized postwar suburbia, dominated by the automobile and representing the post WWII American Dream of homeownership. Middletown depicts suburban land with little semblance of a pattern of the small town or village. Most of the retail use was originally located on the state roadways noted above and essentially remains the same today. The area is not served with sidewalks or a pattern and scale of development oriented towards a pedestrian-friendly environment. The important consideration missing from the Township's neighborhoods is pedestrian interconnectivity-where all types of uses are accessible by foot and the streets are designed so that pedestrians feel comfortable walking along and crossing streets.

As a result, many of the areas of the township that were developed since the 1960's lack quality pedestrian facilities. This is the result of two separate conditions. It is true that many of the residential subdivisions that have been built have sidewalks. The issue is that these sidewalks end at the entrance to the subdivision. This means that connections to other uses are limited. The entrance-ways to subdivisions are usually located along busy roadways, which generally do not have sidewalks and handle a significant amount of traffic moving at faster speeds. The other issue is that subdivisions, and land developments as a whole, have been focused on single-type land uses. This means that people live in one place and shop or recreate, in a completely separate "zone." The benefit of proximity is often lost. These issues may be at the heart of the concern for connectivity, social interaction and community involvement gleaned from the public participation process of this Plan.

Within some of the larger county-owned parks, knowledgeable Township residents do benefit from existing internal trails. Core Creek Park contains an extensive internal network of hiking, bicycling and horseback riding trails. Playwicki Park also has a small scenic trail along the Neshaminy Creek, but it is limited because the trail dead-ends. Park and trail use could be enhanced with improved access to the local neighborhoods, as the existing plan for regional access trails promises, when implemented.

Coordination with Bucks County Parks Department and Planning Department in the joint-development of regional bicycle trails through the Township could accelerate the timetable for these improvements and benefit the Township with a commitment of County resources for long-term maintenance of these facilities that both a regional and local transportation and recreation function.

The Middletown Township Parks, Recreation and Open Space and Greenways Plan's **Existing Facilities and Service Area Map** presents the location of the park, school and public open space sites within the Township. This map illustrates several conditions:

- No single park is centrally located within the Township and the intersecting transportation system dividing the community is a major obstacle to development of a single facility that could be reasonably easily accessible by all of the residents-by all modes of travel including walking and biking. Presently this issue is resolved by the designation of five municipal facilities serving discrete neighborhoods: Middletown Community Park (MCP) in the northeast, Twin Oaks Park in the central east, Forsythia Crossing Park in the southeast, Poplar Park in the south west and Beechwood Park in the central west. Only Middletown Community Park is large enough and equipped with sufficient facilities to support the recreational needs of its immediate service area. Each of the Township parks is supplemented by nearby county, school district, and other municipal facilities.
- The northwest portion of the Township has no Township park, but, through cooperative programming between the Township Recreation Department, Bucks County Parks Department and the Neshaminy School District, Core Creek Park , Neshaminy Jr. High School, and Maple Point Middle School allow limited provisions for active recreation in the northern portion of the Township. Middletown also reserves area and facilities for the larger of two municipal summer day camp programs within Core Creek Park. Opportunities for a northwest community park may be realized through negotiations with adjacent private developers so that a contiguous large tract can be developed from open space dedications and/or acquisition.
- Parks are distributed throughout the community, yet there are several clear patterns that affect the overall service to the several neighborhoods of the Township. The map clearly shows that parkland and additional Township open space and drainage properties are concentrated along the spine of Mill Creek and its tributaries in the Green Belt dedications of the Levittown developments. The meandering creeks, wide expanses of open meadow and peripheral network of local streets through the southeast portion of the Township within this greenway can allow for dispersed mini-parks with diverse complimentary features, potential for plantings of native riparian vegetation buffers for water quality and stormwater management enhancement and the physical exercise to be found within a future connective multiple use trail, linking neighborhoods to activities for pedestrians and bicyclists within an open and safe Green Belt pathway .

In contrast to this phenomenon, the northwest portion of the Township, especially north of the CSX Railroad lines, has a limited amount of parkland. This is important to note because this area contains the last significant undeveloped parcels that can still be influenced and shaped into environmentally-responsive residential projects with significant open space and parkland dedications and joined to the similarly-designed Pennswood Landing retirement community to create a third residential greenway in the Township and provide more multi-use parkland.



- Many open space parcels are evident along the eastern banks of the Neshaminy Creek (western boundary of the Township), either as County properties, within the Neshaminy School District Idlewood Environmental Station or Township properties of dedicated open space and conservation easements from planned residential development. Combined with Bucks County properties on the western banks of the Neshaminy Creek, the Township and County should continue to prepare a plan to include the long-planned County bicycle trail alignment here into a Lower Neshaminy Creek Greenways/Waters Trail that will provide canoe and kayak launches and portage easements accessed by the regional trail and preserve wetlands, wildlife and floodplain natural resources within the lower Neshaminy Creek Watershed.

### **Park System Classification**

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Park, Recreation, Greenway and Open Space Guidelines, (1995) classifies park and recreation facilities into several main categories: mini-park, recreation node, neighborhood park, community park, community school, community park, athletic complex, natural resource area/preserve and greenways

#### **1. Mini – Park**

- Definition: Small park 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: Cobalt Ridge, Lion (Snow Ball Gate), Sunflower, Deep Dale East, Quincy Hollow, Upper Orchard, Middletown Community Center, Harris, Detwieler, Tareytown Estates

#### **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: Periwinkle, Harris, Middletown Community Center, Beechwood, Veterans

### 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 from throughout its service radius by way of 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: Beechwood, Periwinkle, Poplar, Veterans, Twin Oaks, Middletown Community Center

### 4. 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: 30 to 50 acres
- Service Area: .5 to 3.0 mile service radius; served by arterial and collector roads and accessible from 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: Twin Oaks, Middletown Community Park, Forsythia Crossing, Poplar, Beechwood

## **5. School/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. Size criteria for recreation nodes, neighborhood or community parks. School buildings are not considered in the acreage calculation.
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 depends 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:	Maple Point Middle School, Neshaminy Jr. H.S., Neshaminy H. S.

## **6. Athletic Complex**

Definition:	Consolidates heavily programmed athletic fields and associated facilities in fewer sites to allow for economy of scale, improved management, greater control over impacts to neighborhood and community parks such as over-use, traffic congestion, parking and domination of facilities by those outside the neighborhood.
Size:	Depends upon intended use. Consideration should be given to acquiring an additional 25 percent to hedge against unforeseen circumstances.
Service Area:	Strategically located community-wide facilities within reasonable driving times; near non-residential uses if possible.
Facilities:	Development should be based upon the specific types of fields and courts.
Findings:	Middletown Community Park (MCP), Twin Oaks Park, Veteran, Poplar, Beechwood

## **7. 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.
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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 trails and nature study areas. They can also function as greenways.
Findings:	Core Creek Park (Bucks County), Idlewood Environmental Station, County and Township lands along the Neshaminy Creek, Township Green Belt parcels, subdivision open space dedications and drainage function tracts in northern Middletown.

## 8. 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. Bucks County refers this park classification as a “link” park.
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:	Township Green Belt complex for cars, potential for a second greenways/water in the Neshaminy Creek at the Township western boundary

These standards and evaluations provide a frame of reference for establishing standards for parks in Middletown Township. Because the community is heavily developed, working within the resources available requires tailoring the standards to serve the community in the most effective way possible. Based upon the assessment of parks and recreation facilities, Table 4 -1 presents a proposed classification system for Middletown’s parks.

<p><b>Table 4-1</b>  <b>Proposed Classification System</b>  <b>Middletown Township Parks, Recreation Areas, and Open Space</b></p>
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Category	Parks for Proposed Classification	Acres	
		Existing	Proposed
Mini – Park	Cobalt Ridge*, Lions*, Sunflower* , Deep Dale East*, Quincy Hollow*, Upper Orchard*, Harris*, Detwieler*, Tareytown Estates*	7.2	
Recreation Nodes	Periwinkle*, Harris, Veterans Middletown Community Center*, Beechwood	8.9	
Neighborhood Park	Beechwood, Periwinkle, Poplar, Veterans, Twin Oaks, Middletown Community Center	*	
School/ Neighborhood Parks	P.Buck, Eisenhower, S. Everitt, O. Heckman, H. Hoover, W.S. Miller, C.Sandburg,Jr., A.Schwietzer, Queen of the Universe Catholic	190.1	
Athletic Complex	MCP, Twin Oaks*, Beechwood*, Veterans*, Poplar*	54.5	
School/Community Park	Maple Point*, Neshaminy Jr. HS*, Neshaminy HS*	205	87.5**
Community Park	Twin Oaks, MCP*, Forsythia Crossing*, Poplar, Beechwood	52.6	
Special Use Facility	Middletown Country Club, Styer Orchard, Langhome Manor Spring Water	277	
Total Active Recreation		811.4	87.5
Natural Resource Areas/Preserves	Idlewod Env. Station, Twp. Open Space.	135	87.5**
Greenways	Green Belt & Twp. Open Space areas	523	
<b>Total</b>		1469.4	175

\* Acreage only included in category of primary use \*\*The Stone Farm – 50/50 estimated division of uses

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. Under these NRPA guidelines, the minimum active recreation acreage was at least six to ten acres per thousand. While Pennsylvania does not have a standard for active park acreage, Maryland offers a comparison of 30 acres per thousand. In generalized active recreation components of both Township and School District facilities, Middletown has between 17 and 20 acres per 1,000 Township Residents.

## Township Parks

The public participation process has shown that Middletown Township residents desire a comprehensive system of parkland to meet community recreational needs. It should include neighborhood parks, community parks, school/community parks, special purpose facilities, natural resource areas/preserves and greenways. The survey responses show

significant interest in activities beyond traditional organized sports. Tot lots, hiking and biking trails and environmental protection/education activities were recurrent themes.

Parkland can serve many purposes in a community: including 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. Much of the Middletown Township parkland functions for some of these purposes, in a specific fashion or location, but a primary concern is for a balance of functions, improving access and opportunities for wider participation of the whole community.

The Existing Facilities and Service Areas Map and Tables illustrate the following:

- Parks and schools in Middletown Township,
- Service areas for each park,
- 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.

Active recreation is also important for the development of hand-eye coordination in the very young and to offer socialization skills outside of the structured framework of the school classroom. A general concern that is more prevalent today involves adequate sport field maintenance and the installation and upkeep of durable and safe play equipment with adequate safety fall zones. Playground accidents and active sport injuries still account for the most prevalent causes for hospital emergency room visits across the nation. More uniform adherence to recognized standards of design and maintenance of active recreation facilities can greatly mitigate this problem. Several government and non-governmental entities provide certifying programs for playground safety programming and products.

## **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 public meetings, the needs and desires of Middletown Township residents seemed to be consistent with these goals. The results of the community survey showed that a significant percentage of the respondents felt that bike and walking paths should be developed and that it was a priority item for immediate action. For example, biking was a recreation activity that was noted as a very popular activity within the Township.

Core Creek Park is the key park now providing existing trails. Several of the other parks and open space areas present wonderful potential passive trail resources, such as the Green Belt open space parcels and the open space lands along the Neshaminy Creek. All of these open space areas benefit greatly from the presence of a water element: from the relatively tamed Lake Luxembourg and Mill Creek to the more rustic appeal of the Lower Neshaminy Creek watershed.

The existing Green Belt open space areas can be quickly developed for more passive recreation and trails that will provide a unifying theme for that area of the Middletown Parks and Recreation System. Successful trail and conservation landscape improvements in the Green Belt will encourage a stronger commitment of resources from Bucks County and the Neshaminy School District to co-sponsor a new, nature-based greenway along the Neshaminy Creek with the Township. Middletown must take the lead to promote a “Lower Neshaminy Creek Greenways/Waters Trail” within the context of natural resource conservation, environmental education and passive safe trails in the watershed.

### **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 a listing of the notable features, issues/constraints and opportunities for each existing park within the Township.

### **MIDDLETOWN COMMUNITY PARK (42.6 Acres)**

#### **Features:**

Middletown Community Park serves the immediate surrounding neighborhoods of northeast Middletown, as well as a much larger regional area, including areas beyond the Township. Langhorne Yardley Road, and Village Road make up parts of the northern and southern boundaries of the park. The topography of the park is relatively flat. This park contains:

- One Major League baseball field
- Two Little League baseball fields
- Two Softball fields
- Two Regulation Soccer fields
- Two Junior Soccer fields
- One Basketball court
- One tot lot
- One perimeter walking path
- Restrooms
- Two equipment sheds
- Benches and low bleachers
- Two concession stands
- On-site parking
- The Community Park Barn- Recreation Department classes and community events, out-sourced daily special educational program w/ classrooms, music studio and an indoor climbing wall. Also used by the Middletown Teen Task Force–youth group program.
- The McCafferty Middletown Skate Park, outdoor skate park with several practice obstacles for skateboarding, inline skating, and bicycling
- Sports lighting for all outdoor facilities.



A major destination point with multiple playing fields, skate park and Community Park Barn. An additional amenity with regional draw is the Veterans Memorial at the main entrance of Langhorne Yardley Road.

**Issues/Constraints:**

Youth Magnet- The Community Barn, Interior Rock Climbing Wall, Basketball and Skate Park used by community youth club. The largest park with parking provides a venue for events. An event shuttle service has been a successful transportation option for younger participants.

Lighting Complaints-Township-wide “sports-complex” with outdoor lighting allows extended use but local neighbors resent late night illumination and noise. Customize lighting for each seasonal sport to mitigate the nuisance. Provide a stronger landscape buffer to enhance the Veterans Memorial and introduce a water element for a welcome visual and audible distraction from noise of youth activities.

Over-programmed? Parking, bleachers, benches may not be sufficient for high use periods. Fields with persistent drainage problems should be redesigned for passive recreation here.

**Opportunities:**

Increase Alternate Uses and Integrate Access. Passive trails could access future perimeter natural areas and gardens and enhance security access. An Outdoor rocks and ropes facility would complement the Barn program for all youths. Purchase easement adjacent to vacant tracts to expand passive and active recreation and provide shared-use trail to neighborhoods.

**TWIN OAKS PARK (18.0 Acres)**

**Features:**

Twin Oaks Park is a park that serves the immediate neighborhoods of the eastern central portion of the Township. The park is defined by Woodbourne Road to the west, Trenton Road to the South, and Twin Oak Drive to the north and east. The topography of the park is relatively flat and a small stream divides the park north to south. This park contains:

- One Babe Ruth League baseball field
- Three Little League baseball fields
- Three Softball fields
- One T-Ball field

- Batting Cages
- Two shared-field Soccer fields
- Swings and tot lot playground
- Restrooms
- Benches
- One concession stand
- Equipment sheds
- Two on-site parking areas

A major destination point due to the number of fields and different types of fields available for use. Local youth leagues provide volunteer support in concession stands and minor field upkeep (raking and striping).

**Issues/Constraints:** A sports complex with heavy use from youth sports clubs and leagues. Existing on-site parking is underused due to distance from outlying fields for five out of seven fields. Parents choose illegal on-street parking along Twin Oaks Drive, disrupting the surrounding neighborhood. Fines have not reduced the problem.

**Opportunities:** Expansion potential: Amenities at Twin Oaks Park favor connecting trails to Chicken Foot Park, a County park with minor expansion potential. Develop pedestrian access trail from the north through neighborhood open space.

Off-street parking potential: Reconfigure the two central fields with the outfield along the street, establish linear parking area off Twin Oak Drive, sign and enforce towing of illegally parked vehicles. Relocate some events to other facilities. Fence the perimeter of the park along Twin Oaks Drive.

#### **Cobalt Ridge Park (0.5 Acres)**

**Features:** Within the 62 acre Cobalt-Quincy Hollow Green Belt open space, Cobalt Ridge Park is a mini-park located between Cobalt Cross Road and the Queen Anne Creek. This park has a basketball court, passive open space, trash receptacle and is located adjacent to the Queen Anne Creek Corridor.

**Issues/Constraints:** Part of the Queen Anne Creek corridor, this particular site had a heavily used basketball court that is now a half court.

Noise, parking and litter from adult competitive basketball play drew general complaints by neighbors.

**Opportunities:** Green Belt/Queen Anne Creek Corridor Trail. Township owns the property associated with the Queen Anne Creek, making an excellent location for a trailhead for a multi-use path that can connect other facilities within the Green Belt open space. This is a good area for stream buffer planting with a potential interpretative site for water related resources. Path connections and potential relocation of the basketball court to the Bucks County Queen Anne “link park” would provide path system continuity and move the active recreation to a more manageable location. The neighborhood is requesting a playground, reflecting the presence of younger families.

#### **Quincy Hollow Park (0.4 Acres)**

**Features:** Also in the Cobalt-Quincy Hollow Green Belt, Quincy Hollow Park is a mini-park, located between Quincy Drive and the Queen Anne Creek. This park has a paved basketball court and passive open space and is located adjacent to the Queen Anne Creek Corridor.

**Issues/Constraints:** Another “mini-park” of the Queen Anne Creek Corridor. Noise, parking, and basketball playing seem to be the general complaints from neighbors.

**Opportunities:** Green Belt/Queen Anne Creek Corridor Trail. The second touch point for a unifying Green Belt trail system. This is a good area for stream buffer planting with a potential interpretative site for water related resources.

Walk Our Children to School - These mini parks in residential neighborhoods may be appropriate “stops” for a “walking school bus” and Safe Routes to School program that would encourage groups of supervised students to walk and bicycle to school, in this case nearby W.S. Miller Elementary School. These programs have affiliations with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation “Active Living By Design” initiatives for healthier communities and the National Center for Bicycling and Walking.

#### **Upper Orchard Park (0.9 Acres)**

**Features:** Upper Orchard Park is a mini-park within the 40 acre “Juniper Hill” portion of the Township’s Green Belt open

space area located between Upper Orchard Drive, Upper Orchard Way, Frosty Hollow County Park and the Mill Creek. This park has two ½ basketball courts, playground equipment, passive open space and a trash receptacle.

**Issues/Constraints:** In this location the Green Belt concept is more fully expressed, and actual boundaries between mini-park and greenway are blurred. At this site a heavily used basketball court that generated complaints by neighbors was “neutralized” for junior use by significantly reducing backboard height and relocating goals. Further along Upper Orchard Drive is a playground and benches. At the intersection of Upper Orchard Drive and Frosty Hollow Road there is an additional area of open space. There is a dirt trail into Frosty Hollow Park – this trail is used by ATV’s and motorcycles. Flooding is also evident through pooling water and soft, wet soil.

**Opportunities:** Green Belt/Mill Creek Corridor Trail. Within the Township Green Belt open space associated with the Mill Creek Corridor. The site is adjacent to wooded open space areas of Frosty Hollow County Park. It is a good location for a trail system that can connect to other facilities and provide surveillance locations to monitor illegal off-road vehicle use. Play field development opportunities exist. This is a good area for stream buffer planting with a potential interpretative site for water related resources.

#### **Forsythia Crossing Park (6.6 Acres)**

**Features:** Forsythia Crossing Park is located north of Snowball Drive and is split into two parts by Forsythia Crossing Road. On the eastern side of the road is the Roller Hockey Rink. The park also contains a playground, walking path, picnic area, gazebo/pavilion, passive open space, benches and is adjacent to the old Green Belt.

**Issues/Constraints:** Access Controls and Perceptions. Forsythia Crossing roadway splits the park into 2 areas, one for the active recreation of the rink, the other presenting a shady glen with a open pavilion to stage events. Though the adjacent Samuel Everitt Elementary School and the park are joined by a path, bollards and a fence separate the two areas and strictly control access points. There is a perception that truants and vandals will use the park area to avoid detection when entering and leaving the school grounds. Development of more open, stronger vistas into the park and Green Belt from the school is needed to encourage positive use and increase safety.

**Opportunities:**

School Partnership. Should these two entities share resources? The open lawn and gazebo can be used to stage school events outside and double as a gym playfield to increase School involvement. A summer program with the school would bring more positive activity to this park, as well.

Environmental Education. Due to its proximity to Mill Creek, flooding in the park is evident. This may be an excellent opportunity for an interpretative environmental lesson plan focusing on the science of the water cycle in nature and to encourage positive school activities in the Park.

Vehicle Access. Good parking and visibility help insure motorists proceed with caution as they enter the park area.

Spectator Sport. The Roller Hockey facility is very popular and a natural bowl shape above the rink could be developed for an amphitheater of spectator seating.

Traffic Calming Theme. The cobblestone crosswalks provide an effective traffic calming method which should become a recurring feature of the Green Belt trail crossings. This is another good area for stream buffer planting, an interpretative site for water related resources or for a meandering multi-purpose trail system throughout the stream corridor.

Green Belt/Mill Creek Corridor Trail. This park is now a community service range facility and will be the reasonable vehicle access point for a trail-connected Mill Creek Greenway Park . Parking can be shared for activities at the Everitt School, the hockey Rink and within the Greenway.

Walk Our Children to School Program. Develop similar program with Everitt Elementary School.

**Lions Park (1.4 Acres)**

**Features:**

Lion’s Park is a smaller park located in the triangle formed by Trenton Road, New Rodgers Road and Snowball Drive. The park contains playground equipment, a wooden lion monument, benches and a trash receptacle.

**Issues/Constraints:**

There is no parking adjacent to the park. Parking, coupled with a very busy intersection located adjacent to the park, makes accessibility to the park the primary issue. Specifically, pedestrian access issues need to be addressed. However, despite the discordant location, the tot lot is heavily used.

**Opportunities:** The grade change provides a sense of safety from the heavy traffic and busy intersection. There is enough open space to develop a picnic pavilion and parking on either end of the site. Path connections could be established to Frosty Hollow Park and Deep Dale East Park.

#### **Deep Dale East Park (0.1 Acres)**

**Features:** Deep Dale East Park is a small park located between Deep Dale Drive East and the Mill Creek. The park contains a dirt basketball court, passive open space and is within the Green Belt open space corridor

**Issues/Constraints:** Besides the basketball hoop, this site lacks any other equipment. The worn dirt surface suggests that this site needs more resources and neighborhood involvement. There are no paths and no signage currently in the park. This site is in a very secluded location in a residential neighborhood yet Trenton Road and New Rodgers Road (Lion Park) is a 3 minute walk.

**Opportunities:** Completing minimal improvements to the playing surface, the placement of benches and site furniture with a park trail head sign and information kiosk would give this neighborhood a connection to the overall Park system and the Mill Creek Greenway. Due to its immediate connection to Mill Creek, this site is a good location for stream buffer plantings and a potential interpretative site within the trail system of the stream corridor.

#### **Middletown Community Center (5.4 Acres)**

**Features:** Middletown Community Center is a public meeting building serving the immediate surrounding older neighborhoods of the Township. A rare indoor facility within the Middletown parks System, it must provide diverse subsets of services for various groups. The Center was originally an elementary school, then the Township Administration building. Currently, the Center houses offices and classes for the local Senior Citizens program and a youth summer daycare program. Inside, the small gym is the site for Bingo and Teen dances. Outside, there is a tot lot, large lawn area and parking area.

**Issues/Constraints:** The landscape on this site lacks a meaningful relationship to the Community Center. Open space features are not planned, they seem to be more of an afterthought. The tot lot has safety surfacing, but is not adequately curbed and is lacking seating for parents. The open space has a gentle slope. Currently, a facilities study for the Center is under consideration.

**Opportunities:** Pending the conclusions of the Community Center Study now underway, which includes alternate locations for a new building, several programmed functions could be added: volleyball, horse shoe pit or picnic tables. Due to its physical connection to the community services, this open space could provide facilities for programming in concert with internal activities; band stand for small concerts; gardens for floral display and vegetables, and as therapeutic activity for seniors: display and utilization of crafts and other ceremonial settings as appropriate. Integrate outdoor improvements with the approved recommendations of the Facility Study.

**Delaware Park (5.8 Acres)**

**Features:** Delaware Park was a neighborhood park, located between a residential neighborhood and commercial uses. The park is North of Delaware Avenue and south of Business Route 1. The park facilities: a trash receptacle, on-site parking, passive open space and adjacent to the Mill Creek.

**Issues/Constraints:** Overall, this park is unkempt and forgotten, awaiting the reconstruction as a drainage facility. There has not been any maintenance work or upkeep since the park flooded in 1996. Presently, the park is only open for passive recreation. 7 AM to 5 PM. The Township is proposing to utilize the entire park as a large stormwater management area. Loss of the past active recreation (ie one baseball field, two basketball courts, and three tennis courts) presents an obvious need for new fields and active park area.

**Opportunities:** The needed stormwater facility will cause a redesign of the Park to a more passive function. This park is a good location to utilize stream buffer plantings and an interpretative site for water related resources. The new park will only have peripheral walking trails homes along Duxbury Drive and to the east by homes along Hulmeville Road.

**Poplar Park (13.2 Acres)**

**Features:** Poplar Park is a community park located within a neighborhood. The park is bordered to the north by Poplar Street, to the south and west by homes along Duxbury Drive and to the east by homes along Hulmeville Road. The park contains:

- Two softball fields
- Two tennis courts

- Two basketball courts
- Playground equipment
- Facility lighting
- Security lighting
- A trash receptacle
- On-site parking.
- Picnic tables

**Issues/Constraints:** The entire park gently slopes from NW to SE to a large detention basin that covers the entire southern portion of the park and that is more than 15 feet deep.

**Opportunities:** The detention basin needs creative thinking and reinventing for any future use. A second soccer field installation should be pursued for development of this park as a long field complex.

#### **Harris Park (2.6 Acres)**

**Features:** Harris Park is a smaller park located between Harris Avenue and the Neshaminy Creek. The park contains a baseball field, basketball court, playground equipment, a bench and passive open space.

**Issues/Constraints:** The site borders a handful of residences along its northern edge. The park is sandwiched between Business Route 1 and the Neshaminy Creek. This site floods regularly from the Neshaminy Creek. The baseball field and basketball court are in poor condition and the playground equipment is unusable.

**Opportunities:** There are existing trail connections at the west and east edges and there are ATV and motorcycle tracks throughout the park. These two conditions suggest opportunities for a stream buffer planting and potential interpretative site or a meandering multipurpose trail system throughout the Neshaminy Creek corridor.

#### **Sunflower Park (0.4 Acres)**

**Features:** Sunflower Park is a small park located between Sunflower Avenue to the south and west, homes on Poplar Street to the



north and a home on Avenue “C” to the east. The park contains a swing-set and a trash receptacle.

**Issues/Constraints:** This site is a very small parcel essentially acting as an extension of the backyards for adjacent residences. Truly a neighborhood park, the surrounding residents take pride in the appearance of the park. The park has several mature trees and neighborhood residents use the swings and quiet picnic grove year-round. There is a day-care facility adjacent to the park that is a complementary use.

**Opportunities:** The property is a prime site for outreach to the neighborhood for improvement suggestions. The wooded area should be assessed by a certified tree expert and managed to carefully remove hazardous limbs and trees that are succumbing to disease and weathering damage.

#### **Detweiler Park and Open Space (2.4 acres)**

**Features:** Detweiler Park is perceived as a small lawn behind homes of Fox Lane. A small stone marker provides the dedication to a local resident of the neighborhood that contributed lawn area and larger sloping wood to the Township. The proximity to backyards of adjacent homes and lack of facilities make the park threatened by usurping neighbors.

**Issues/Constraints:** The site is located within a residential neighborhood. The lawn is maintained and although the site is on high ground, the soil is very wet and soft. It appears that work is in progress to create a garden or flower bed along the northeastern corner of the site. The property is a dedication in honor of a deceased long-time community resident. The park is threatened to become absorbed into adjacent backyards, over time removing a potential access point to open space to the rear of the tract.

**Opportunities:** The site needs a program and support from the larger neighborhood. This site could become an entryway to passive open space to the rear and future purchase of a large adjacent property for a viable green space.

#### **Veterans Park (7.0 Acres)**

**Features:** Veterans Park is a larger park that is located in a residential neighborhood. It is bordered by Brownsville Road to the north, homes on Colonial Drive to the west and homes to the south and east. The park contains one baseball/softball field, two basketball courts, three tennis courts, playground equipment, on-site parking, a trash receptacle and passive open space.

**Issues/Constraints:** Residential neighborhood seems disconnected from this site. The existing signage carries a disciplinary message. Brownsville Road is busy and site lines in and out of the parking area may be an issue during afternoon hours. The overall condition of the park is good.

**Opportunities:** More physical connections to the surrounding neighborhood may foster more civic pride. A connection should be made to the wooded site to the south.

#### **Periwinkle Park (3.4 Acres)**

**Features:** Periwinkle Park is entirely passive open space. It is bordered by Periwinkle Avenue to the east, Brownsville Road to the south, Lang Terrace Creek and Neshaminy Creek to the west and Mistletoe Drive to the north.

**Issues/Constraints:** The connection of Lang Terrace Creek and Neshaminy Creek in the vicinity of this park creates flooding problems in the park. Brownsville Road separates the park from a potential expansion site. There is a fence around a drainage outlet from Lang Terrace Creek.

**Opportunities:** Expansion opportunities are to the southeast, on the other side of Brownsville Road.

#### **Beechwood Park (15.9 Acres)**

**Features:** Beechwood Park is a large park located in a residential neighborhood. It is bordered by Maple Avenue to the north, Beechwood Avenue to the east, homes on Alscot Lane to the west and Clearview Avenue to the south. The park contains two baseball/softball fields, a trash receptacle and wooded passive open space.

**Issues/Constraints:** The site is approximately 60% wooded to the southern end of the site. The northwestern corner of the site drops in elevation by approximately 18 feet. The sight lines exiting the parking area are very limited to the west. The curve in the road along with the downward slope limits sightlines to approximately one-hundred feet. The sightline limits are a safety concern.

**Opportunities:** Walking paths could be created in the wooded area. Cut and fill in the non-wooded areas could generate more areas for playing fields. The current gravel parking area is on Beechwood Avenue and should be improved. This park could support a new soccer field.

#### **Middletown Country Club (100.7 Acres)**

**Features:** The Middletown Country Club is located off of Bellevue Avenue in a residential neighborhood. The Country Club is an 18 hole golf course with a clubhouse, indoor pool, banquet hall, concession stand, drinking water, a telephone, equipment shed, trash receptacle, on-site parking lot, passive open space, facility lighting and security lighting.

**Issues/Constraints:** The Country Club provides discounts for Middletown residents. The Middletown Summer Camp Program participants are offered discounted pool privileges. And Teen Task Force events are conducted in banquet space available here

**Opportunities:** The adjacent open land to the Southeast may be available for purchase. There is an opportunity for increased cooperation for programming pool, golf course, and meeting space.

### **Tareyton Estates Park**

**Features:** Tareyton Estates Park is a modern village design, with the common green surrounded by multi-family residential housing neighborhood. The green square has only a small tot lot and trash receptacle.

**Issues/Constraints:** No immediate parking is provided, yet the park is accessible from all perimeter streets. This site is the closest to the Municipal Building and centrally located in the Township, however issues of “neighborhood and ownership” hamper increased utilization of the site for youth sporting events.

**Opportunities:** This park has an expansive open lawn, with a gentle slope and very few trees, making it perfect for special events. Though adequate areas for sports fields, courts and gardens exist, the immediate residents concerns must be respected. The complex has a fenced-in outdoor pool area. Crosswalks and traffic calming, such as those at Forsythia Crossing Park, would enhance access to this site. The outdoor pool has been open to Middletown residents subscription recently and perhaps special swim days could be provided for the summer camp here.

### **Chicken Foot– Bucks County (45 Acres)**

**Features:** Chicken Foot Park is an open space park along Trenton Road. **Exhibit 4.4, Bucks County Parks** contains a listing of facilities

**Issues/Constraints:** This site has very little parking and very little programmed open space. At the toe of the slope, there is an unsightly fill pile. Topographic relief is considerable, sports field required considerable cut/fill to construct. The proximity to Twin Oaks Park could allow for complementary uses between the two sites. The north and east portions of this site are heavily wooded and contoured.

**Opportunities:** Explore partnerships and trail connections to Twin Oaks Park. Walking trails and smaller programmed elements, including parking, could be located within the wooded area

#### **Queen Anne Park– Bucks County (19.5 Acres)**

**Features:** Queen Anne Park is a regional “link” park of the Bucks County Parks Department connecting other regional facilities outside of the Township along the Mill Creek. **Exhibit 4.4, Bucks County Parks** contains a listing of facilities. The baseball field is primarily used by a men’s adult league

**Issues/Constraints:** This site is county-owned and its service area is primarily out of Middletown Township. Queen Anne Creek connects this park with Cobalt Ridge and Quincy Hollow. The wooded portion to the east is mostly sloped toward Queen Anne Creek.

**Opportunities:** Cut and fill could be used to create more fields with attention to floodplain issues. This is a good area for stream buffer planting with a potential interpretative site for water related resources.

Green Belt/Mill Creek Corridor Trail Terminus This is a good location for a trail system that can connect other facilities and locally sites.

#### **Frosty Hollow Park– Bucks County (95 Acres)**

**Features:** Frosty Hollow Park is a regional streamside park along the Mill Creek. **Exhibit 4.4, Bucks County Parks** contains a listing of facilities

**Issues/Constraints:** This site is primarily densely covered woodlands. The one exception is the very isolated Frosty Hollow Tennis Center. There is evidence of ATV’s and motorcycles around the perimeter. The park appears to be dominantly open space preservation.

**Opportunities:** Green Belt/Mill Creek Corridor Trail Terminus. This park is adjacent to Upper Orchard park for an expansion of a passive trail system. These two sites could serve to create a

larger area for stream buffer planting, along Mill Creek, with potential interpretative sites for water related resources.

The Tennis Center makes a good destination for a regional and local bicycle trail. The utility corridor could serve as trailhead parking on New Rodgers Road. The Tennis Center entrance could be shared for access to the rest of the site. There appears to be misuse of this open space and a few dedicated access points may help reduce trespassing and erosion issues.

#### **Playwicki Park – Bucks County (36.2 Acres)**

**Features:** Playwicki Park is a regional streamside park along the banks of the Lower Neshaminy Creek. **Exhibit 4.4, Bucks County Parks** contains a listing of facilities

**Issues/Constraints:** The site is rich with cultural and historic identity. Bridges provide historic architectural elements to the park, while the location and access give the park an air of privacy and removal from the suburban character of the community. The location along the Neshaminy Creek creates flooding issues in the park. There is no access to the island portion of the park. The restrictive signage is overbearing and the wooden bollards that are within the park are not part of the palette of materials that define the park. ATV activity on the bridges, within the park, is a concern.

**Opportunities:** This is the most picturesque of all the parks in the Township. The entrance to the park and the entrance to the Township could serve as an impressive gateway for both. Rails to Trails potential for a path extending to the east is strong, and such a trail could connect other Township facilities. The Township should co-sponsor a picturesque trailhead at this site with Bucks County for the intersection of an east west Bucks- Middletown Trail and The Lower Neshaminy Greenways/Waters Trail.

#### **Core Creek Park – Bucks County (1185 Acres)**

**Features:** Core Creek is a large regional park within the Bucks County Parks Department. Among its numerous facilities, those most utilized by Middletown are the playing fields and reserved areas for a youth summer camp programmed and operated by the Recreation Department. **Exhibit 4.4, Bucks County Parks** is a listing of facilities.

**Issues/Constraints:** This is a regional entity and accepts reservations for use from much of the County. This site dominates the north central portion of the Township. Diverse facilities include playgrounds, trails, playing fields, access to Lake

Luxemburg and restrooms. Most programmed uses along western edges are in expansive open meadows. Though Lake Luxemburg provides a water recreation feature, direct access to the water is limited. The tennis courts are in poor condition and present a poor first impression of the park. Park configurations isolate the northwestern portion of the Township.

**Opportunities:**

Land Exchange & Sports Complex. The Township's pending acquisition of Stone Farm and small Township properties present within the park offer potential for a land exchange program with the Bucks Parks Department in Core Creek Park. There are numerous opportunities for continuing and expanding cooperative outdoor education programming. A co-sponsored plan for a sports complex that incorporates existing fields, Maple Point Middle School facilities and County open areas adjacent to the school has excellent potential.

Bucks-Middletown Trail. Coordinating a east west trail that leads to Tyler County Park through Township open space parcels would benefit both the County and Township. Regional access could be achieved with less land acquisition problems for the County and more access to interior areas of Core Creek Park will be afforded to local residents.

## 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 active 90' fields on Township property, at Middletown Community Center Park and Twin Oaks Park, respectively. There are two 60' fields, Middletown Community Park and three at Twin Oaks Park. There is one T-ball field at Twin Oaks Park. In addition there are four 60' fields located in county parks and a total of twenty-three fields on school properties in the Township- one at Pearl S. Buck Elementary, two at Samuel Everitt Elementary, two at Oliver Heckman School, two at Hebert Hoover Elementary, three at Maple Point High School, four at Walter s. Miller School, three at Neshaminy High School, three at Neshaminy Junior High School, two at Carl Sandburg Junior High School and one at Albert Schweitzer Elementary School.

### Softball Fields

There are nine softball fields on Township property. Three fields are located at Twin Oaks Park, two are located at Middletown Community Park, two at Poplar Park, one at Beechwood Park, and one at Veterans Park. The school district maintains its 60' baseball fields as dual use for both softball and baseball, so the twenty-three fields listed above on school district property also serve as softball fields. In addition there are four softball fields located on county property within the Township. One is located at Chicken Foot Park and the rest can be found at Core Creek Park.

### Soccer Fields

There are six soccer fields in the Township; three are located at Middletown Community Park, two are located at Twin Oaks Park, and one is located at Poplar Park. Because of their heavy utilization, some appear to be heavily compacted, and the turf is bare. There are also small practice areas located at both Middletown Community and Poplar Parks. Soccer goals should not be permanent, to allow moving the fields for maintenance and wear purposes. Consideration should be given to increasing the amount of practice area so that the regulation fields are limited to competitive play. Potential opportunities exist to add soccer fields at Poplar Park, Veterans Park, and Beechwood Park.

There are twenty-five soccer fields on school grounds, however many of these serve as dual use fields sharing time with football. There is one at Pearl S. Buck Elementary, one at Samuel Everitt Elementary, six at Hebert Hoover Elementary, seven at Maple Point High School, two at Walter s. Miller School, five at Neshaminy High School, one at Neshaminy Junior High School, and two at Carl Sandburg Junior High School. Four soccer fields, also dual use, are located on County property within the Township. One is located at Chicken Foot Park and three more are located at Core Creek Park.

### Football Fields

The Township has no sanctioned football fields. There are twenty-five dual use football and soccer fields on school grounds and for more dual use fields located on County property. There is one at Pearl S. Buck Elementary, one at Samuel Everitt Elementary, six at Hebert Hoover Elementary, seven at Maple Point High School, two at Walter S. Miller School, five at Neshaminy High School, one at Neshaminy Junior High School, and two at Carl Sandburg Junior High School. Of the four dual use fields in county property, one is located at Chicken Foot Park and three more are located at Core Creek Park.

### Basketball Courts

There are seven full basketball courts on Township property. There is one court at both Middletown Community and Quincy Hollow Parks. Poplar Park and Veteran's park have two courts each and Deep Dale East Park has one dirt-surfaced court. Half

courts are located at several mini-parks, two are at Upper Orchard Park, one is at Cobalt Ridge Park and one is at Harris Park.

Eight full size basketball courts are located on school property, within the Township. Pearl S. Buck Elementary has one the only lighted court. Neshaminy High School has three courts, Samuel Everitt Elementary School has two and Eisenhower, Walter S. Miller and Albert Schweitzer all have one.

#### Tennis Courts

There are five tennis courts within the Township. Three courts are located at Veteran's Park and two are located at Poplar Park. There are six courts located at both the Maple Point Middle School and Neshaminy High Schools. 18 courts are located on County property within the Township. Ten are sited at Frosty Hollow Park and the other eight are at Core Creek Park.

#### Roller Hockey Courts

Forsythia Crossing Park has the only roller hockey court in the Township.

#### Swimming Pools

The Township owns an outdoor swimming pool at the Middletown Country Club. Neshaminy School District has two indoor pool facilities within the Township, one at the Carl Sandburg Middle School and one at Neshaminy Middle School.

#### Playgrounds

The Township has been installing new play equipment throughout its parks. 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. Playground equipment is located at Middletown Community Center, Twin Oaks, Upper Orchard, Lion's, Poplar, Forsythia, Harris, Veteran's, and Tareytown Estates Parks. There are playgrounds located at all of the elementary schools within the Township. Core Creek and Playwicki County parks also maintain playgrounds for public use.

### **Indoor Recreation**

Middletown Township has the Middletown Community Center, which has a small gym and several former classroom spaces that are utilized for various indoor activities and provides Senior Citizen services. Surveys, Interviews and Visioning sessions revealed a need for indoor gym space. Most of the active indoor uses are currently accommodated in some fashion by Neshaminy School District gym space

The growth of year round sports activities, plus the need for schools to fulfill their own demands, has placed a premium on indoor recreational facilities. There is a clear need to enhance coordination and scheduling efforts, to insure that these valuable community resources are optimally utilized.



The potential development of a new park in the northern area of the Township could include indoor facilities at the site. Other possibilities for new indoor recreation facilities may arise with a potential expansion of the existing Middletown Community Center, or in a similar future expansion of a new indoor facility presently under consideration by the Board of Supervisors in a separate study. The opportunity for the Township to meet some of the increased demands for both structured gym activities and “free time” gym use and to expand its program activities, which are currently severely limited by available indoor space, should be included in any criteria for indoor service provisions and facilities expansions, particularly if the recreation resource and a police facility could be combined in the interest of a community outreach and efficient response to security concerns regarding evening use of facilities.

### **Golf Course**

The Middletown Country Club and Golf Course is a Township-owned facility. It includes an 18 hole course, a driving range, a putting green, and clubhouse facility with banquet facilities and a Olympic-sized indoor pool. Presently, it is operated by an out-sourced recreation management company and not under the jurisdiction of the Township Parks and Recreation Board or Recreation Department.

### **Trails**

The Township has excellent opportunities for recreation, exercise, hiking and bicycle trails development within and connecting Township parklands and open space. The Green Belt open space area existing within the southeast portions of the Township are prime linear greenways that would benefit from unifying multi-use trails expressed in this document as the proposed Queen Anne Creek Trail and Mills Creek Trail. These trails can connect the mini-parks within these existing township lands and provide connect new park features such as streambank landscape enhancements, tot lots, fitness stations, small seasonal ice skating ponds and fenced dog parks within appropriate segments of the greenway.

In conformance with the Bucks County bikeways plans, the two county bike trails to be located in Middletown Township should be integrated into a Middletown local bicycle and pedestrian trails system to provide local access to recreational and natural resources facilities by foot or bicycle as well. An east/west Bucks-Middletown Trail could be developed that winds through the northern Township open space properties and Bucks County Core Creek Park to access Bucks Playwicki Park at the west side of the County and eventually connect to a large farmland preservation area and Tyler State park to the east of the Township. Intersecting this trail at Playwicki a Bucks County trail along the lower Neshaminy Creek can be accelerated in its development with the combined use of Township parks and open space dedications, County lands and an easement across the Neshaminy School District Idlewood Environmental Station. The Township should coordinate with adjacent municipalities, Bucks County and the Neshaminy Creek Watershed Association to create a larger trail network along the Lower Neshaminy Creek.

Trails should be provided in every park for recreation purposes. These 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, viewing areas should be developed to provide interesting points along the journey to see activities, vistas and settings that are expressive of the unique qualities of each park.

### **Teen Areas**

Through the planning process, facilities for teens have been highlighted as an important need in the municipality. Teens enjoy numerous sports activities, notably basketball, volleyball, street hockey, skateboarding and in-line skating. Additionally, a major component of many teens' recreational behavior is "hanging-out" with friends in areas distanced from adult supervision. Through the Middletown Teen Task Force, teens in Middletown Township have exhibited a great desire to improve and shape their recreational opportunities within the Township. This involvement should be considered seriously and further promoted. In fact, if any new teen facilities are to be truly accepted, they will have to be carefully crafted to meet the current needs of teens. The challenge that exists in serving this age group is a result of the rapidly changing teen "culture" and by the fact that the actual target group changes every four to five years. Hence, something that may be popular one year may be viewed as not relevant a few years later.

### **Support Facilities**

Key components that provide a quality experience for park visitors include appearance, scenic beauty, and creature comforts. Park benches, shaded areas, drinking fountains, restrooms, and landscaping contribute to the desirability of public recreation areas. Aesthetic design is important in parks. Many of the parks in the Township, especially the athletic complexes, have a very utilitarian look to them. They lack the visual qualities that create real parks.

System-wide elements such as a comprehensive system of signs designed by a graphic sign designer would aid in upgrading the overall appearance of all of the parks. Just as any business develops an identification system for people to recognize its product, the Township needs an identification system to denote the public realm. Signs should provide a hierarchy of information, from identification, to directions and rules of conduct. The same effect of creating positive and cohesive imaging should be carried through all of the various site elements and program features, from lighting, benches, buildings, etc. to T-shirts, caps and bumper stickers for summer camp, programs, fundraisers, tournaments and event memorabilia.

## **Summary**

Middletown Township is fortunate that it has a fairly broad range of types of parkland, serving both passive and active needs. In addition it has within its boundaries a significant number of both county parks and public schools which

provide added recreational benefits to the community. The challenge that will exist for the Township is to promote a better balance between passive and active recreation and to upgrade the quality and aesthetics of the Township's parks "system-wide." In addition, based on the availability and distribution of existing park and recreational resources within the Township, the development of a future Neshaminy Creek Corridor Greenways and Waters Trail will have an enormous impact on the utilization of open space and parkland in the Township. The potential addition of a northwest community park site and achievement of a east-west Bucks County-Middletown Township Trail will solidify county commitments to a regional trail crossroads that will provide more access to the Core Creek Park for local residents while connecting the Township's residential open space parcels in the newer subdivisions and parklands of northern Middletown Township.

The existing active facilities are focused on traditional organized sports, such as baseball, softball and soccer. Demographics show dramatic increases in soccer, as well as new types of activities such as rollerblading, skate boarding, and extreme-type sports like rock climbing, etc. In addition there are limited opportunities for teens that do not want to participate in organized sports (facilities such as weight-rooms, social areas, etc. should be considered).

As the popularity of organized sports increases, the demand for sports fields also increases. The length of playing seasons has been extended and the number of events scheduled for the same fields has also grown. This increased wear, added to the fact that many of the fields were not constructed with all of the necessary elements, such as under-drainage, irrigation, proper soil mixes and amendments, etc., compounds the problem. Programmatic approaches could be employed to partially address this issue, such as reducing the length of playing seasons for sports groups composed of young age groups. Township fields are being maintained to a reasonable level of service, but they are currently being heavily used and show signs of major wear. Many of the fields need upgrading, and the Township should consider implementing a turf management program for all of the Township athletic fields. Professional staff from the Township golf course can provide the Township with a wealth of knowledge to insure a high level of quality for turf management. The addition of new fields at specific parks and with park expansions will aid in reducing this problem, but the reconstruction of existing fields should be included in a Capital Improvement Program. A program for field rehabilitation and turf management should be included as part of an overall Parks and Recreation Capital Improvement Program for all of the Township's parklands facilities.

The creation of "Friends of" park associations can be instrumental in directing the vision for parks, as well as assisting and subsidizing the increased demand for care and maintenance. A Park Design Manual for the overall system should be developed to ensure quality standards and a unified aesthetic design. In addition, the manual would promote efficiency regarding park maintenance and equipment through standardizations promoting quality and durability. It would eliminate the need to re-verify replacement parts and components during each repair. Careful thought should be employed in developing the manual to ensure that all specified components are of high quality, compatible with other park elements and are cost effective. The development of such a manual could be tackled as part of the planning and design of a park in the northwest portion of the Township.

The existing gym space owned by the Township is small and very limited. The existing Middletown Community Center facility is outdated and requires a significant number of capital improvements. A more centralized method of utilizing school space and scheduling should be developed as an interim step while plans for providing indoor space for community services are being examined in an independent Middletown Board of Supervisors study.

The Township lacks trails, bicycle facilities, and other supportive pedestrian facilities. Park and recreation facilities should be considered an integral part of neighborhoods. One way to achieve this integration is through pedestrian accessibility. Users within an approximately one-quarter to half-mile radius of each park should be able to safely gain access. An important consideration is the fact that parks should serve all age groups, including children and the elderly. These two groups often do not have the benefit of automobile mobility. In addition, linear parks, greenways, and trails are becoming very popular active and passive facilities. Opportunities to create connections between parks and schools, using trails, bicycle lanes, and pedestrian paths should be explored. Joint development of the County trails within Township preferred alignments for eventual long-term maintenance by the County (such as the Neshaminy Greenways/Waters Trail and Bucks-Middletown Trail concepts) can expedite these improvements for both parties.

The creation of a Parks and Recreation Capital Improvement Program (PRCIP), would ensure that the Township is well situated to meet the demands of maintaining and improving its existing parks and managing the additional challenges of new facilities and trails management. Although the Department currently has a program for improving the parks, the proposed Parks and Recreation Capital Improvement Program relies heavily on an annual re-evaluation of facilities to ensure the quality of all of the parks and facilities is maintained. Equally important, it would insure that the existing parks are not lost in the overwhelming task of planning, constructing and maintaining any future additions to the park system. Not everything can be done at once, and an established PRCIP process allows for phasing and targeting potential sources for funding, such as grant programs and private donors. By establishing such a program, the Township can clearly show its long-term commitment to parkland resources with Middletown Township and eliminate the potential for other Township building plans to overshadow the vital importance of adequately preserving open space and maintaining quality in a gradually maturing parks and recreation facilities system within the Township.



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# Recreation Opportunities

The Middletown Township Parks and Recreation Department's strength is community recreation programs. The department offers year round recreation programs to citizens of all ages and interests. Creativity and innovation are the hallmark of programming in this township. Examples of this are numerous ranging from the Barn School and the Teen Task Force to moving ahead with an indoor recreation center for senior citizens. Middletown Township plans and delivers programs successfully that are not even attempted in other communities.

The Park and Recreation Board was the catalyst for the current range of services available in Middletown. The Board laid the foundation for the establishment and growth of municipal park and recreation programs. The Board provided the ideas, energy, expertise, skill and time required to launch public recreation in Middletown. The Board continues to serve in an advisory capacity for the Department and contributes not only program ideas but also volunteer time and expertise in community recreation.

## Recreation Trends

As part of the assessment of Middletown's programs and services, trends elsewhere were considered. Such trends will enable Middletown Township to plan for interests that have not yet emerged here as well as ideas for opportunities and methods of delivering services the community might desire.

From businesses booming in commercial recreation to the cutting edge recreation operations in the public sector, understanding the public's underlying motivation for recreation will keep businesses profitable and the municipalities responsive to community needs. The following point illustrates how important outdoor recreation is in America: the American Recreation Coalition reports that sales of outdoor recreation apparel and gear have reached \$80 billion annually.

Fun, fitness, and family are the three F's of recreation. This is evident in recreation trends and spending patterns. The concept applies in particular to Middletown Township, a family-oriented community. Important recreation trends, *based upon the most current information available*, include the following:

- Nearly half of all Americans say they spend time together outdoors at least once a month. Recreation is important to families with young children.
- Customers are demanding quality service: They want to be "hassle-free."

- People want information and education about recreation opportunities.
- In 1994, seven out of ten Americans participated in outdoor recreation at least once annually. By 2000, participation had increased to eight out of ten.
- Today, two thirds of all Americans recreated outdoors monthly while in 1994 only half did.
- In 1971, fewer than one out of 27 girls participated in high school sports. By 2004 that figure increased to more than one out of three.
- Sports are played year round instead of only in a single season such as spring baseball and fall soccer.
- Today's seniors with extensive free time, unprecedented good health and solid retirement plans, are indulging in active lifestyles that are well beyond rocking chairs, front porches, and bingo. There is a mismatch between what retirees are looking for and what society provides.
- Generation X'ers have launched the development of new activities such as in-line skating and snowboarding.

## Challenges of the Times

Despite these changes demonstrating increasing participation in recreation, new sports and activities, and a broadening of the participation base from younger males to both males and females of all ages, there is a conundrum regarding recreation. The conundrum is that obesity and the lack of physical activity in the United States is at an all-time high.<sup>1</sup> The United States Surgeon General issued a report in 1996 that physical inactivity among Americans is the number one public health issue.<sup>2</sup> Obesity costs the United States \$238 billion annually in expenses associated with diseases such as diabetes stroke and heart disease not including the cost of treating the obesity itself.<sup>3</sup>

The Center for Disease Control has stated that public park and recreation departments have a primary role in addressing this issue. They can provide attractive and safe places for people to walk, hike, bike, and enjoy other active pursuits.

Another challenge facing both private enterprise and all arenas of public recreation is that the rapid demand for facilities is outpacing availability and the resources to develop and manage new ones. Combined with rapid development in the metropolitan areas of Pennsylvania, the available open space is dwindling and land costs are escalating. There is an ever-present danger that recreation opportunities for the public in the future may succumb to a large demand and/or tight budget constraints.

It will become increasingly important to find creative ways of bringing recreation opportunities and facilitating healthy active lifestyles of the citizens in the future.

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Center for Disease Control. (1999). CDC's Guidelines for School and Community Programs Promoting Lifelong Physical Activity. <[Http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/phactag.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/phactag.htm)>.

<sup>2</sup> Surgeon General. (1996). Physical Activity and Health. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Public Health Service, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. <[Http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/sgr/npai.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/sgr/npai.htm)>.

<sup>3</sup> Fox, Maggie. (1999). Obesity costs U.S. \$238 Billion A Year – Survey. Reuters: Science Headlines. <[Http://dailynews.yahoo.com/h/nm/19990916/sc/hralth\\_obesity\\_2.html](http://dailynews.yahoo.com/h/nm/19990916/sc/hralth_obesity_2.html)>.

## **Local Recreation Trends and Issues**

Based upon key person interviews, work sessions with township officials, the community survey, and visits to the parks, the following trends are apparent in Middletown Township:

- Indoor recreation space is needed for year round recreation, especially for senior adults.
- Soccer and baseball report the need for more fields to accommodate their participation rates and expanded seasons. Basketball leagues need more gym time.
- Lacrosse is moving into the area. The challenge is that lacrosse and soccer use the same fields. In the past soccer played only in the fall in order to allow the fields much needed rest. Now lacrosse is using the fields in the spring and there is virtually no time to allow the fields to regenerate.
- The Township serves numerous leagues providing the same sport causing high demand for the same facilities. Most often a municipality has only one organization per sport.
- While Middletown residents are well served by traditional sports, and even emerging sports such as roller hockey, they are underserved in terms of programs that are natural resource based. Survey results show that the citizens are very interested in this type of program.
- Interest in self-directed types of facilities such as trails, in-line skating, scenic areas, and access to the creeks and nature is emerging.
- People want recreation opportunities year round, including indoor recreation.
- Programs related to national health care issues such as the lack of physical activity among adults, obesity, and heart disease, have some solutions rooted in public parks and recreation. People in Middletown want safe places to bike, walk and do water based recreation.
- Middletown Township programming has been on the forefront over the past decade regarding finding ways to make programs work ranging from establishing a community foundation to looking ahead to developing “Pop Styer’s Orchard” as an interpretive center to tell the story of farming.

## **Survey Findings Related to Programs and Services**

The Township conducted a community wide random survey of distributed to 1500 households in the Township. The findings related to recreation opportunities include the following:



## Community Survey Findings

### ■ Activities with the highest response on participation

- 44% Exercise and Fitness
- 38% Special Events
- 25% Non-league sports
- About 12% participated in the township's recreation programs, which is higher than most townships that have about a seven to ten percent participation rate according to community surveys.

### ■ Activities with the highest response from those who would like to participate

- 29% Special Events
- 25% Performing Arts
- 24% Studio Arts

### ■ Level of service to client groups

While most respondents were not sure enough to rate the level of service to clients groups, the groups that respondents identified as the least served included:

- 23% - adults
- 22% - families
- 19% - retired adults and high school students

Service for children and youth appeared to be the most familiar area to survey respondents. Those who knew enough to rate service to children and youth rated the level at about right.

### ■ Departmental Priorities

- Expansion of programs and services ranked second only to natural resource conservation by respondents. They were asked to choose where the focus of parks and recreation should be in the future. Choices included: expansion of recreation programs and services, upgrading existing facilities, developing new parks, constructing trails, building and indoor recreation center, protecting natural resources, and providing access to creeks for recreation.

- **Nature Based Recreation**

- In terms of facility improvements that related to recreation opportunities, respondents were most interested in nature-based facilities including walking and bike paths, natural areas and pavilions.
- An amphitheater was also high on the list of the respondents for facility development, which corresponds to their desire for more arts in the community.

## **Community Recreation Services in Middletown**

In Bucks County, Middletown Township is one of the top providers of public recreation opportunities. In addition to providing programs directly to the public, the Department also facilitates the provision of recreation programs by other groups. By supporting other groups such as the organized sports associations, the Township greatly expands its capacity to offer public recreation that it could not provide independently.

### **Successful Programs and Innovation**

Middletown Township offers programs in a variety of recreation categories. About 6,000 children, youth and teen participate in Middletown's programs annually. In addition to the traditional programs, another 2,000 people participated in the special event, the Battle of the Bands. The Department offers about 200 scheduled programs and events annually. These range from one-time major community events such as the Holiday Open House, to programs held on a daily basis seasonally such as the summer camps to single session programs such as day trips. The Department also facilitates activities that people can undertake at their own pace such as Discount Ticket Sales to places including amusement parks, cultural and historical destinations.

In addition to directly providing programs and services, the Township works closely with community sports groups to provide facilities for the leagues and with individuals on projects such as the mural painting in the Township Building. The Township also holds programs of a special nature such as boating in Core Creek County Park, which is located in the Township.

### **Parks and Recreation Department Program Inventory**

The Township schedules two programming seasons: Spring & Summer and Winter & Fall. The Township classifies the programs according to client group and recreational category. The following section presents the 2004 programs.

### **Parks and Recreation Department Program Inventory**

**Table 5-1** presents key for the program table. **Table 5-2** presents the program inventory for the Middletown Township Department of Parks and Recreation. The inventory is presented in tabular form organized around the elements of age group, activity classification, activity format, gender, season, and fee.

**Age Group** - Target age group for the program.

**Classification** - The classification system presents a grouping of activities according to the functional areas of recreation. Because the number of leisure time activities is so vast, classifying activities by functional area provides a simple method of coding activity into a system that is easily understood. It serves as a guide in measuring the balance and variety within the total services of the agency.

**Format** - Format expresses the idea of what form the leisure experience takes. Program formats are tools for offering a variety of experiences within activities. Formats include: self-improvement, competition, social, participant-spectator, and self-directed. For example, “soccer” could include league play, a trip to a soccer game, volunteerism through coaching.

**Gender** - It is important to serve both males and females.

**Season** - Middletown Township uses a two “season” programming schedule: Spring & Summer, and Fall & Winter.

**Fee** - The amount charged for participation in the program. The first figure shows the resident charge and the second the non-resident charge.

**Inventory Key**

The Program Inventory offers a significant database for program planning. With 28 factors and 200 programs, the data need to be focused on summary types of information. For this reason, the data is organized in **Tables 5-1 and 5-2**. While program data can be sorted in a variety of ways, the tables are consolidated according to the above noted program elements. **Table 5-1** shows the key to the programs in **Table 5-2**.

<b>Table 5-1 Middletown Township Recreation Program Inventory Key</b>								
Age Group		Gender		Format		Class		Fee
P	Pre-schoolers	M	Males	S	Social	A	Arts	\$
Y	Youth	F	Female	Si	Self-Improvement	C	Crafts	NR: Non-
T	Teens	B	Both	C	Competitive	Da	Dance	Resident
A	Adults			PS	Participant-Spectator	Dr	Drama	
F	Families			SD	Self-Directed	F	Fitness	
						Mt	Mental	
						Mu	Music	
						So	Social	
						Sp	Sports	
						Vo	Volunteer	

**Table 5-2  
Middletown Township  
Annual Program Inventory 2004**

Program	Gender	Age	Format	Class	Fee
<b>Spring and Summer</b>					
<b>Adult Skills and Knowledge</b>					
FauxEver Beautiful	B	A	Si	C	\$35/45 NR
Baltimore Trip	B	A	S	So	83/93 NR
West Point Trip	B	A	S	So	65/75 NR
NYC Trip	B	A	S	So	64/74 NR
Men's Outdoor Basketball					30/35 NR
Step Aerobics	B	A	Si	F	30/33 NR
Aerobic Kickboxing	B	A	Si	F	54/59 NR
Basic Kayaking	B	A	Si	F	30
Beginning Yoga	B	A	Si	F	10/12 NR
Jazzercise	B	A	Si	F	40/45NR
<b>Music Programs</b>					
Recording & Technology/Songwriting	B	A, T	Si	Mu	100/115 NR
Instrumental Improvisation	B	A, T	Si	Mu	90/100 NR
Music Theory	B	A, T	Si	Mu	90/100 NR
<b>Sports Programs</b>					
Summer Co-ed Basketball	B	Y, T	S, C	Sp	62/67 NR
Skateboard Camp	B	Y, T	Si	Sp	30/lesson
Youth Karate	B	Y	Si	F	45/month
United Soccer Academy Squirts	B	P	Si	Sp	85
Junior Fishing Camp	B	Y	Si	Sp, E	25
US Multi-Sports Camp	B	Y, T	Si	Sp	142/169
United Soccer Academy Camp	B	P, Y	Si	Sp	149
Junior Tennis Camp	B	Y, T	Si	Sp	78
Basketball Camp	B	Y	Si	Sp	104/114 R
Mini Hawks	B	P, Y	Si	Sp	98/108 NR
Multi-Sports Camp	B	Y	Si	Sp	104/114 NR
Lacrosse Camp	B	Y	Si	Sp	104/114 NR
USA Rock & Rally	B	Y	Si, S	Sp, So	Free
USA Tennis Lessons	B	Y, A	Si	Sp	35/40 NR
Beginner – 4 sections					
Intermediate- 4 sections					
<b>Specialty Camps</b>					
Mad Science Space Camp	B	Y	Si	Mt	110/125 NR
Mad Machines	B	Y	Si	Mt	110/125 NR
Creative Theater/Encore	B	Y, T	Si	Dr	85/95 NR
Creative Theater/ 5&6 Yrs.	B	Y	Si	Dr	145/155 NR
Summer Writers & Readers	B	Y	Si	Mt	45/50
Kindermusik: Around World	B	P, Y	Si	Mu	40
Kindermusik: On the Road	B	P, Y	Si	Mu	40
Teen Summer Trip Camp	B	T	S	So	395/405 NR

**Table 5-2 (continued)**  
**Middletown Township**  
**Annual Program Inventory 2004**

Program	Gender	Age	Format	Class	Fee
<b>Spring and Summer</b>					
<b>Nature Camps</b>					
Wandering in the Wild	B	Y	Si, S	E	60/67 NR
Junior Naturalist	B	Y	Si, S	E	60/67 NR
What's Bugging You?	B	Y	Si, S	E	60/67 NR
Drawing from Nature	B	Y	Si, S	E	60/65 NR
<b>Summer Recreation</b>					
Pre-school – half day	B	P	Si, S	So	115/125 NR
Children – half day	B	Y	Si, S	So	92/102 NR
Field Trips	B	Y	S	So	4-19
Children –full day	B	Y	S	So	395/405
<b>Fall and Winter</b>					
<b>Programs for Adults and Teens</b>					
Beginning Yoga	B	A, T	Si	F	35/43 NR Month
Aerobic Kickboxing	B	A, T	Si	F	48/53 NR
Basic Massage	B	A	Si	F	20/25 NR
Country Line Dancing	B	A, T	Si	Dc	55/60 NR
Fall Flower Arranging	B	A	Si	A	26/30 NR
Thanksgiving Centerpiece	B	A	Si	A	28/33 NR
Williamsburg Arch	B	A	Si	A	40/45 NR
Garage Band Workshop	B	A, T	Si	Mu	100/110 NR
Fridays at the Barn	B	T	S	So	5/8 NR
Utility Hall	B	T	S, C	Mu, So	NA
Paintball	B	T	S, C	So, SD	65/70 NR
Hayride & Bonfire	B	T	S	So	3 / 4 NR
Ski/Board Trip	B	T	S	So, F, Sp	Varies
<b>Special Programs for All Ages</b>					
Youth & Adult Tennis	B	T, A	Si	Sp	50/55 NR
NYC Trip	B	All	S	SD	64/74 NR
NYC Christmas Trip	B	All	S	SD	144/154
Horse Drawn Wagons	B	All	S	So	15
Horse Drawn Toboggan	B	All	S	So	15
<b>Just For Kids</b>					
Youth Karate	B	P, Y	Si	F	45/55 NR
Kindermusik: Village	B	P w/ A	Si	Mu	107/117 NR
Kindermusik: Our Time	B	P	Si	Mu	190/200 NR
Kindermusik: Imagine That	B	P	Si	Mu	190/200 NR
The Art Room	B	Y	Si	A	80/90 NR
Kiddie Kapers	B	P	SD	A	25/28 NR
Pint Sized Projects	B	P	Si	A	25/28 NR
Winter Wonders	B	P	Si	Mt	25/28 NR
Pumpkin Day for Kids	B	Y	Si	C	5/6 NR
Halloween Special	B	P, Y	Si	C, So	10/11 NR
Science of Magic	B	Y	S	Mt	15/15 NR
Digging Dinosaurs	B	Y	Si	Mt, C	15/15 NR
Flight and Stunt Planes	B	Y	Si	Mt	15/17 NR
Holiday Special	B	Y	SD	So, A	10/11 NR
Babes in Toyland	B	Y	Si	Dr	85/95 NR

**Table 5-2 (continued)  
Middletown Township  
Annual Program Inventory 2004**

Program	Gender	Age	Format	Class	Fee
<b>Fall and Winter</b>					
<b>Just For Kids</b>					
Creative Theater	B	Y	Si, S	Dr	85/95 NR
Earth's Wonders	B	Y	Si	Mt	37/42 NR
Crazy Chemistry	B	Y	Si	Mt	37/42 NR
United Soccer Squirts	B	P	Si	Sp	89

## Inventory Highlights

There are a number of key points to note about the Middletown Program Inventory. These include number of participants, classification, and service to clients.

- **Classification** - The program classification is broad based including sports and fitness, culture, performing arts, studio arts, special events, trips, nature and the environment.
- **Service to Clients** - The programs are targeted to both males and females.
- **Variety** – Programs show a variety of program categories, program formats, seasons of the year, indoors and outdoors, partnerships with other providers. Middletown’s programming is superior to traditional municipal recreation programs that focus on elementary school children in the summer and sports.
- **Special Initiatives** – In addition to the regularly scheduled types of programs, the Department offers programs such as Middletown Arts Weekend, Family Movie nights, cooperative programs with other townships such as the Battle of the Bands with Bensalem, Salute to the Troops, and the Mural Project for the Township Building.

## Program Growth

Fifteen years ago, the Township offered only about 10 programs annually. This has grown to more than two hundred with multiple sections. The programs now generate about \$180,000 annually in revenues for Middletown Township.

## Community Recreation Service Organizations

Middletown residents are fortunate in having a number of recreation service providers in addition to the Township’s services. The role of the Township is to work in cooperation with the other providers and to facilitate their programming wherever possible. Middletown Township has a host of community groups that all contribute to parks and recreation including the Arts Committee, the sports organizations, the Teen Task Force and the senior citizens.

The Department's philosophy is that collaboration is mutually beneficial and results in effective public service for less cost. The Department and the community sports organizations have worked hard at building a strong working relationship. The Department rigorously avoids duplication of effort to focus on programs that are not offered elsewhere.

## Teen Task Force

Middletown's Teen Task Force is a model of recreation programming. The Task Force members plan and schedule their own programs. The program includes Battle of the Bands, Extreme Fridays at the Barn, which include rock climbing, a coffeehouse for writers, teen nights at the Middletown Country Club pool, ski trips and paintball trips. Issues for the Teen Task Force include adult chaperones and generating revenue.

## The Art Committee

The Art Committee provides exhibits at the municipal center with about three exhibits annually. They also offer Arts Weekend that includes opportunities for participants to see local artists first hand, participate in workshops, view art and enjoy the social aspects of art. Such interactive, intergenerational programs help to build community in Middletown Township. The Committee was also responsible for the municipal center mural that was funded by a grant.

## Organized Youth Sports

Middletown Township has several organizations that provide organized sports on a volunteer basis. Middletown is unusual in having several organizations offering the same sport. Some leagues spun off original organizations. The challenge in this situation is that several community organizations vie for the same facilities at the same time.

The Parks and Recreation Department serves in the role of facilitator by providing facilities for the leagues. Over the past ten years, participation has increased, year-round play emerged, more females are playing, and players are involved at older and younger ages. New sports such as lacrosse are emerging. This has resulted in the need for more facilities and additional maintenance requirements.

### Langhorne Athletic Association (LAA)

LAA offers soccer, basketball and baseball. The league operates through volunteers, league fees, and private fundraising.

#### **SOCCER**

- Travel and in-house soccer.
- Ages: Five years through under 19.
- In-house: 347 participants.
- Travel: 150 participants.

- Trends: Stable participation.
- Season: Fall only.
- Fields: Community Park, Maple Point, and Core Creek Park.
- Facility Needs: Additional fields to ease the pinch of limited practice and game areas.

### **BASKETBALL**

- Ages: Second Grade through age 17.
- Teams: 78 with over 600 players.
- Trends: Increasing by about five percent annually.
- Season: December through March 15.
- Gyms: Maple Point Middle School, Neshaminy Junior High School, Newtown Friends School that LAA rents.
- Issue: Have been dealing with limited gym time that has sparked consideration for the limiting participation. LAA is trying to continue to allow anyone who wants to play to be able to do so.

### **BASEBALL**

- Ages: Boys five years through 15 years.
- Participation: 450
- Trends: Stable. Switched to Cal Ripken league to enlarge service area.
- Season: Mid-April to Mid-June with post-season play into July.
- Fields: Community Park, Maple Point, Woodbourne, Neshaminy Junior High School. Have enough fields.

### **SOFTBALL**

- Ages: Girls six years through 13 years.
- Participation: 80
- Trends: Little growth but would like to see more girls play.
- Fields: Have enough fields



## Middletown Athletic Association (MAA)

MAA offers baseball, softball and soccer.

### **BASEBALL**

- Ages: Five years through 19.
- Participation: 600 Players. Stable.
- Season: Spring/ early summer.
- Fields: Community Center and the field behind the Texaco Station.
- Need: Additional 90' field. Correction of drainage problems.

### **SOFTBALL**

- Ages: Five through 18 years
- Participation: 500 Players. Growing.
- Season: Spring/ early summer.
- Fields: Community Center and the field behind the Texaco Station.

### **SOCCER**

Ages: Inhouse – Five through 16 years. Travel – Ten through 16 years.

Participation: 450. Stable.

Season: Inhouse – fall only. Travel – year round.

Fields: In-house – all school fields. Travel – Twin Oaks.

Needs: More fields, lights.

### **HOCKEY**

Ages: Five through 16 years. Street hockey for ages 5-13. Roller hockey for ages 13-16.

Participation: 150. Growing.

Season: In-house – fall only. Travel – year round.

Courts: Forsythia Gate.

Needs: Storage facility and lights at Forsythia Gate.

## PEARLS SOCCER

Ages: Five through 17 years.

Participation: 24 teams – 270 participants-

Season:

Fields: Neshaminy Junior High School. 11 fields. Four of the fields are carved out of one large field. Community Park, Core Creek Park.

### **Rugby**

The rugby league which is based in Lower Bucks County has about 35 players who play at Poplar Park. The park currently has no field for rugby although this plan is making a recommendation for the development of a flat sports field. The Rugby season is February through early April. Rugby requires a high level of field maintenance because of the nature of the game and its impact on the playing surface.

### **Lacrosse**

Lower Buck Lacrosse is emerging and has been requesting the use of soccer fields in the spring. In the past, the soccer organizations did not have spring soccer in order to rest the fields. The use of the same fields for lacrosse will require a higher level of maintenance. There will also be a need for fields for lacrosse.

### **Related Issues**

Other issues that affect sports play in Middletown Township include:

- Overlapping field design results in organizations vying for the same space, irregular patterns of use that affect sports play differently for the various sports using the same space for different sports.
- Year round play precludes the use of overlapping facilities. It also places more wear and tear on the fields requiring a higher level of maintenance.
- Soccer is going to smaller numbers of players on the field at one time e.g. going from 11 players on a side to eight players on a side. This means that the same number of children is playing on smaller teams thus requiring more fields to accommodate the smaller number of participants playing in a game.

## **Sports Needs**

All groups expressed the opinion that the Township does the most possible with its resources and that the Department goes out of its way to help the organizations and individual citizens.

- Soccer fields are needed for the growing participation. Lighted fields are needed to deal with the limited daylight hours of fall play.

- Gym time is at a premium and more gyms are needed.
- Correction of drainage problems at the Community Park and the addition of more dugouts there have been requested.
- Facilities for adult use are needed. Focus is on youth sports. It is likely that adult sports leagues will emerge in the future.
- A major concern is the splintering of community sports organizations into spin-off leagues. The Township should consider a league sanctioning policy before any more splintering would occur in order to be prepared for additional sports groups with their own individual needs and field demands.

### **Neshaminy School District and Related Programs**

Neshaminy School District permits the use of school fields for recreational sports. The District performs limited maintenance on the fields. The Neshaminy Evening School offers self-improvement programs for adults in the Adult Evening School. The programs are geared towards lifelong interests and leisure pursuits to enable people to lead enriched lives.

### **PANA and Healthy Communities**

The Pennsylvania Activities and Nutrition Advocates (PANA) and Healthy Communities are regional programs targeting healthy lifestyles among teens and youth. These programs are in their infancy in Pennsylvania. They offer potential for partnerships and perhaps funding in the future. The Department should continue to monitor their progress and be involved in order to create or seize emerging opportunities.

### **Departmental Focus**

The Department has been focused on planning and providing organized recreation programs and activities as well as supporting the efforts of other providers.

The Department is relying on the traditional mainstream programs and adding new offerings each season. Work session for this plan among the management team launched discussions about new directions and initiatives based upon the findings of the public participation process and program analysis. These include indoor recreation facilities, the need for a senior center, and the need for additional staff. Programs that are nature based could be added but that would represent a whole new program area. For the department to take on more, additional staff would be needed.

## **Program Analysis**

Recreation programs and services are important in Middletown Township. The Department is recognized by the public for providing effective services and in responding to public needs. Overall survey respondents indicated that weren't sure how to rate service to client groups. Those who could rate the level of service rated it at "about right".

## **Programming for Diverse Age Groups**

Middletown Township offers programs and services for all age groups. Sports organizations are youth focused. This is likely to change as people begin to live longer, healthier, more active lifestyles. Adult leagues are already popular elsewhere.

## **Programming by Gender**

Both males and females participate in the recreation programs. The Township insures that recreation opportunities are available for both genders. The challenge is to establish policies that support growth in participation by females such as in facility allocation and operation of sports leagues. It is important to avoid policies that allocate facilities based upon historical precedence that virtually eliminate access to facilities by new leagues or activities. This affects primarily females, adult players and players in emerging sports. There should be equal access to recreation facilities for both males and females.

## **Program Structure**

The Department offers different types and lengths of programs and program formats. Instead of just offering the traditional multi-week programs, the Department offers special events, single time programs, and unique projects with community wide impact. One of the strongest values of the Department is its formatting that emphasizes self-improvement and social interaction instead of competition that is prevalent in many communities.

## **Program Partnerships**

Partnerships between Middletown Township and other providers of services are important elements of recreational opportunities. Partnerships with organized sports, the senior adult center with Bucks County Area Agency on Aging, Bucks County Parks Department, Bucks County Nature Centers, the Middletown Community Foundation and the Neshaminy School District are building blocks that enable the Department to provide opportunities that would be impossible on its own.

It is important to note the value of the collaborative role of the recreation department with other township departments and boards. The Recreation Department collaborates on an ongoing basis with other professionals in the township organization. Professionals with expertise in planning and the environment work with the Recreation Department. This serves to mainstream recreation services with overall township planning and operation.

## **Program Fees and Revenue Philosophy**

Middletown Township's parks and facilities are free to the general public except for the special use facilities of the McCafferty Skate Park and pavilions that can be rented by community groups. The Department sets user fees and charges for programs that benefit the direct use of the services. Programs recover about 96 percent of their cost and about 20 percent of the overall operating budget. The Department is approaching \$200,000 in program revenues.

To support those with financial needs, Middletown Community Foundation raises funds to pay the fees for those who cannot. These scholarships benefit the community in tow ways.

First, they benefit people in need, especially children and youth. And secondly, the scholarships enable the Department to operate financially.

## **Program Schedule**

Middletown offers two programming seasons: Spring & Summer and Fall, & Winter. This schedule works for the present staff level. With a Director who functions as the program coordinator as well, two seasons is a maximum workload. When the staff increases, consideration could be given to a establishing a three-season calendar that corresponds to the school year: Fall, Winter/Spring, and Summer. This would help with promotion and being current in the public's awareness.

## **Year-Round Recreation**

The Department offers programs year round. Limitations are caused by the limited staff time and indoor space in the winter. Additional indoor space especially for active senior adults as well as additional program staff would enable the community to have more public recreational services year round. Long term, the community should consider a large indoor facility that fosters lifelong active lifestyles year round. Our climate serves to reduce the level of physical activity during the cold weather months. Research conducted in the area found that there is a need for public indoor recreation facilities.

Both gyms for organized sports and other indoor facilities to serve people of all ages, interests, and abilities are needed. Drop-in activity space, fitness facilities, gyms, pools, and community meeting rooms are usually spaces that enable people to participate in an active healthy lifestyle year round at all ages throughout the lifetime. Planning for senior adult centers is evolving away from the traditional stand-alone center to centers that people use throughout their lifetime and on an expanded basis once they retire. As the baby boomers enter retirement, this concept is expected to become the norm.

## **Good Service/Good Will**

The public participation process found that the goodwill towards the Parks and Recreation Department creates an overall favorable impression of Middletown Township. Examples of the positive view of this Department include the Middletown Community Foundation, which was expressly set up for public recreation and related purposes such as the community gateway project.

## **Program Planning**

The Department has solid expertise in recreation programs and services. This is typically the weak point for most community parks and recreation departments. Great recreation programming does not just happen: it requires expertise, training, creativity, and a willingness to take risks. Recreation programs must meet client needs for socialization, enrichment, creativity, adventure, and physical and emotional well-being.

Any changes in program planning must be scheduled based upon the future direction for Middletown's recreational services. Adding new programs and expanding recreation opportunities will require additional staff time. The addition of nature based recreation, expanding public awareness and providing information about self-directed recreation

opportunities will require additional staff time. Partnerships for certain projects such as the interpretation and programming of the Styer Farm with the Churchville Nature Center and Silver Lake Nature Center could help to advance township projects that would not be possible with the current staff level.

## **Program Registration**

Program registration can be done by phone or mail. Consideration is being given to credit card payment. In the future WEB based registration should be considered to make registration most convenient. Other departments with WEB based registration in place could provide information about their experience and costs.

## **Program Promotion**

One of the most helpful and important community services is providing information about parks and recreation. The Department uses their WEB site, cable access television, and newspaper coverage to promote recreation opportunities. The **Middletown Township Recreation Calendar** is an important public service. Interviews and the surveys found that people wanted more information about parks and recreation. This is always a challenge for municipal departments. A marketing and promotion plan for programs and services should be formalized. Additional program staff would be necessary to do any more in the area of promotion. A township this size should have a public relations staff member.

## **Self-Directed Programs**

People want to be able to use facilities such as trails, bike paths, fitness facilities, scenic areas, and have access to the creeks and natural areas for their own self-directed recreation. The survey shows that these are among the most preferred activities. The role of the Department is to provide the facilities and to make people aware of them. By developing these facilities and then advertising them along with how people can use them, the Department can facilitate public recreation on an un-scheduled, self-directed basis.

## **Program Limitations**

Programs are limited principally by the small staff and by indoor facility space. A township with nearly 45,000 should have significantly more staff. Program staff could include an assistant director, a program coordinator, youth and family services director, a senior adult director, a public relations specialist, customer service representatives, arts coordinator, specialist fitness and wellness and so on. The position most essential now is a program coordinator.

## **Program Summary**

Recreation programs are a hallmark of quality service in Middletown Township. The Department:

- Offers diverse programs with a broad focus on in most recreation categories.
- Operates with fee-based programs that recover 96 percent of their cost.

- Works with the Middletown Community Foundation to provide scholarships for recreation programs for those in need.
- Does not duplicate what other groups provide.
- Traditional organized programs need to be re-worked towards self-directed opportunities, information about recreation in the area, “how-to” information for such new opportunities as water based recreation to become available with creek access and a new trail and greenway system.
- Focuses on quality in service delivery.
- New program areas in nature, interpretation of the Styer Farm, and the provision of information about trails and self-directed recreation will require additional staff and partnerships.

The Department appears to be operating at full capacity on programs in terms of both administration and facilities. Sustaining, developing, and enhancing partnerships with other providers will be crucial to success in the future. Responding to public expectations for high quality, convenient service is important. The Township should continue in planning responsive, creative recreation programs with an eye towards meeting the needs of a changing population, one that is aging and leading active lives well into the upper years.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

1. **Develop a programming mission statement.** Broaden the services beyond scheduled organized programs to include self-directed opportunities and information about other services and opportunities in recreation in the area.
2. **Expand program areas.** Include water and nature oriented recreation, environmental education, fitness and wellness, and the arts. This needs to happen over time, strategically as the new facilities are developed and as provisions for additional staff time are established.
3. **Focus on Self-Directed Recreation.** To support the interest of citizens in undertaking their own recreation at their own time and convenience, develop a program area that focuses on self-directed recreation. This would include the use of (future) trails and parks for fitness and wellness, socialization, nature (bird watching, photography, family bonding, wildlife watching, restoration through peace and tranquility, etc.). Getting the word out on both facilities and ideas about what people can do on their own should be a target goal. Teaching people how to do activities like kayaking as well as telling them about access points and support services would be key.
4. **Hire a Program Coordinator part time.** Without additional staff time, programs expansion is not possible. Over the next three years, additional full-time program staff should be hired. To build the case for more staff, the Department should continue to track benefits and the cost recover of programs and services.

5. **Establish a senior adult center in the heart of the senior service area.** This would be an immediate solution to a pressing need. The center should be configured for future expansion and renovation to serve next generations that would most likely prefer lifetime, intergenerational recreation centers as opposed to single purpose senior citizens centers.
6. **Develop an orchestrated marketing program.** Establish a Public Relations Specialist position to afford the Department with an invaluable opportunity: a mechanism for establishing an institutionalized public needs assessment system and promotional program. Each program should have a participant and instructor evaluation. Focus groups for non-participants should be held to determine gaps in service. Focus groups with identified client groups should be early in the year for planning the programs, especially the summer youth programs. Invite parents and participants to determine changes they would like to see in the future. Consider inviting non-participants to determine if there is a latent market for programs and what people are interested in.
7. **Obtain computer software for program registration, tracking, and decision-making.** Explore systems in place in other departments. Consider WEB based software in which 24/7 service is available to fix problems and attend to immediate departmental needs. Include a training budget so that management and staff get the maximum benefit out of the software.
8. **Set a policy that of league sanctioning in order to discourage more spin off leagues.** Numerous sports organizations in Middletown Township offer the same sports. This has resulted in competition for the same facilities by several organizations. A policy of league sanctioning means that the Township would formally recognize sports organizations as township-sanctioned organizations and give them first priority in field permitting. Existing groups could be grand fathered-in. Long term consideration could be given to working with existing groups about merging. In other municipalities with the similar circumstances of many players and sports, multiple sports organizations, and limited fields and courts, the organizations are merging on their own to make more efficient use of resources, provide better service at more levels of play and to help create and maintain more facilities.



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# Administration & Management

Parks and recreation departments manage a vast array of complex and challenging functions. Every day, they have a myriad of tasks and projects to handle: Run a program. Prepare a ballfield. Acquire land. Manage the budget. Respond to a citizen's request. Their scope of work could range from helping a Boy Scout earn a badge to orchestrating a community event with thousands of people and hundreds of details.

Recreation professionals need a diverse set of skills and techniques to manage these complex systems in the ever-changing and demanding world of public parks and recreation. Successful systems are rooted in effective management. While it is important to do things right, it is even more important to do the right things.

With a relatively new department – only five years as a full time professional department – the Township has greatly benefited from its investment. The Director has:

- Multiplied programs twenty fold.
- Generated a 96 percent cost recovery from programs.
- Helped to start a community foundation.
- Secured donations and sponsorships to build the skate park.
- Obtained grant funding making innovative programs possible such as the Mural project.
- Built healthy working relationships with organized sports.
- Instituted professional planning and service delivery for community recreation and parks.

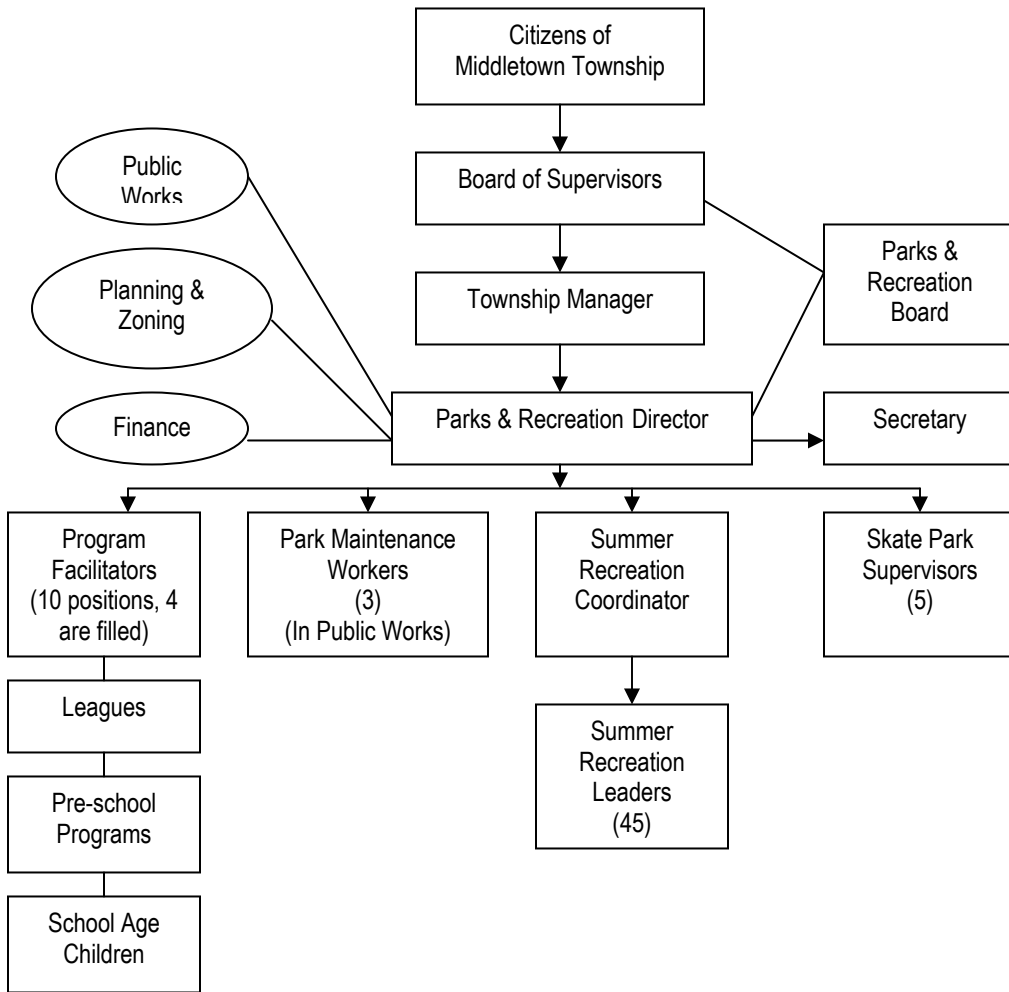
## Purpose of the Management Assessment

The purpose of the management assessment was to work with the Middletown Township Recreation Department in taking a fresh look at operations and management. The goal was to determine how best to position the Department to achieve Middletown's parks and recreation goals. The assessment addressed organizational structure, staffing, employee development, public involvement, maintenance, and information management.

### Organizational Structure

Figure 6-1 presents the organizational structure for parks and recreation in Middletown Township.

**Figure 6-1  
Middletown Township  
Parks and Recreation Organizational Structure**



## Parks and Recreation Department Organization

The Middletown Parks and Recreation Department has four full time employees, five part-time employees and about 50 seasonal employees. The Director is a full-time recreation professional. The seasonal employees serve in both recreation and facility management positions. Park maintenance is housed in Public Works.

### Organizational Divisions

The Department is organized with the following four divisions: Program Facilitation, Summer Recreation, Park Workers, and Skate Park. Administration is the responsibility of the Director of Parks and Recreation with support from a part time secretary.

Administration includes planning, directing, controlling and evaluating the Department; management, coordination with other departments; financing; personnel; land acquisition; legal issue coordination; park planning; park development and park maintenance.

**Program Facilitation** is responsible for the planning, implementation and evaluation of pre-school programs, leagues and school age children programs. Four of the ten positions are filled currently.

**Summer Recreation** is managed by the Summer Recreation Coordinator and staffed with about 50 seasonal employees. The Coordinator is responsible for planning, directing, supervising, and evaluating the summer recreation programs.

**Parks Maintenance** is responsible for the routine maintenance of parks and recreation facilities. This is done in accordance with the annual maintenance calendar and other tasks and special projects that emerge. Parks Maintenance falls under the Public Works Director.

### Parks & Recreation Positions

Middletown Township has written job descriptions for all recreation positions. The job descriptions include a definition, examples of work, requirements and knowledge and abilities. These positions include the following by definition:

- **Director of Parks and Recreation:** Under the direction of the Township Manager, plans, develops, administers, supervises and schedules all Township park and recreation staff, programs and facilities.
- **Recreation Program Coordinator:** Under the direction of the Director of Parks and recreation, plans, develops supervises and administers a facet of the Township's recreation program.
- **Summer Recreation Supervisor:** Under the Direction of the Director of Parks and Recreation, plans, develops and administers the summer recreation program.
- **Recreation Program Counselor:** Under the direction of a Recreation Program Supervisor, oversees and leads a group of children enrolled in the Township's recreation programs.

- **Secretary:** Under the direction of the Director of Parks and Recreation provides administrative support regarding program registration, public relations, financial tasks, contracts, WEB site management and telecommunication matters.
- **Parks Maintenance Workers:** Under the direction of the Public Works Department in collaboration with the Parks and Recreation Director is responsible for the routine and cyclic maintenance of Middletown Township's parks and recreation facilities including a wide variety of maintenance, service, repair, and construction functions to provide parks recreation areas, buildings, trails, and other facilities that are safe, useable and attractive in accordance with departmental policies.

## Parks and Recreation Department Operations

The Department is a new organization moving from a part-time seasonal model supported where possible by a volunteer Park and Recreation Board to a full-time professional run department in 2001.

The Department operates with a lean staff of only a director and part time and seasonal staff. While maintenance is split into two departments, the collaboration of the department heads and the maintenance workers enables this organizational structure to work for Middletown Township. The challenge when park maintenance is housed in a public works department is insuring that parks gets work done when needed. Often, the needs of public works and parks tend to compete during peak season such as in the spring when potholes emerge and ball fields need preparation at the same time.

### Recreation

The focus of the recreation division is on organized programs and events. The Department offers about 200 scheduled organized recreation programs annually. Beyond the programs, the Department undertakes special recreation initiatives such as selling discount tickets, initiating township wide projects such as the mural for the township building, coordinating township sports organizations, creating partnerships, and participates in township boards such as the Middletown Community Foundation and regional recreation planning. Given the present level of staffing, the Department is at maximum capacity in terms of service delivery. Nothing more should be added without bringing on more staff. In order to grow the recreation division and provide more recreation opportunities to the community the following changes could be considered:

1. **Broaden the focus of the division from organized, scheduled programs to the provision of recreation opportunities that are self-directed and information based.** Self-directed opportunities would be recreation pursuits that citizens could undertake at their own pace and on their own schedule. Facilities that are expected to be developed in the parks including trails, water based recreation access, natural areas, and lifetime recreation facilities will enable this in Middletown Township. In terms of information, recreation

can transition into the role of information broker. That means that the Middletown Recreation Department would inform people about what they can do, what opportunities exist, and how to do new recreational pursuits. Lack of awareness about what to do and where to do it is a major block to community recreation involvement. A “leisure counseling” type of framework could help citizens at different times in their lives such as parents with toddlers, families, active retirees, teens.

2. **Transform the Recreation and Park Director position into more planning and less hands on.** The Department needs an operations position in the form of a program coordinator and part time program staff so that the Director could concentrate on growing the parks and recreation services. The pay-off would be in higher revenue generation for the Township. The trade off in not doing this is that only a smaller number of programs can be provided under the current staffing levels.
3. **Develop the program management plan for the next fiscal year and approve it prior to the budget season in the fall.** When additional program staff is added, consider moving from two program seasons to three. The plan should address the market segments; total number of services, events or programs to be offered for each programming season; income goals that also include provision of services for those with financial needs. It is important to create a program vision for three to five years out and then develop the program management plan in detail for the first year. It is equally important that the program plan be realistic. Programming benchmarks could include the following<sup>1</sup>:
  - New programs – 20%
  - Overall cancellation rate – 15%
  - New program cancellation rate – 30-50%
  - Divisions – 5-10 which could include youth, active seniors, culture, special events, wellness, and resource based recreation such as the riverfront, trails, environmental education and so on.
4. **Plan for the next frontier of Programming: Nature and the Arts.** The Department already has a number of cutting edge arts programs such as the music writing/recording/production aimed at high level musicians, arts weekend and individual arts projects. Response from the public in the survey showed that art programs are high in public interest could be rooted in the township’s creative arts programming over the last five years. New facilities such as trails, greenways, creek access and the Styer Farm all offer the setting and opportunities for nature and resource based recreation. These new programming areas represent whole new functional areas that could be done only through staff additions or partnerships.

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<sup>1</sup> Based upon formula supplied by LERN, the Learning Resources Network which is the leading association in lifelong learning programming. LERN PO Box 9 River Falls, Wisconsin, 54022. [www.lern.org](http://www.lern.org).

## Public Relations

Having a public relations division in a Recreation Department in a community the size of Middletown Township should be essential. It is key to both management and in building public awareness about parks and recreation. Higher public awareness leads to higher participation and ultimately higher revenues. For Public Relations, the Department should consider the following:

- 1. Develop a written marketing plan.** This should be a very specific one-year plan for the next fiscal year. This plan should be developed and approved prior to budget discussions. The plan needs to be based in the reality of current staffing levels with expansion based upon additional personnel or partnerships.
- 2. Include a “CD ” (Customer Database) component.** This would be a function of a future program coordinator. The CD would create an information base about customers of the Department. Detailing who the customers are along with their preferences and interests will help the Department to plan services as well as to promote them. This component should include program evaluation, information from registrations, quick surveys, and outreach. Outreach should include focus groups on various topics to find out what the customers want. A focus group should consist of about eight individuals sitting around a table with a facilitator asking a set of directed questions. Recognize that not every citizen will use public recreation and parks but that even if they don't, citizens still value township parks and recreation. Therefore, it is important to focus on the customers the Department has and to get them to participate more in other programs. Retaining customers and getting them involved in other activities is most important.
- 3. Direct the promotion to the customers in more targeted ways than the Recreation Calendar for the population as a whole.** Keep on doing the Recreation Calendar, possibly expanding it to three seasons. Once the department is able to procure software, developing targeted outreach could be possible through e-mail, mailings, the WEB site, handouts at programs.

## Park Planning

The Director of Parks and Recreation is responsible for all park planning in Middletown Township. This includes land acquisition, park master planning, park rehabilitation, the public participation process related to park planning, funding, grant writing, partnerships and other elements related to specific projects. Because the Director has her “ear to the ground”, she works successfully and diligently to secure parkland in this densely developed municipality. She has been able to work on innovative land acquisition projects with additional creative solutions for land on the horizon. For park planning, the department should consider the following:

- 1. Develop master site plans for all parks, recreation facilities, trails and greenways.** As part of the master site planning process, include recreation planning and landscape architecture in addition to engineering. Creating great public spaces should be the goal.

2. **Create a Maintenance Impact Statement (MIS) for all park master plans.**  
The MIS should forecast the additional financial and human resources required, partnership and sponsorship possibilities and alternatives to the provision of maintenance services by township forces where feasible.
3. **Involve Public Works and the Park Maintenance Workers in the park master planning process.**

## Maintenance

The Department is currently maintaining about 216 acres of active maintained parkland and about 532 acres of open space. The Township is spending about \$2,060 per acre for active areas which falls in the middle range of the typical per acres park maintenance budget of between \$1500 and \$3000 seen in communities with populations less than half of Middletown's size. To put this into perspective, the per acre cost can be as high as \$80,000 or more per acre in urban park settings. More natural type of parks with limited development (such as greenways) come in at about \$500 per acre in annual maintenance costs. While there is some economy in having a parks maintenance division already in place and organized within the Public Works Department, any expansion and new development of parks will require more financial and human resources for maintenance. Tax dollars alone should not support these costs. Community sports organizations have already adopted the innovative measure of charging participants a \$15 per player fee that goes directly into field maintenance.

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Maintenance is the single largest recurring expenditure in park and recreation operations. Over the lifetime of a park, about 75 percent of its cost is in maintenance while only about 25 percent is in acquisition, development, design, and construction<sup>2</sup>.

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Park maintenance has been focused on taking care of active recreation parks. Since conservation is a high priority among the citizenry, a maintenance program for the protection of township natural resources should be considered. This will require a new set of maintenance skills. A sports turf management program should be established and coordinated with the athletic groups that already do some ballfield maintenance.

While routine maintenance has been the focus on parks, the Middletown Township Parks and Recreation Department could consider a broader view of park and recreation facility care. A holistic perspective on the parks would incorporate park planning, use policies, maintenance, and facility management. Since maintenance costs will increase for new parks and recreation facilities, looking at the organizational structure for park maintenance is warranted. Instead of adding park maintenance workers, the Township could consider establishing a professional grounds & buildings supervisor position. The qualifications could be similar to a college campus buildings and grounds manager. Specific knowledge, skills and

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<sup>2</sup> Lay, Francis. (1978). *Management of Grounds and Site Maintenance Operations. Manual of Site Management*, Environmental Design Press. p.4.

expertise in grounds maintenance could result in cost savings by developing a park maintenance program that is based in science and technology rather than in general knowledge of task performance. Potential areas for consideration for maintenance in the future include the following:

1. **Develop standards of care for the facilities, parklands and natural areas.** Not all park areas should be maintained to achieve a manicured appearance. Naturalization is better for the environment, less costly and in accordance with public preferences in Middletown Township for natural resource conservation. Standards can and should vary within parks as well as among parks. To advance the standards of care concept, public education is required in order to inform the citizens that the Township is adopting a more naturalized approach. Otherwise, citizens misperceive the naturalization as reduced maintenance. Information at park kiosks, mowing a pathway along newly formed meadows, and regular articles in the township newsletter and the recreation calendar as well as on the WEB site can all help to educate citizens.
2. **Develop a maintenance impact statement for all capital improvements and park master site plans.** Look for alternatives to providing the maintenance with township forces and resources where possible.
3. **Computerize the maintenance workload/cost tracking system.** Once again this is based upon managing the park system as one that serves 45,000 people. The park system, especially with consideration of its facilities such as the Barn, the skate park, sports complex and future senior center is well beyond a “mom and pop” operation.
4. **Explore the concept of establishing a presence in the parks and on the trails.** Roving or stationary staff could perform this function. The response would be in the form of a park “ranger” type of non-law enforcement position. A model in Upper Dublin in Montgomery County, Site Watch, is funded through use fees and charges. The purpose is to provide a public presence, add a sense of security, assist park patrons, insure that field use policies are followed, report maintenance needs or problems and remedy problems that can be taken care of on the spot.
5. **Consider using park uniforms to increase public awareness and recognition of the parks and recreation system.** Any medium that the Department can present its logo should be used.

## **Administration**

Administration is the responsibility of the Parks and Recreation Director. Consideration for Administration could include the following:

1. **Require that the Parks and Recreation Director should continue to be a parks and recreation professional just as it is now.**



- 2. Add support staff to relieve the director of administrative and clerical functions.** The Department cannot grow if the professionals on staff are working on daily operations rather than on building the client base, designing programs, creating partnerships and other growth functions.

## Volunteerism

Volunteerism is important to the Township. Volunteer groups include the following:

- **Middletown Township Park & Recreation Board** assists the Director of Parks and Recreation and is responsible for equipping, supervising and maintaining all of the township parks, establishing and conducting a variety of recreation activities and planning for recreation growth of the Township.
- **Teen Task Force** serves as the advisory committee for teen recreation in Middletown Township. The group identifies new activities for teen involvement and establishing places for teens to congregate.
- **Styer Farm Committee** oversees the management and operation of Styer Orchards and advises the Board of Supervisors on all matters regarding its use and operation.
- **Middletown Country Club Committee** advises the Board of Supervisors on matters pertaining to greens fees, capital projects and acquisition at the Middletown Country Club, which is owned by the Township.
- **Middletown Township Arts Committee** was formed in 2002 to promote public awareness of and interest in fine arts and cultural properties. The Committee encourages the integration of art into architecture of municipal structures and is committed to supporting projects that move art from museums and galleries into the public spaces in which people live in and move through daily. This will help to enhance the quality of life in Middletown Township.
- **Sports Organizations: Middletown Athletic Association, Langhorne Athletic Association (LAA) Pearls Soccer Association, Lower Bucks Lacrosse, Queen of the Universe CYO (Catholic Youth Organization).** Thousands of Middletown residents are involved in these organizations at any one time. More importantly, most residents participate in these organizations at some point in their lifetime. They serve the majority of citizens as players, spectators or volunteers over the course of time in Middletown Township. They offer soccer, baseball, soccer, basketball, hockey and lacrosse. Programs range from instructional and recreational through competitive travel play.

Consideration should be given to the following regarding volunteerism:

- 1. Focus on volunteer efforts through community groups in the near future.**

2. **Wait until the staff is available to develop the volunteer program for other purposes.** Developing a volunteer program targeted at individual volunteers is beyond the capacity of current staff. Volunteerism should be focused on supporting the group efforts of the above references organizations.

## Employee Development and Training

The Parks and Recreation Director participates in conferences, seminars, and annual meetings, has professional organization memberships, obtains subscriptions to professional trade publications. The Director attends annual parks and recreation conferences and workshops held in Pennsylvania annually. While training opportunities are available, there is no formal employee development program. A training program would outline the development program for the staff, including the park maintenance workers, over the next five years. This would be beneficial from two perspectives: one, it would be a sound approach to investing in the township's largest expenditure in parks and recreation: labor and, secondly, it would provide a career development benefit for the staff.

Training is essential in keeping up with regulations, technology, and trends. Regulations, guidelines, and standards in parks and recreation are evolving and deal with such diverse topics as herbicide and pesticide spraying, playground safety standards, trail planning and management, and health guidelines. Our changing society has resulted in issues that impact services for children and youth: child custody, abuse, discipline issues, juvenile justice, violence, substance abuse, and other major concerns that were not in the picture just a few years ago. The forums with the playground leaders showed evidence of this in the Township.

At present training is part of the administrative budget and funded at \$1,000. This should be about one to two percent of the budget, which would be about \$8,000 to \$16,000 annually. Since this would be a significant increase, phasing in training over the next five years could be a solution. Bear in mind that training is an investment and should result in enhanced public service, reduced township exposure to liability, greater efficiency, lower costs and management alternatives.

Consideration should be given to the following actions for employee development:

1. **Conduct a training needs assessment within the Department from the perspective of departmental needs and employee development.** Identify the objectives of the training for the Department, the Director, secretary, recreation staff and park maintenance workers. Prioritize the training. Set the employee development for a five-year time frame, each year implementing the first year of the program and adding the fifth year. Consider including Planning and Zoning staff in the training program related to resource and open space conservation, trail planning and so on.
2. **Budget between one and two percent annually for employee development.** This would be \$8,000 to \$16,000. This could be phased in over five years from the current \$1,000 level.
3. **Include a variety of training modalities.** The employee development program can include in-service training; self-directed improvement through participation in

seminars, conferences and so on; orientation for new and seasonal employees; rotating employees through jobs other than their own; brown bag lunch discussion sessions when recreation staff are brought on and networking with other parks and recreation departments. The idea is that training can be low cost and does not always have to be conferences and training.

## Partnerships and Sponsorships

Partnerships with other organizations in the community enhance public service at reduced costs. The Department has worked to forge a strong partnership with the sports organizations and community groups. The Department works with area businesses and organization on events and activities. Businesses in the area provide both donations and funds to support township programs.

### *Neshaminy School District*

The School District provides fields for recreational use in the community. The District also provides limited maintenance of fields but allows the organizations to perform required maintenance tasks.

Opportunities for collaboration with the School District include fitness and wellness, and facility development in the parks. Regarding wellness, working with the Pennsylvania Advocates for Activity and Nutrition (PANA) and Healthy Communities would be important. Both these organizations are interested in partnerships with School Districts.

### *Sponsorships*

The Department has worked diligently over the years to generate corporate partnerships and sponsorships. The Middletown Community Foundation, a non-profit, tax-exempt corporation encourages and supports the betterment of the Middletown Township community. The aim of the Foundation is to improve the quality of life and encourage the enhancement of community support for the Township of Middletown. The Foundation intends to support these goals by providing funding for various public safety and emergency management programs, promotion and enhancement of recreational programs and the preservation and procurement of future recreation, park and conservation facilities and programs within the Township of Middletown.

## Customer Service

In this age of e-mail, voice mail, faxes, and the Internet, customer service has become a buzzword in our society. And for good reason: Research shows that 70 percent of lost customers never come back because they did not like the human side of doing business with the provider of the service.<sup>3</sup> For the Middletown Township Parks and Recreation Department, customer service is a top priority. Their “actions speak louder than words” and earn them high marks in public service and customer loyalty. Interviews revealed the high positive regard that people have for the Department. They lauded the responsiveness of the Department to their needs and the staff goes out of their way to serve the public. Examples include the Community Chorale and organized sports groups.

<sup>3</sup> Whiteley, Richard C. (1991) *The Customer-Driven Company: Moving from Talk to Action*. Reading Massachusetts: Addison - Wesley. pp. 9, 10.

## Information Management

Providing excellent public service is a challenge given the volume of contacts and public interaction the Department experiences on a daily basis. The Department processes thousands of transactions annually: registrations, permits, citizen requests, assistance to community organizations, production of public information, program planning, league support, evaluations, financial data, and scheduling.

A recreation software program could help to ease the demand on staff time. This should include a workload cost tracking system for park and building maintenance.

## Customer Response and Convenience

Making registration more convenient is under consideration in the Department. Providing easier, faster, “hassle-free” registration will serve the public well. This would include credit and debit card payments as well as Internet registration. At present people can register by coming into the office or via mail or telephone.

## Information Dissemination

The Department creates and distributes **the Recreation Calendar**, the recreation newsletter twice annually via direct mail to households. The Department uses the Internet to provide information on programs and activities via the department’s WEB site.

Public awareness and recognition of facilities and services is important. The community survey, focus groups and interviews found that getting information out to the public about what is available in the Department and through other recreation providers is one of the most valuable services the Department could provide. This should become a part of the marketing plan to be developed by the Public Relations Specialist or other recreation staff of the future.

## Risk Management

The most effective measures that a municipality can take in reducing exposure to liability is to design and construct facilities properly and have an effective maintenance management system supported by written documentation. The record keeping system presents the documentation of the tasks performed in the regular and un-scheduled maintenance of township parks and recreation facilities. Since the Township could always be sued, the Township has put into place a regular scheduled maintenance program to eliminate hazards and reduce risk. Coordination with the township’s insurance carrier should be a part of the risk management program.

## Policies

The Department of Parks and Recreation has policies, guides and ordinances that govern operations and management. These include:

1. Field Use Policy

2. Use Operation and Maintenance Agreements with sports organizations.
3. Annual Park Maintenance Calendar.
4. Park Rules & Regulations.
5. Job descriptions.
6. Summer Recreation Staff Handbook.
7. Park Gifts Program

## Management Analysis

In a time of increasing accountability for all levels of government, decision-makers, staff and citizens alike, expect efficient and effective operating systems. In Middletown Township, the management team is committed to providing professional, effective public service through parks and recreation.

### Management Strengths

The Recreation Department has a thoroughly professional management team. The Department has been able to operate with seasonal part-time employees that extend the capacity of the Department to provide programs and services.

The elected officials are supportive of parks and recreation and expressed great respect for the job the Department is doing. They have made a strong commitment to the community for the last thirty years including the recent land acquisition and park investments. They are concerned about managing in a fiscally responsible way for both present and future taxpayers. Township recreation administration has an ear to the ground regarding parks and recreation. Finding ways to serve the public through parks and recreation, in an appropriate fiscally responsible manner, is a goal of the administration and the guiding philosophy for this plan.

Community partnerships are the strong suit of the Parks and Recreation Department. This should continue. The public participation process for this project brought to light that people in the community view the Parks and Recreation Department as responsive, well organized and collaborative. The Department has a remarkable collaborative relationship with other township departments to the extent that the township's professional planner served on the advisory committee for this plan and was an active participant throughout the planning process.

### Management Challenges

**Staffing** – The staff is undersized for a township of 45,000 people with an extensive and growing park system. As a new department of only five years, it is in its infancy. The Township needs to phase in the establishment of a staff commensurate with the size of the township.

**Training and Employee Development** - Training needs to become an organized, focused process over three to five years. Both recreation and parks employees should have a specific employee development program. Research shows that among all businesses, employees generally function at about 50 to 60 percent of their efficiency because they lack a clear understanding of what is expected of them, the knowledge and skills for the job, or the motivation to do the work.<sup>4</sup> Each of these blocks can be reduced through training. Training helps staff keep up-to-date with technological and legal changes; enhances efficiency; and boosts morale.

**Maintenance** - The nature and expansion of the township park system merits high quality maintenance. The challenge will be to increase maintenance support as the system expands. The scope of park maintenance should be broadened to include a holistic approach to overall park management including components such as natural resource management, water based recreation, sports turf management along with the specialized expertise that is based in science and beyond routine maintenance tasks.

**Making the Case for Parks and Recreation** - The Department needs to enhance its information base and numbers regarding parks and recreation. Documenting and enumerating both benefits and costs will help the Department to provide information to:

- Provide elected officials with good information to make sound decisions.
- Create public awareness and support for parks and recreation.
- Allocate money and work force effectively.
- Leverage partnerships and seek grants.
- Revitalize the community by helping to attract and retain businesses and residents. The Township should be gearing up to attract residents in the main entrepreneurial age bracket of 25 to 40 years of age, which is now decreasing. Having plentiful recreation opportunities and facilities such as the riverfront, trails, bike paths, trail and so on helps to attract this age group.

**Maximizing the Resources of a Small Staff** – WEB based information and computerization of management functions is helping the staff to do more, reduce paperwork, and operate in a more informed fashion.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The Department operates with a lean professional staff. To manage the changes going on in the community and the expansion of the park and recreation system, the management team needs to adopt the following ten strategic management characteristics:

- Change-oriented, dynamic
- Mission-oriented

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<sup>4</sup> McKinney, William, and Lowery, George A. (1989) Staff Training and Development for Park, Recreation and Leisure Service Organizations. Alexandria, VA: National Recreation and Park Association. p.1.

- Vision of future guides actions
- Proactive
- Action-oriented, even in face of ambiguity
- Focused on customer service
- Operates with creativity and innovation
- Fluid, dynamic processes
- Emphasis is on options and high quality
- Focus on effectiveness

1. **Develop a staffing plan to expand the professional staff to a core of five positions within the next five years.** Consider including a program coordinator, a public relations specialist, youth and family services manager, environmental specialist, and an office administrator with expertise in computers and the Internet.
2. **Develop a Maintenance Impact Statement for every capital park and recreation project.** Forecast the additional human and financial resources that will be needed to maintain the project upon completion. Consider partnerships and alternatives to township force maintenance. Do not undertake the project unless maintenance resources can be provided.
3. **Develop a workload cost tracking system for park maintenance.** Consider obtaining a Peer-to-Peer grant through DCNR to assist the Public Works and Park Maintenance Workers in developing this. This would be a \$10,000 project including a \$1,000 township match.
4. **Set performance standards for both recreation and parks on an annual basis.** A planned system of annual goals and objectives will help to focus all parties on a common vision. Identify objectives by programming season.
5. **Develop a recreation program management plan.** Include a vision for where recreation services should be in three years. The vision should include recreation opportunity facilitation and self-directed recreation. Use the first year of the plan in the next fiscal year.
6. **Hire a part time recreation coordinator immediately to take some of the workload from the Director and institute new programs.**
7. **Plan for the increasing demand on park maintenance responsibilities.** Consider re-focusing park maintenance to become more of a comprehensive park management division beyond routine maintenance alone. Establishing a professional parks, grounds and buildings supervisor over the long term can help to position the township's park management system more inline with the size of the township and the park system
8. **Work towards establishing a highly recognizable presence in the community.**
9. **Continue to mainstream parks municipal planning and parks and recreation planning.** Use parks and recreation as a tool to attract and retain businesses. Seek grant funding to develop the new parks and recreation facilities, township trail system and beautification that will position Middletown as a competitive community.

**10. Establish an Employee Development Program.** This should be a five year program based upon departmental and employee needs with an annual budget of about one to two percent of the operating budget.



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# Financing

Financing and acquiring the resources to operate public parks and recreation services is a major challenge. Operating within a climate of fiscal conservatism and increasing responsibilities, the Middletown Township Parks and Recreation Department has adopted an entrepreneurial approach to providing public services. Once supported entirely by township taxes, the Department has shifted to a mix of public support and revenues generated through fees and charges, donations, partnerships and sponsorships. The Department is striving to capitalize on this entrepreneurship as the township's park system expands over the next decade.

## Middletown Township Financial Perspective

Middletown Township operates within the philosophy of keeping township taxes low while providing effective public service on an annual budget of about \$20 million. The current fiscal year budget was based upon the premise of cutting taxes. The Parks and Recreation Department has not been affected by the budget cuts. The Township is committed to top-notch services. The Township has a \$40 million investment fund as a result of the sale of the water authority. Figure 7-1 shows Middletown Township's Revenue.

## Parks and Recreation Revenue Sources

Most parks and recreation systems rely heavily on tax dollars to fund operations. Financing trends show that parks and recreation is moving more towards a market-based economy in which the users pay for services or facilities from which they directly benefit. Middletown fits this pattern. Taxes support about 80 percent of the Parks and Recreation Department. About 20 percent is generated through user fees, charges, donations and sponsorships. The Department also derives financial support from grants such as state arts and recreation grants as well as through innovative programs like the Park Gifts Program.

About \$436,000 in township taxes revenues are allocated to the Parks and Recreation Department. The Department raises about \$150,000 through fees, charges and contributions.

## Township Revenue Philosophy

Middletown Township's program fee philosophy has been to recover costs for programs that directly benefit the individual participating and not the township at large. About 96 percent of the organized recreation programs recover their costs. The Department has also made great progress in recovering the cost of operating the community center with an 85 percent recovery rate in 2003 with the expectation that the center will recover all of its costs in the future.

Middletown Township does not charge field use fees from the organized youth sports groups. The fields are viewed as the township's contribution to supporting the organizations. The skateboard park requires a fee for use.

**Figure 7-1**  
**Middletown Township Revenue Sources**

**Real Estate Taxes:** The tax rate is .87 mills for Middletown Township.

**Recreation:** User fees for recreation programs and services.

**Open Space:** Funds derived from developers through the mandatory dedication of parkland or fee in lieu of dedication.

**Act 511 Taxes:** These taxes represent \_\_\_ percent of the township's revenues. This is a category of taxes under Pennsylvania's state law called Act 511. The category includes the following taxes along with their tax rate in Middletown Township:

- \* Earned income tax – A 1.0 percent Earned Income Tax requires that all persons living or working in Middletown Township pay 1.0% on all individual gross earnings and net profits from businesses. It does not apply to income, which is constitutionally or specifically exempt.
- \* Real Estate Transfer Tax
- \* Occupation Privilege Tax
- \* Amusement/Admission Taxes
- \* Business Privilege Tax

**Licenses and Permits:** Revenues under this category are derived from cable television but also include revenues from permits for plumbing, zoning, alcoholic beverages, inspections, occupancy permits.

**Fines and Forfeits:** Fines from violations and accident reports.

**Interests and Rents:** The Township's investment program helps Middletown gain as much as possible while minimizing exposure to loss. Property rentals also generate revenue for the Township.

**Grants and Gifts:** Middletown Township pursues grant funding and donation for community endeavors.

**General Government Permits:** Fees charged by Middletown for regulatory actions regarding development, planning, and zoning hearings.

**Public Safety:** Charges for Public safety include fees for inspections and accident reports to insurance companies.

## Operating Revenue Sources

Table 7-1 shows Middletown Township's revenues for 1999 through 2004.

<b>Table 7-1 Middletown Township Revenues 2001-2005</b>					
<b>Item</b>	<b>2001 Actual</b>	<b>2002 Actual</b>	<b>2003 Actual</b>	<b>2004 Actual</b>	<b>2005 Budget</b>
Township Taxes	\$365,968	\$435,414	\$436,013	\$452,775	\$448,562
Interfund Operating Transfers	0	83,528	207,446	208,549	212,210
<b>Non Tax Revenues</b>	<b>94,843</b>	<b>142,216</b>	<b>167,433</b>	<b>181,043</b>	<b>198,500</b>
Facility Use permits	5,600	7,150	9,825	9,270	9,500
Skate Park fees	0	16,500	13,165	9,401	10,000
Summer recreation fees	38,650	48,945	53,033	56,565	65,000
Other recreation fees	50,592	66,600	77,231	90,856	95,000
Building rental	0	0	6,351	5,760	15,000
Contributions	400	2,700	7,828	9,191	4,000
<b>TOTAL Revenues</b>	<b>\$487,901</b>	<b>\$666,761</b>	<b>\$812,895</b>	<b>\$844,371</b>	<b>\$861,277</b>

## Chart and Revenue Highlights

- Non-tax revenues increased by 91 percent from 2001 to 2004, a notable accomplishment. The first year with a full time professional director was 2001.
- During that same time period, the township's tax investment increased by 24 percent.
- The programs and services provide a significant source of revenue.
- Non-tax revenues support 90 percent of the Township's program budget.

Table 7-2 presents the Parks & Recreation Department Operating Budget for 2001 through 2005. In 2003, the park maintenance budget was moved into Administration. In 2005, the Administration budget includes all staff and insurance.

<b>Table 7-2 Middletown Township Parks and Recreation Department Operating Budget 2001-2004</b>					
<b>Budget Items</b>	<b>2001 Actual</b>	<b>2002 Actual</b>	<b>2003 Actual</b>	<b>2004 Actual</b>	<b>2005 Budget</b>
Administration	\$136,367	\$226,286	\$156,198	\$248,138	\$395,983
Recreation Programs	88,347	167,579	174,680	187,694	222,017
Parks/Facilities	330,321	457,843	457,948	324,434	266,552
Celebrations & Senior Citizens	600	600	500	500	500
Insurance	0	3500	0	7,397	7,175
Interfund Operating Transfers	24,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$591,016</b>	<b>\$883,237</b>	<b>\$811,329</b>	<b>\$790,167</b>	<b>\$914,232</b>

## **Parks and Recreation Budget Findings**

In 2003, the Township operating budget was \$19,700,000. Of this, \$811,329 was allocated for Parks and Recreation equaling about 4.1% of the municipal operating budget. This is about \$19.72 per capita or \$14.98 in tax revenues per capita. With an average of 2.81 people per household, the average household is paying about \$42 annually for parks and recreation. The national average per capita in 1996 (latest available) in the United States was \$45. According to the budget and salary survey, the average municipal investment for municipalities of this size is about \$33 per capita with a range of \$3 to \$123.

- About 20 percent of the overall operating budget is derived from fees and charges. However, 90 percent of all program costs is recovered. This reflects the township philosophy of cost recovery programming for the major programs, school district charges and the lack of revenue generating facilities such as gymnasiums, ice rinks, swimming pools, and camping facilities.
- About 56 percent of the budget is invested in park maintenance. Park maintenance is the single largest recurring expenditure in a parks and recreation budget. With 216 active park acres, the annual maintenance expenditure equates to about \$2,060/acre. This is towards the lower-middle range of per acre cost of between \$1500 and \$3,000 per acre in townships similar to Middletown in Pennsylvania. As a comparison, park acreage maintenance figures range as high as \$40,000 per acre in urban parks in the great park systems of the United States.
- There are no youth field use fees. A “rule of thumb” for sports field maintenance for good quality conditions is about \$5,000 per field annually.

## **Grants**

The Department regularly pursues grants for programs and park improvements. They have been successful in securing grants such as funds for this planning grant, an arts grant for the mural project and tennis funds for the youth tennis program.

## **Middletown Township’s Capital Investment**

The Township has floated bonds in the past, which included parks and recreation projects such as Middletown Community Park. The source of the capital fund budget now is the fees-in-lieu- of the dedication of parkland from developers.

## **Parks and Recreation Financial Management**

The Director of Parks and Recreation is responsible for overseeing the financial operation of the Department. The Department operates with a mix of funding sources including compulsory resources, earned income and financial assistance.

## **Budget Process**

Although the Director of Parks and Recreation works on financing year round, the budget process begins in earnest in August. The Director solicits input from the parks staff and the Park and Recreation Board in preparation of the annual budget. The Director presents it to the Township Manager for review. The Board of Supervisors reviews, revises and adopts the township budget in December for the following fiscal year.

## **Middletown Community Foundation**

The Department pursues donations from local businesses to support special events and projects. Area businesses donate both products and funds. Significant donations have been generated including funds for the Skate Board Park. The Middletown Community Foundation has been set up for the purpose of supporting projects that will benefit the community through public private partnerships.

## **Fees-in-Lieu of Dedication of Park Land**

Fees -in-lieu of the dedication of parkland are derived from fees assessed for new homes built in the Township. The Township is nearly completely developed with limited opportunity remaining to obtain parkland or fees-in-lieu. Consideration could be given to the dedication of parkland or fees-in-lieu of dedication for commercial and industrial development. Other townships have successfully implemented this dedication.

## **Economic Benefits of Parks and Recreation**

**Recreation is an investment, not a cost. The National Recreation & Park Association has undertaken a nationwide campaign to promote the benefits of parks and recreation. It is based upon decades of research that demonstrates the economic, social, individual and environmental benefits of parks and recreation. Research findings come from a broad spectrum of sources ranging from the National Park Service to medical schools and conservative “think tanks” such as the Rand Corporation. These diverse sources all point to the value of parks, recreation and open space.**

- **A 1997 study reported that owners of small companies ranked recreation, parks and open space as the highest priorities in choosing a new location for their business".**
- **Property values are higher near open space.**
- **Recreation deters crime and substance abuse: incarceration of a juvenile offender costs 100 times more than public recreation for one youth.**
- **Walking an extra mile adds 21 minutes to your life and reduces national health care costs by 34 cents.**

- **Recreation is the single most effective way to build strong family bonds, the foundation of our society.**
- **For every dollar a community invests in parks and recreation, anywhere from \$1.02 to \$1.42 is generated in spending in the economy.**
- **According to the American Softball Association, softball tournaments generate about \$150,000 in spending in the local community over a single weekend.**

**In the Delaware Valley, for every dollar a person spends on a cultural activity, they spend another four dollars on related items such as food.**

## **Analysis**

Middletown Township has a very conservative fiscal philosophy. The Township prides itself on holding the line on taxes while providing high quality community services. The elected officials are committed to holding the line on taxes. Services are growing and costing more.

The Park and Recreation Department also operates in a conservative fashion by using a revenue generation approach that includes tax dollars but also fees and charges, grants, gifts, donations and sponsorships. About 20 percent of the Park and Recreation budget comes from non-tax sources.

## **Benchmarks**

Middletown Township appropriates about four percent of its annual township operating budget for Parks and Recreation. This is under the five percent minimum percentage suggested for strong parks and recreation departments. However, the Township's overall fiscal austerity contributes to a lower overall operating budget than similar townships in the region. The benchmark of about \$19 per capita is also lower than expected for a community of this size.

## **Public Opinion: Paying for Parks and Recreation Improvements**

**In the Public Opinion Survey, 50 percent of the survey respondents reported that they would be willing to support paying additional local real estate tax for parks and recreation improvements. About 14 percent were not sure about paying more and 20 percent were not willing to any more.**

## **Parks and Recreation = Economic Development**

The parks and recreation system is a chief asset of Middletown Township. The Township's investment in parks and recreation has helped to provide a high quality of life for the people who live in Middletown. In turn, parks and recreation helps to attract and retain people in the community. With technology and the work force in a "commuting" and retail and service based economy, parks and recreation can play a key role in the vitality of Middletown Township. A park system with creek access, trails and pathways, the arts and culture, recreation opportunities for people throughout their lifetime and a host of special community events (lots of things to do!) can help attract and retain businesses. More and more people can live wherever they want without respect to traditional factors

such as access to transportation or labor pool. That is when quality of life decisions come into play for businesses in making decisions on where to locate or expand.

Parks and Recreation goes hand-in-hand with Middletown's future. For Middletown to be a vibrant thriving community in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Township must provide a quality park and recreation system and visual landscape. Focusing on high quality design and development will help to spur the kind of economic development that will attract developers who want to work with the township on innovative projects.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Fiscal resources in Middletown are mixed: the operating funds are under a fiscally conservative philosophy but there is \$40 million in the township Investment Fund. The intent of this fund is to generate investment that would support improvements while retaining the fund itself. The Township has a very small staff given the population of 44,141. Additional investment through a mix of public funds and non-tax revenues should be considered for additional staffing, park improvements, and maintenance.

When operating with tight fiscal resources, there is a tendency to concentrate on maintaining the status quo rather than on creating a vision for what the community should be. Just as the Township made bold decisions for the park system over the last ten years with things like the Skate Park and the Barn, officials are being called upon to once again make bold decisions required to position the township as vibrant community in this new century.

The interview process revealed that citizens have great pride in the parks and recreation system in Middletown Township. The financial challenge will be to provide the operating support needed for the increased responsibilities of parks and recreation. There was a strong message in the public participation process that the citizens want to make sure that the Township takes good care and makes the best use possible of parks, recreation facilities and natural areas.

- 1. Increase the level of financial support for providing community service through parks and recreation.**
- 2. Develop a revenue policy for Parks & Recreation.** This policy should reflect the Township's philosophy in generating revenues from compulsory resources (taxes and impact fees); earned income (fees and charges, sales, etc.), contractual receipts (facility rentals, leases, concessions) and financial assistance (grants, gifts, friends, fundraising, bequests)
- 3. Set goals to increase non-tax revenues from 20 percent of the budget to 30 to 50 percent of the budget for recreation.** This does not mean that fees should supplant township support but rather add to it. The revenue policy should address providing for those who cannot afford to pay. Alternatives can be the establishment of a community foundation to support those in need for public recreation, "sweat equity" through community service such as adopt-a park tasks, scholarships, reduced fees or other approaches to be explored. It is also important to consider the impact of increasing the maintenance budget on this ratio. As maintenance budgets increase, the ration of non-tax revenues decreases.

The fees established in the Revenue Policy should translate into the cost of a "recreational hour" per person. A recreational hour is defined as what a person would pay for a recreational experience with such activities as going to the movies, golfing, and so on. Based upon a movie ticket, it would be about \$4 per hour. Recognizing that the fees are low now in the Township, the Township could

phase in fees over the next five years with gradual increases with respect to what the market will bear. Rates could be based upon group size and type (citizen, school, non-profit, business and so on).

3. **Develop strategic alliances that benefit the community as a whole.** Examples would be with the Bucks County Nature Centers for the Styer Farm and the Water property. Create, develop and/or sustain partnerships for parks and recreation. Other initiatives could include organizations such as PANA (Pennsylvania Activities and Nutrition Alliance), For major capital improvement projects, partnerships with other providers and private sector involvement should be considered to generate a portion of financing necessary as has been successful for the Township in the past. Such partnerships need to be based upon a solid business plan that demonstrates the costs and potential advantages to the citizenry as owners of the public estate.
4. **Allocate resources for capital improvements and operating based on community need and the goal of making the parks more valuable to the community and more “park-like”.** In Middletown, this would be “creature comforts” to make the parks more enjoyable for the public such as drinking fountains, restrooms, shade, landscaping, scenic beauty, and seating areas. This should also include “lifetime” fitness and wellness facilities.
6. **Consider a long-term financial strategy for park, recreation facility and bike path improvements.** This could be in the form of a bond issue or other mechanisms as deemed appropriate by qualified financial advisors. Having capital funds would enable the Township to match state and federal grants so that township money is leveraged to gain more purchasing power. Townships in Pennsylvania have been floating bond issues ranging from \$5 million to \$26 million over ten years. Retaining financial counsel would enable the Township to support its in house financial expertise, take a holistic approach to overall township capital needs and position the Township to take advantage of state and federal programs for parks, recreation, trails, and revitalization that are under consideration now. Consideration of the municipality’s current capital funds should be a part of the discussion about funding capital improvements.
7. **Consider creating a park endowment with a portion of the township’s capital funds.** The proceeds from the interest could be designated to support a particular initiative such as park maintenance or operating costs for special use facilities.



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# Putting the Pieces Together

The preceding chapters examined the individual components of Middletown Township’s parks and recreation system along with community factors and trends. This chapter draws on every previous step of the planning process, plus the knowledge and experience of the planning team. The inventory, analysis, goals and potential actions need to be combined with the realities of Middletown Township, the budget, and the strengths of the Parks and Recreation Department in order to develop realistic strategies.

## Middletown Township at the Millennium

Middletown Township is a nearly fully developed suburban community in Lower Bucks County. As an older township, Middletown experienced most of its development right after World War II. The local economy is primarily retail and service base with the largest shopping and commercial areas in Bucks County.

Middletown Township possesses much of what it needs to flourish. The foundation of a great park and recreation system built over the past fifty years. Dedicated elected and appointed officials. A professional park and recreation staff. A cadre of community volunteers. Distinctive neighborhoods. Location near health care centers, transportation network, and shopping areas. Affordable housing. Excellent school system.

Just as the Township has invested successfully in parks and recreation, this plan calls for the Township to continue to do so at an even faster pace as a way of using parks and recreation as a community planning tool. Planning for a more competitive, higher quality future includes parks, trails, recreation facilities, community events and recreation services that attract and retain businesses. To generate a secure and vibrant future, Middletown needs to be the kind of community in which people want to live, work, play, raise a family and retire. Parks and recreation is a major component of that vibrant future. The Township as a whole needs to re-focus total planning efforts, and concentrate on aggressively leveraging the township’s assets and current conditions.

Despite the accomplishments in parks and recreation, the Township has challenges in this area. Given the size and population of the Township, Middletown’s park and recreation system doesn’t “fit” – it is too small! The Township has about half the acreage it needs at minimum recommended park standards, no true community park and a full time staff of one recreation professional and three maintenance workers. The department is also under funded at \$10.09 per capita for parks and recreation operating. Growing the system to a size that “fits” Middletown and conveys the image of a premiere park and recreation *system* is the main challenge over the next ten years.

## **Parks and Recreation Scenario**

The Township gets a huge return on its investment in the parks and recreation department. The Middletown Parks & Recreation Department operates in a cutting edge fashion, establishing successful programs from the Teen Task Force to such creative ventures as the Barn School. Going back to the days of William Levitt, the Township used parks as the foundation for community planning resulting in a neighborhood based system of parks.

## **Parks and Recreation Facilities**

Middletown Township has completed most of its parkland acquisition. The Township has 220 acres of parkland distributed among 19 parks. Most of these parks are smaller neighborhood parks with the largest park being the Community Park. Community Park is more of a sports complex than a true community park. Despite having the sports complex, additional ballfields are needed to keep pace with the increasing participation in year round sports. The challenge is to tie the parks and recreation facilities together into a true park system, fold in natural resource conservation, connect the community through a system of greenways and pathways and provide access to the creeks for water based recreation. The acquisition of the Stone Farm, the creation of a township wide bike path system, and the development of an indoor community recreation center are the next major step forward.

## **Focusing Recreation**

Just as the park system is evolving, so are recreation programs and services. Recreation programs have been progressive in their focus encompassing a myriad of services for the citizenry ranging from the traditional summer recreation program for children to arts & cultural programs. In addition to the traditional programs, the Township established an arts board for cultural opportunities and received innovative grant funding for the Mural Project. While other communities struggle with services to teens, Middletown Township has led the charge in developing a successful teen service program that serves as a model to other communities.

Changes in recreation services projected include focusing on providing self-directed, nature based recreation opportunities through the planning and development of facilities that could support this modern trend. Today, people want to participate in outdoor recreation, year round fitness and wellness, and lifetime recreation at their own discretion rather than on a scheduled programmed format. Developing a balanced program for the department of traditional scheduled classes, events and activities along with facilities that people can use on their own for self-directed recreation is the challenge. What comes with this challenge is the need for a strong and effective outreach and promotional effort to make people aware of the opportunities in the community. This goes along with the survey findings in which respondent identified their wish to know more about facilities and services.

## **Supporting Parks and Recreation**

Middletown Township spends about \$10.09 in taxes per person per year on municipal parks and recreation. In the most recent Pennsylvania Park and Recreation Budget and Salary Survey (2002), the average per capita spending for municipal parks and recreation in communities with populations of 25,000 to 49,999 was \$33.04. Middletown Township has a population exceeding some of the cities such as York with about 42,000 people, yet operates with a much smaller staff. Out of the 33 municipalities surveyed in this population category, Middletown ranked at the bottom of the list in terms of staffing numbers with only one full time recreation person and three park maintenance people. Similar municipalities with program driven departments but with smaller populations have at least five

full time recreation people. As comparisons: Warminster has six. Upper Dublin has 10. Northampton has seven. The point is that the size of the staff is too small for the size of the municipality. Additional staff for promotion and public services, programming, and maintenance are needed.

## **The Middletown Millennium Plan: Recreation and Parks Update**

The following vision statement will guide the Middletown Township Department of Parks and Recreation in the implementation of the plan. All decisions should be made based upon working towards achieving this vision. The vision is based upon public opinion and ideas generated throughout the planning process.

### **Parks and Recreation Vision Statement**

**The people of Middletown Township live and recreate in a community that celebrates its active, healthy lifestyles in a setting that is rich with natural resources. Close-to-home parks are complemented by large community parks with preserved natural areas, creek access, and recreation facilities for individuals and community groups to use throughout their lifetime year round. A system of greenways and trails connects people to parks, neighborhoods, schools, business and community destinations both within the Township as well as with adjoining municipalities for regional connections. The Township has a wide range of recreation opportunities that enable people to lead fulfilling lives with strong family ties and a sense of community. The entire system is developed and maintained through cooperative efforts among partners that include municipal, business, educational, social, cultural, and environmental interests. Together they have achieved a balanced system that offers a quality of life distinct to Middletown and contributes to a vibrant thriving community.**

To achieve this vision, the Middletown Township Department of Parks and Recreation will operate in accordance with its mission statement.

## **Parks and Recreation Mission Statement**

**The Parks and Recreation Department is a professionally managed, multi-faceted public service of Middletown Township. Our mission is based upon our passion for enriching the lives of the people who live, work, or visit here through recreation, creating a livable community, and maintaining a safe, clean and attractive environment. We consistently strive to provide enjoyable experiences for our citizenry through caring, authentic service, quality facilities and programs. The following points guide us:**

- **To manage the Parks and Recreation Department in the best interests of the community and in a manner that contributes to its revitalization.**
- **To exceed customer expectations of our citizens and businesses by understanding, anticipating and fulfilling their needs.**
- **To provide a rewarding and challenging professional experience for our employees.**
- **We are committed to delivering the benefits of parks and recreation to our community including the following:**
- **Economic benefits of attracting and retaining businesses in Middletown Township; increasing property values through parks, trails, natural resource conservation and scenic beauty; and contributing to more productive work forces.**
- **Environmental benefits of protecting natural areas, the streams, enhancing water and air quality and contributing to overall community livability.**
- **Social benefits of building strong families, reducing alienation and loneliness, promoting cultural harmony, providing equitable opportunities to all people in the community regardless of their financial abilities, and providing positive alternatives to anti-social behavior.**
- **Individual benefits of strengthening self-esteem and self-image, improving fitness and wellness and reducing stress.**

The planning process revealed that there are eight key areas of focus:

- 1. Focus on Natural Resource Conservation.**  
Address the need to provide creek access for water based recreation and environmental education. Complete the acquisition of the Stone Farm and develop a master plan to conserve the site in as natural a condition as possible.
- 2. Transform the parks into a park system.**  
Use design elements such as thematic signage, logo, promotion and advertising to promote Middletown parks as a park system. An important strategy to do this is the development of a community bike path system that would link the facilities.
- 3. Create a Biking and Non-Motorized Boating Trail network.**  
Develop and implement a community biking and boating network. The major highways traverse the community so that networks might have to be set up within geographic areas within the transportation corridors. Use the Neshaminy for a water trail. Develop the access points, physical improvements and most importantly the promotional materials to inform people about creek access and the programs to teach people how to do non-motorized boating. Consider a partnership with community groups for this effort.
- 4. Provide facilities for community organizations.**  
Community organized sports groups need additional playing and practice fields. As new the new parks are being planned, continue to include the organizations in the planning process to insure that their needs are addressed.
- 5. Plan for an Indoor Recreation Center for the long-term.** Plan an indoor recreation center for citizens of all ages and interests to use throughout their lifetime and on an expanded basis once they retire. The lack of indoor public recreation facilities is a major factor in service limitations and programming in the arts, culture, and lifetime wellness.
- 6. Institute gradual and strategic changes in refocusing recreation services.** Given the small staff, expand programs and services incrementally. Work on adding the role of facilitator of recreation to that of direct program provider. Develop a program management plan with annual goals and actions.
- 7. Prepare for the increasing demand on park and recreation facility maintenance with the addition of the new park and biking/boating trails.**  
Additional staff, equipment, and budget will be needed to maintain the new parks. New skills in the area of natural resource management need to be added to the maintenance team..
- 8. Invest in Parks and Recreation at a level commensurate with responsibilities and resources.** The Township needs to increase its investment in parks and recreation in the form of staffing and capital improvements for the improvement of existing facilities, making the parks more park-like, development and operation of year round recreation facilities.

The eight focus areas are the foundation for the goals and recommendations in the next chapter.

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## Goals and Recommendations

The goals and the recommendations present a suggested course of action for Middletown 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 township 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. Some things are urgent such as land conservation given the intensity of development in Middletown and the limited undeveloped land remaining. The plan is intended to be flexible to enable the Township to make wise decisions in implementing the **Middletown Millennium Plan**.

### Goals

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

Goal 1: Conserve the natural resources of Middletown Township including adopting a regional perspective.

Goal 2: Connect the community through a system of greenways and trails; and advocate regional connections to County and State Parks.

Goal 3: Establish a premiere system of parks, recreation facilities, greenways, and trails for the citizens and for resource conservation and environmental education.

Goal 4: Provide recreation opportunities, programs and services that will enrich the quality of life for the people who live, work, and visit in Middletown Township.

Goal 5: Manage the parks and recreation system in a professional manner that conveys the greatest possible benefit to the public in an appropriate scale to the Township as a large community of 45,000 citizens.

Goal 6: Invest in parks and recreation to sustain and enhance the quality of life in Middletown in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

## Goal 1

Conserve the natural resources of Middletown Township including adopting a regional perspective.

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### Objective 1

**Solidify public preservation of important natural resource areas within the Township through outright acquisition of properties and easements, land use controls available through initiatives available through the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, and alliances with individual landowners, environmental groups and environmental focus areas of local, county, regional and state and federal agencies and institutions.**

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### Recommendations

#### a. Pursue Open Space Acquisitions, Dedications and Easements

**Complete Stone Farm Acquisition.** 175 acres. The Township is in the midst of activities to acquire the Stone Farm Tract per the recommendations of the Recreation Parks and Open Space Plan Addendum of 1998. This agricultural tract is adjacent to the Bucks County Core Creek Park and has significant importance as a “de facto” expansion of open space for the County Park and value as an area for headwaters water quality protection for a feeder stream to Lake Luxemburg within Core Creek Park. It is in an area of the Township that is remote from a municipal park facility. The open fields, streams and woodlands and large area of the tract allow for provision of natural resources protection functions and establishment of a community park facility with environmental education and recreation elements (See discussion below). The Park and Recreation Board should actively advocate the completion of the acquisition and assist in identifying innovative strategies for funding resource protection measures in partnership with the Bucks County Parks Department and the Pennsylvania Division of Conservation and Natural Resources.

**Fleming Farm.** 50 acres. Since the recommendations of the Recreation Parks and Open Space Plan Addendum of 1998, approximately two-thirds of this highly ranked property has been developed as a restricted age residential community, the remainder is still referred to as the “Fleming Farm”. Located on the north side of Village Road in the northeast corner of the township and extending into Newtown and Lower Makefield Townships, cultivated fields are characteristic of the rural-preserve tracts of one of Bucks County’s prime agricultural preserve areas. Agricultural easement purchase programs preserving the farming properties of Lower Makefield and Newtown immediately north of the Township. The potential ranking of this parcel for agricultural preservation is strong.

**Matrix (aka Saba) Property.** Part of 25 acre site - The Matrix Company is preparing plans to develop this 25 acre parcel that is a portion of a larger project site in adjacent

Lower Makefield Township in the east central portion of the Township as a mixed use project. This site contains important natural resource features and listed PA endangered vegetative species according to a recent Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Inventory Review.

**Prepare a Resource Preservation Strategy for the Lower Neshaminy Creek River Greenway.** Approx. 10 miles - The recent Lower Neshaminy Creek River Conservation Plan (LNCRCP) prepared by the Heritage Conservancy for the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources contains prioritized goals and recommendations for the Lower Neshaminy Watershed. In this report, a strong priority has been placed on the importance of acquisition and easement dedication for preservation and enhanced water resources protection and recreational access within the river corridor greenway for this watershed. It is fortunate that there is in place a zoning overlay district for those portions of the watershed within Middletown so that recent development sites have refrained from overdeveloping the Neshaminy Creek watershed. As a result, a considerable number of riverside properties are already in Township hands. The recommended Resource Preservation Strategy should include a comprehensive “gap analysis” of parcels remaining in private ownership in the Middletown segments of this river corridor, options for protection, identification of potential partners/stakeholders and potentials for restoration of habitat and sensitive development of appropriate areas for recreational use, especially related to trails and water-based activities.

**Prepare a Resource Preservation Strategy for the Mill Creek Greenway.** The LNCRCP report also makes a recommendation for a resources protection greenway concept within the upper reaches of the Mill Creek corridor and watershed. The upper reaches of the Mill Creek corridor lie within a valuable area of the Township, zoned for commercial and light industrial uses. Developer dedications and easements are more likely to be successful here than outright acquisition. The upper corridor has high value for natural flood control that will benefit the entire watershed, existing parkland and neighborhoods downstream.

**b. Generally advocate for more open space and recreation areas dedications and alternate funding in the course of municipal review and approvals of development of remaining vacant lands. Specifically, recommend a thorough update of the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance and Zoning Ordinance of the Township with specific consideration of critical natural resource areas protection and preservation as this relates to current trends in environmentally-responsible land development.**

Presently Middletown Township is enacting more stringent requirements for natural resource protection from private developers. In concert with these measures, ordinance construction should reference the specific preservation objectives of this Plan as guidance to the layout of proposed facilities and open space areas within individual sites to support and enhance the Township proposed system of open space and greenways.



## Goal 2

Connect the community through a system of greenways and trails and advocate regional connections to County and State Parks.

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### Objective 1

**Develop a Master Plan for Bicycle and Pedestrian Trails for Middletown Township and new zoning and subdivision and land use requirements for comprehensive establishment of a Township trail network through the combined efforts of the Township, and developers.**

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### Recommendations

- a. **Develop Master Plan for Bicycle and Pedestrian Trails.** Based upon the generalized Primary Trail corridors shown in the Action Plan of Park System Recommendations Map at the end of this Report, The Master Plan will provide more detail and guidance for the Municipality and applicants for realty development for establishment of the actual trail components and
- b. **Develop Bicycle and Pedestrian Trails Resolution of Adoption, Zoning and Subdivision and Land Use Code Regulations.** Such regulation will provide the mechanism for comprehensive establishment of a Township trail network through the combined efforts of the Township and developers. The regulation should include a requirement for constructing new trail segments connecting all new developments to the trails network depicted in the Plan or a “fee in lieu” option that may be applied to township-wide trails planning, design and construction.

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### Objective 2

**Enhance the functionality and character of the existing “greenbelt” areas with a unified internal trail system that connects new and established park features and provides opportunities for bicycle and pedestrian access between neighborhoods, to local services and elementary schools.**

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### Recommendations

- a. **Prepare a Greenways Trail Program and Implementation Schedule for existing neighborhoods where no significant new private developer involvement in trail construction is anticipated.** The program will identify funding mechanisms and prioritize specific Trail segments that will validate need, emphasize partnerships with other trail building advocates and encourage public support of the Program.

It is important to consider potential trail construction and maintenance assistance through “Friends of “organizations, civic groups and school groups within established neighborhoods and ultimate ownership by other entities where the trail and greenway has a regional significance. A Preliminary trail segment/potential partner breakdown is provided below:

- Lower Mill Creek Greenway Trail/  
Upper Orchard and Bucks County Frosty Hollow Tennis Center
- Queen Anne Creek Greenway Trail/  
Miller Elementary School, Bucks County Queen Anne Park
- Upper Mill Creek Greenway Trail/  
Everitt Elementary School/ neighborhoods
- Lion’s Park Off Road Loop Trail/  
Civic Groups/PennDOT/ neighborhoods
- Middletown Eastern Trail  
Oxford Valley Mall-Sesame Place/ PennDOT
- Middletown Central Trail  
Styers Farm, Bucks County Playwicki Park,

**b. Develop Lower Neshaminy Creek Greenway & Waters Trail. In partnership with the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, Bucks County Park Department, Neshaminy School District, Lower Neshaminy Creek Watershed Association, Langhorne, Hulmeville and the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.** Prepare an implementation plan for a shared use trail with canoe and kayak access points, portage points and complementary facilities at Playwicki Farm Park, Periwinkle Park, Harris Park and Idlewood Environmental Center for non-motorized boating along the navigable reaches of the Neshaminy Creek on the Western border of Middletown Township. Beginning and ending launch areas, water safety, and daily registration and monitoring of users are major considerations to be addressed within programming.

**c. Support revitalization of the Bucks County regional trail/greenway “Link Parks” system to access neighboring municipalities, Bucks County Parks and Environmental Centers of the region, Tyler State Park, Benjamin Rush State Park and Neshaminy State park (to the south).** In association with provisions for connections to utilize the local trail network, advocate (A) and/or partner (P) with Bucks County and DCNR to construct the regional trails shown below as prioritized by the Bucks County Park & Recreation Plan, 1986:

First Priority

Neshaminy Creek 1: Playwicki Park to Core Creek Park-P

Neshaminy Creek 2: Core Creek Park to Tyler State Park-A & P

Neshaminy Creek 4: Playwicki Park to HulmevillePark-P

Neshaminy Creek 5: Hulmeville Park to Neshaminy State Park-A & P

Neshaminy Creek 3: Playwicki Park to Hulmeville-P

Second Priority

Brock Creek: Core Creek Park to Middletown Community Park to Lower Makefield and Yardley-P

Third Priority  
Mill Creek 21- at confluence of Mill Creek and Queen Anne to Black Ditch  
and Silver Lake Environmental Center - A & P

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### Objective 3

**Understanding the present divisions of the Township by major transportation corridors, identify opportunities in existing local “bridging” roadways for future integration of bicycle and pedestrian facilities and assess potential locations for placement of pedestrian overpasses.**

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#### Recommendations

- a. **Prepare recommendations for improvement of those local routes of travel that can be adapted to provide viable bicycle and pedestrian connections across major highways to the planned bicycle and pedestrian trails network, through an inventory and analysis of the local roadway system.** Include specific guidelines for traffic calming measures, trail design and structures that address this issue and each feasible location. Coordinate these findings with frequent monitoring of PennDOT improvements schedules to get these facilities included within the specific roadway project program. Economical on-grade solutions with added signalization and mid-crosswalk rest/safety medians, additions to existing bridging “overpass” roads and pedestrian overpasses or tunnels should be advocated where feasible.

## Goal 3

Establish a premiere system of parks, recreation facilities, greenways, and trails to meet the needs of the citizens as well as for resource conservation and environmental education\*

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### Objective 1

#### Develop Design Theme Guidelines

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The Department of Parks and Recreation should develop a Design Theme Guidelines Manual for all of the parks within the “system.” Overall, the Township’s park system lacks a strong unifying theme that complements and promotes its many attributes and services while enhancing and maximizing individual park utility and aesthetics. This issue relates to the lack of more expansive passive/active, diversified, “park-like” parks versus the present dominance of “single-focus” sports complexes, tot lot areas, and formal and naturalistic viewsheds now seen as separate entities and often not recognized as Middletown Park facilities. All unifying and utilitarian elements should be addressed including but not limited to: plant material, lighting fixtures, benches, signing and system-

\*Five county parks (Chicken Foot, Queene Anne, Frosty Hollow, Playwicki, and [Core Creek](#)) and 19 municipal/neighborhood parks (Middletown Community, Twin Oaks, Cobalt Ridge, Quincy Hollow, Upper Orchard, Forsythia Crossing, Lion's, Deep Dale, Delaware, Poplar, Harris, Sunflower, Detweiler, Veterans, Periwinkle, Beechwood, and Middletown Country Club.)

wide logos, paving materials, structures, bleachers, trash receptacles, information kiosks, etc. The development of such a manual could be integrated with the planning and design of Master Site Plans for Greenways and new park initiatives and reconditioning of existing parks and recreation areas.

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## **Objective 2**

### **Landscape Enhancement Program**

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The Department of Parks and Recreation should develop a Landscape Enhancement Program. Through planned projects throughout the System, this Program will express the role of vegetation in conservation and diversification of habitats, the benefits and functional potential of natural systems in flood management, the restorative and positive psychological impacts of landscape settings and decorative aspects of vegetation. A Master Home Gardener Element could encourage park neighborhood residents to be more involved in the development and maintenance of specific features of each local park and surroundings that connect and integrate park use with neighborhood daily life and leisure pursuits. This element would emphasize the importance of landscape and building maintenance for improved quality of life and preserved realty value in neighborhoods. A “Friends of” and “Corporate Conservation” Element would assist and coordinate the more formal efforts in fundraising and direct civic involvement in semiannual parks, open space and greenways clean up drives and exercise/sports related charitable fundraisers staged within the Parks System. An Environmental Education Element would emphasize the proposed new park development and outreach stations of the Silver Lake Environmental Center at the Langhorne Manor Center and Greenway, the Churchville Environmental Center at the Fleming Farm and Stone Farm sites and the partnership of the Idlewood Environmental Station at the Lower Neshaminy Creek Greenway & Waters Trail.

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## **Objective 3**

### **Middletown Millennium Parks Partnerships Program**

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As this study reveals, the parks, recreation, sports and open space providers within Middletown include numerous stakeholders that are participants in recreation and open space management in the township but not under Park and Recreation Board control or within Recreation Department-administered, Township-owned lands. Major examples of this situation are found in the holdings of the Neshaminy School District and the Bucks County Parks Department and residential project homeowners associations, as well as other non-profit and private entities. At this point, the excellent delivery of these services to the community depends upon a loosely-defined network of cooperation between these groups, generally championed by the Middletown Recreation Department.

The Middletown Millennium Parks Partnership Program (M2P2) will advance these cooperative associations, provide more outside grants and funding options, and position the Park and Recreation Board in an more proactive stance when recreation or open space resources are threatened or opportunities for positive intervention arises. The Program will act as a focal point to the initiation of specific combined efforts for internal municipal departments, Township, County and State interactions

on joint acquisitions and project development and to strengthen the already successful cooperation between the Recreation Department and the Neshaminy School District in providing facilities and services to the organized youth and adult sports organizations of the community. A second objective of M2P2 will be to identify and attract private and corporate entities to improvement that can be branded and express a civic pride and contribution to the community.

M2P2 will enhance and display the commitment of these participants in general planning and specific acquisition and improvement proposals where a partnership is crucial to the successful outcome and preservation of sparse open space and historical and cultural resources can be confirmed.

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#### **Objective 4**

### **Sports and Recreation Enhancement Program**

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The present status quo for organized sports is rapidly evolving as long field sports rise in popularity over base fields. These field types refer to the many teams sports that can be played on rectangular fields versus the specific infield construction needed for baseball and softball fields. The present provisions for field scheduling to club teams by individual schools, the Township Recreation Department and the County Parks Department appears to be adequate for now, but trends in extending team play seasons and training periods will eventually negatively impact those recreation facilities that depended on overlapping multi-use fields. In order to efficiently provide for organized sports Middletown should solidify partnerships to secure year round recreation areas, implement plans to create single sport areas and assist in the upgrade of appropriate areas for lighting and extended use. The existing partnership of the local soccer club, Middletown Recreation Department and the Hoover School to provide fields and sport lighting presents a successful model to built upon. Not all fields need to be premiere fields. However, all fields need to be playable. All fields should a basic level of care that provides for safe, clean, and attractive fields with an adequate playing surface. The quality of the fields should range from this basic level up to premiere conditions that merit tournaments and high levels of competitive play with subsurface draininage, irrigation, field lighting, support facilities and a high level of maintenance. Most of the fields in Middletown should fall in the mid-range between basic and premiere. Middletown Township should also consider developing a graduated system for ballfields providing for primarily recreational play and youth skill development. This could include establishing training areas for skill development that might not require a full field such as batting cages or place to “kick on goal”. That way, the Township can provide for all levels of play, offer skill development areas, allocate resources more effectively, and provide facilities with revenue generating potential. In terms of youth athletic skill development, having a graduated system of fields offers the participants the incentive of the opportunity to play on progressively better fields as they increase their own skill development. The following projects will contain major components to forward these concepts:

### **Veterans Park, Beechwood Park and Poplar Park**

Develop additional long fields at each of these facilities for anticipated increase for boys and girls soccer, lacrosse, field hockey in overall redevelopment review of these parks. Presently the Veterans and Beechwood Parks are to be the subject of a combined Master plan proposal.

### **Core Creek Park Maple Point School Sports Areas Upgrades**

Begin discussions with the Bucks County Parks Department and the Neshaminy School District to assist in the preservation and upgrading of the fields and court areas of both these facilities for summer use by the Middletown Recreation Department. Develop proposals for new field construction that can benefit all parties and new sports lighting for extended use and opportunities for tournaments.

### **Middletown Indoor Sports Facilities**

Develop indoor/outdoor courts sports facilities within the central industrial area, as an expansion to the Community Center under consideration now, or as a “stand-alone” indoor sports complex . Consider rehabilitation of a wide “clear span” warehouse supported by an area industrial/ business community adult sports league, an air-supported structure for an indoor sports complex structure, possibly to be sponsored by a complementary private entity (ie. CTW/ Sesame Place/Oxford Valley Mall) so that the temporary structure can be seasonally placed within an existing under-used parking area and be serviced by the parking and cafeteria services of that facility; an integrated expansion of the facility that results from the present Community Center study underway; or a separate facility that may attract a private sector recreation service provider as a Middletown Millennium Parks Partner.

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## **Objective 5**

### **Provide Master Site Improvement Plans**

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Recommendations  
Concepts for Master Plans

#### **MIDDLETOWN COMMUNITY PARK**

- Increase passive and educational uses
- Integrate pedestrian and bicycle Access.
- Passive trails at future perimeter natural areas and gardens
- Enhance security access.
- Outdoor “Rocks and Ropes” training facility for youths and adults
- Acquisition or easement of adjacent wooded, vacant areas
- Provide shared-use trail to neighborhoods.
- Customize lighting for each seasonal sport to mitigate the nuisance factor
- Provide a stronger landscape buffer
- Enhance the Veterans Memorial with landscape and introduce a water element
- Expand shuttle service as a transportation option between parks for specific events

## **TWIN OAKS PARK**

Expansion potential with connecting trails to Chicken Foot Park,  
Develop a trail from the north for pedestrian from neighborhoods  
Reconfigure the two central fields so that the outfield is along the street  
Establish a third linear parking area off Twin Oak Drive  
Sign and enforce towing of illegally parked vehicles  
Relocate some events to other facilities  
Fence the perimeter of the park along Twin Oaks Drive.

## **Queen Anne Creek Greenway Park**

### **Cobalt Ridge Park, Quincy Hollow Park**

Green Belt/Queen Anne Creek Corridor Trail.  
Trailhead for a multi-use path connecting other facilities within the Green Belt  
Stream buffer planting with interpretative site for water related resources.  
Path connections and potential relocation of the basketball court to the Bucks County  
Queen Anne Park.  
New playground, reflecting the presence of younger families  
Horizontal murals of labyrinths, knot gardens and cartoon street maps for Big Wheels  
riders, and exercise classes and open air stages for music and dance classes and events  
Walk Our Children to School - “stops” for a “walking school bus” and Safe Routes to  
School program  
Trails expansion into Queen Anne Park through Bucks County Parks Department  
partnership

## **Mill Creek Greenway Park**

### **Upper Orchard Park, Forsythia Crossing Park, Deep Dale Park**

Green Belt/Mill Creek Corridor Trail  
Develop Forsythia Crossing Park opportunities and partnership with Everitt School  
Trail system in partnership with Bucks County Frosty Hollow Park  
Play field development.  
Stream buffer planting with a potential interpretative site for water related resources  
Expand upon cobblestone crosswalks as traffic calming theme for the Greenways

## **Lions Park and Lions Trail**

Develop a picnic pavilion and parking  
Address pedestrian access issues with shared use trail, sidewalk connections and  
cobblestone crosswalks

## **Detwieler Park and Sunflower Park**

Incrementally develop Detwieler Park and Sunflower Park into Master Home  
Gardener education centers

Pursue opportunities for expansion into the residential site adjacent to south of Detwieler for physical connection to feeder greenways of the Lower Neshaminy Creek River Greenway

### **Develop New Park Features within Existing and New Parks**

Pocket parks, Small plazas, Labyrinth, mazes and parterres, sand lots, Zen style gardens that will double as Volley ball courts, knot gardens, micro soccer fields all providing small venues and seasonal venues for exhibition of exercise and martial arts classes, music and dance school and community theater productions in the parks.

Frisbee golf and fitness trails can be appropriate activity installations for adjunct to the trails within the Greenways proposed

### **Park Project Priority Schedule**

In order to keep the goals, objectives, opportunities and indicatives of this study on track and in focus for the life of the ten year projected horizon of this study, The Recreation Department should develop specific Master Site Improvement Plan packages that direct and inform subsequent final design, construction plans and implementation strategies for each existing and new park, greenway and system expansion proposal.

#### **Prioritized for Short Range Projects (1-3 year completion)**

##### **Site Master Plans**

Veterans Park/ Beechwood Park Recreation Complex  
Community Park  
Upper Orchard/Frosty Hollow Park  
Core Creek Tennis Courts and Fields  
Twin Oaks/Chicken Foot Sport Complex  
Queen Ann Creek Greenway and Trails  
Mill Creek Greenway and Trails  
Forsythia Park/Everitt School  
Lions Trail

#### **Prioritized for Middle Range Projects (3-5 year completion)**

Langhorne Manor Environmental Center  
Periwinkle Park/Harris Park Boat Launches  
Stone Farm Park & Environmental Center  
Fleming Farm Park & Environmental Center  
Middletown Indoor Sports Complex  
Boating Safety Education at Idlewood Center  
Central Trail (Playwicki Park to Styers Farm)Community Park



## **Prioritized for Long Range Projects (5-10 year completion)**

Upper Mill Creek Greenway  
Eastern Trail  
Lower Neshaminy Creek Greenway & Waters Trail  
Bicycle and Pedestrian Connections  
Central Trail (Styers Farm to Community Park)

### **Goal 4**

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

---

#### **Objective 1**

**Develop a programming mission statement.**

---

#### **Recommendations**

- a. Create the mission statement to reflect the needs of the general citizenry as well as community organizations that provide significant recreational services.
- b. Use the mission statement to guide the planning and implementation of all programs. The mission statement can be a tool to use in preventing the over-expansion of recreation programs beyond the capacity of the existing staff and its goal to provide quality experiences to the participants. The over-expansion beyond staff capacity is a chief concern determined in the planning process.

---

#### **Objective 2**

**Expand programming areas when feasible.**

---

#### **Recommendations**

- a. Develop a program expansion plan based upon the realities of the staff capacity. Do not develop new program areas unless there is staff to support it.
- b. Consider adding partners for program expansion:
  - Churchville Nature Center for interpretation and operation of the Styer Orchard goal of interpreting twentieth century farming.
  - Silver Lake Nature Center in developing nature and environmental programs.

- c. Use the Art Committee as a vehicle to add arts programming. Consider adding a community arts specialist when an opportunity for hiring a staff person comes about.
- d. Develop information, advertisement and programs to help citizens develop the skills and knowledge to undertake their own recreation pursuits independently. Focus on the arts, fitness and wellness, family recreation and life-long healthy lifestyles.
  - Provide information about trails, trail lengths, and access to the public.
  - Make information available about where citizens can get onto or near the creek for boating, fishing and nature activities.
  - Continue to teach classes to help people learn how to do life-long recreation such as kayaking.
  - Form partnerships with recreation equipment outfitters with the goal of informing the public about how to buy or rent equipment.
- e. Make registration as convenient as possible for the customer. Institute the credit card registration. Develop an Internet registration system.

---

**Objective 3****Plan indoor facilities for lifelong recreation.**

---

**Recommendations**

- a. Plan for a new senior adult center for use in the immediate term.
- b. Design the center for expansion for use by future generations of retirees and for intergenerational use as interest in stand alone senior centers wanes in the future.
- c. Use focus groups of pre-retirees and retirees to design the facility.

---

**Objective 4****Develop an orchestrated marketing program**

---

**Recommendations**

- a. Create a written marketing program that includes on-going needs assessment, advertising, and promotion with specific objectives, actions, and budget. Include benchmarks for assessing success for the advertising.
- b. Modify the marketing program to reflect actual staff capacity to do this.

- c. Hire a public relations specialist as a priority. The need to get information to the public in a way that builds recognition of Middletown's recreation and park system as well as enhances the image of the department with the public.
- d. Begin to collect and document information about the benefits of parks and recreation specific to Middletown Township. Use this information to support budget requests, generate partnerships and sponsorships, and for municipal economic development purposes. This includes property values, attraction and retaining businesses, deterrence of crime and anti-social behavior, support and investment by private donors and so on.

---

**Objective 5****Procure computer software for recreation programming.**

---

**Recommendations**

- a. Explore software used by other departments with comparable programming levels in the range of 200 or more programs annually.
- b. Conduct an information management needs assessment within the department. Analyze all of the different types of information the department needs to plan, manage, budget, determine costs, make decisions, respond to the requests of elected and appointed officials and administration. Consider all aspects of management and service delivery including developing service profiles for targeting marketing.
- c. Consider WEB-based software as opposed to installed software. WEB based software is likely to be the standard within the next five to ten years.
- d. Develop training for start up and on-going operation of the software for staff and management.
- e. Upgrade software on a regular basis and budget for it.

---

**Objective 6****Institute a league sanctioning policy.**

---

**Recommendations**

- a. Try to prevent further spin off sports leagues from forming. The leagues are now fragmented and are competing for the same fields for the same sports.
- b. Establish a policy of sanctioning authorized leagues of the Township as a way of setting priorities for field use. Leagues that are sanctioned would have priority for field permitting. Grandfather in existing organizations.

- c. Consider working with the organizations to phase in the centralization of specific sports within one organization rather than having numerous organizations for one sport.
- d. Make provisions for new or emerging sports to insure equitable access to public fields.
- e. Develop policies for field allocation with respect to donations, facility maintenance and capital improvements. This a complex situation in which the Township needs to recognize donations and at the same time that the parks are public property.

## Goal 5

Manage the parks and recreation system in a professional manner that conveys the greatest possible benefit to the public in an appropriate scale to the Township as a large community of 45,000 citizens.

---

### Objective 1

Recognize that Middletown Township is a large township of 45,000, one of the largest municipalities in Pennsylvania.

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### Recommendations

- a. Foster a move away from the prevalent attitude in this township that it is a “small town”.

*The City of Harrisburg’s population is 48,950. The City has 32 fulltime parks and recreation staff, 20 part-time staff and 155 seasonal staff.*

- b. Adopt a planning and operating perspective that reflects the size of the population and the parks and recreation system.
- c. Planning and operating measures should reflect the recognition of the size of Middletown Township.

---

## Objective 2

Develop a staffing plan to expand to a core of five core positions.

---

### **Recommendations**

- a. Begin with the addition of a part time program coordinator.
- b. Expand the position to full-time.
- c. Add a public relations specialist who would also do some programming.
- d. Spin off this position into a full time public relations specialist and a program specialist.
- e. Consider full time professional program specialists for youth and family services, fitness and wellness (who would also be responsible for sports), environment, administrative support, and customer service representatives.
- f. Make the case for these positions in terms of cost recovery for programs and based upon the sheer size of the community.

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## Objective 3

Establish a workload cost tracking system for park maintenance.

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### **Recommendations**

- a. Consider obtaining a Peer-to-Peer grant from PADCNR to assist in the development of a workload cost tracking system for park maintenance.
- b. The computer software package to be purchased by the Department should have a maintenance-tracking component.
- c. Include the park maintenance workers in the development and planning of the workload cost tracking system.
- d. Use the information for budgeting, scheduling maintenance work, calculating cost centers, setting fees and charges, planning future maintenance and capital improvements.

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Objective 4

Establish a maintenance impact statement for all capital improvement projects.

---

**Recommendations**

- a. Project the costs in terms of human and financial resources for all capital improvement projects.
- b. Use this information to determine if the Township has the capacity to maintain the project upon completion.
- c. Do not undertake any project for which there are insufficient resources.

---

Objective 5

Formalize the park maintenance management system.

---

**Recommendations**

- a. Set quality standards for all parks and facilities within parks.
- b. Gain consensus on the standards from elected and appointed officials, township administration, Public Works, Recreation and user groups.
- c. Use and modify the existing annual maintenance calendar, add monthly daily and weekly scheduling.
- d. Develop methods for controlling maintenance such as making most tasks routine and scheduled.
- e. Establish formalized inspection, reporting and filing systems.
- f. Adopt the workload cost tracking system.
- g. Put the system into writing for current and future management.

---

Objective 6

Establish an employee development program.

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**Recommendations**

- a. Conduct needs assessment in Recreation, Park Maintenance, and Planning to determine the expertise needed for parks & recreation in the future.
- b. Develop a five-year training program to capture this expertise.

- c. Use a variety of methods including conferences, seminars, training program, networking, field visits, “brown bag lunches” hosting other departments, publications and research.
- d. Increase budget from \$1,000 per year to one to two percent of the budget, \$8,000 initially. Phase this in over the next three to five years.
- e. Document the benefits of the training to show that the investment of the training money has a real financial payback. Present this information to elected officials and administration.

## Goal 6

Invest in parks and recreation to sustain and enhance the quality of life in Middletown in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

---

### Objective 1

Develop a revenue policy plan.

---

#### Recommendations

- a. Establish a formal written four part revenue strategy including:
  - Compulsory resources: taxes and dedication ordinances.
  - Financial Assistance: grants, gifts, fundraising, bequests and friends groups
  - Contractual receipts for facility rentals, concessions and leases
  - Earned Income: fees and charges, admissions, rentals, sales, special services and permits.

---

### Objective 2

Expand the mandatory dedication of land ordinance to include trails and land or fees from commercial development.

---

#### Recommendations

- a. Explore the use of commercial dedication ordinances already in place in communities such as Plymouth Township in Montgomery County.
- b. Include the mandatory dedication of trails in developments.

- c. Work with a professional planner and the township solicitor in establishing the ordinance for recreation and parks.
- d. Update the mandatory dedication of land ordinance to reflect the goals of this plan and current market values of land.

---

### Objective 3

Invest in parks and recreation at a level that is at least average among comparably sized municipalities in the state.

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### Recommendations

- a. Parks and Recreation is under funded in Middletown Township. The per capita investment is about \$10.09 in tax funds when the state wide average is \$33 for municipalities this size in 2002 dollars (most recent figures available). This could be phased in over time, would provide the level of staffing needed as well as the additional resources for park maintenance needed now and for park expansion.
- b. Consider a bond or borrowing against the township's capital reserves for park improvements.

-Establish a capital improvement program to undertake park improvements that would include the new senior center, trail development, and park improvements to make the parks more "park-like".

---

### Objective 4

Work towards generating 30 to 50 percent of the budget from non-tax sources.

---

### Recommendations

- a. To achieve this goal, additional program staff would be needed. Existing staff already recovers about 96 percent of program costs from user fees and charges. This translates into 20 percent of the overall budget. To increase program revenues, additional program staff is needed.



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Objective 5

Create and enhance alliances for park operations.

---

**Recommendations**

- a. Continue to work with sports groups on field maintenance. Provide additional support where needed in tasks such as aeration and providing support for them such as storage facilities.
- b. Work with the Bucks County Parks Department Nature Centers for interpretive programs and the interpretation of the Styer Farm.
- c. Continue to pursue land swaps with the County in order to secure the active area of Core Creek Park featuring the deteriorated tennis courts.
- d. Continue to work with the county in using Core Creek Park as a program site.

---

Objective 6

Create a park endowment with a portion of the township's capital reserve funds.

---

**Recommendations**

- a. Establish a park trust fund. Use the proceeds from the investment for park maintenance.
- b. Support this initiative as a way of giving back to the people of Middletown in quality of life enhancements. The people have the largest commercial shopping area in the County and have had their community traversed by major highways such as U.S. 1, I-95 and Route 413. The parks contribute a restorative power to the community.
- c. Explore trust funds in other municipalities such as the Trexler Trust in Allentown as a model.

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# Implementation Schedule

The Implementation Schedule sets forth the time frame for the actions Middletown Township will undertake in the short, medium, and long term. Not everything can be accomplished at once. Opportunities arise and needs change, requiring this schedule to be flexible. The Implementation Schedule is organized around the six goals of the Plan for parkland, recreation facilities and trails; recreation opportunities; administration and management; and financing.

The actions recommended should be viewed like the pieces of a jig saw puzzle rather than a list of things to do. Just as piecing together many parts completes a puzzle, Middletown will achieve community goals by undertaking parts of the action plan simultaneously. The key issues recommended by this plan and addressed through the action plan are:

- The adoption of a regional perspective to aid in the conservation of natural resources in Middletown Township
- Creation and advocacy of community and regional connections through a well developed system of greenways and trails
- Development of a premier system of interconnected parks, recreation facilities, greenways and trails.
- Utilize proposed recreation facilities for the enjoyment of citizens and the promotion of conservation and environmental education
- Enrich the quality of life for residents of and visitors to Middletown Township by the provision of enhanced recreation opportunities, programs and services
- Develop a professional parks management plan that will convey the greatest possible benefit to the public
- Invest in parks and recreation to sustain and enhance the quality of life in Middletown Township.

This Schedule is intended to be a flexible, living document that will enable Middletown Township to make wise decisions in creating the community of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

**Goal 1**  
 Conserve the natural resources of Middletown Township including adopting a regional perspective.

Project	Cost	2005-07	2008-11	2012-15
Pursue Open Space Acquisitions. Consider establishing a municipal open space and resource protection financing program. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Stone Farm</li> <li>▪ Fleming Farm</li> <li>▪ Matrix (aka Saba) Property</li> </ul>	Staff time. Cost to be determined.	√	⇒	⇒
Advocate for the dedication of increased open space and recreation areas associated with the development approvals for remaining vacant lands.	Staff time	√	⇒	⇒
Develop resource protection strategies for the important streams and stream corridors. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lower Neshaminy Creek</li> <li>▪ Mill Creek</li> </ul>	Staff time; Township/County coordination;	√	⇒	

Chart Key

√ - Start project

⇒ - Continue implementation

## Goal 2

Connect the community through a system of greenways including regional connections to county and state parks.

Project	Cost	2005-07	2008-11	2012-15
Coordinate with Bucks County in greenway planning. Advocate the importance to the Bucks County Commissioners and the Bucks County Planning Commission the importance of developing a county greenway plan in accordance with the state's goal of having a county greenway plan in place for every county in Pennsylvania. This is important to help Middletown achieve its own greenway goals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Neshaminy Creek</li> <li>▪ Brock Creek</li> <li>▪ Mill Creek</li> </ul>	Staff time; Township/County coordination;	√	⇒	
Prepare a Greenways & Trail Program Planning and Implementation Schedule	Staff Time; Coordinate with "Friends of" groups	√	⇒	⇒
Implement the recommendations of the Resource Preservation Strategy Plans for the Lower Neshaminy and Mill Creeks.	Cost will be based upon the recommendations of the plans	√	⇒	⇒
Develop a Bicycle and Pedestrian Trails Master Plan	Staff Time. \$35,000-40,000 consulting services. Seek DCNR grant.	√	⇒	⇒
Host a regional bicycle and pedestrian friendly community seminar in conjunction with the Bucks County Recreation Council. Include elected and appointed officials as invited guests in order to build support for the concept.	Staff time. Seek RecTAP grant to provide support for the program. No match required.			
Draft and adopt Bicycle and Trails resolution to the Township Zoning and Subdivision and Land Use Code Regulations	Staff Time.	√		
Review land development plans for trail connections and linkages between communities and facilities	Include as part of the development review process	√	⇒	⇒
Develop Lower Neshaminy Creek Greenway & Waters Trail	Staff Time; Planning & Design Development & Implementation costs to be determined through master planning	√		
Support revitalization of the Bucks County regional trail/greenway "Link Parks" system	Staff Time; Coordinate with Bucks Co. Parks Dept. and DCNR	√	⇒	⇒
Prepare inventory and analysis of local roadway improvement projects to recommend the inclusion of bicycle and pedestrian friendly links	Staff Time; Coordinate with PennDOT	√	⇒	⇒

Key

√ - Start project

⇒ - Continue implementation

### Goal 3

Establish a premier park system of parks, recreation facilities, greenways and trails for recreation, conservation and education.

Project	Cost	2005-07	2008-11	2012-15
Development of design theme guidelines. Include establishment of graduated system a sports fields ranging from basic safe fields to high quality tournament level play.	Staff Time	√	⇒	⇒
Development of landscape enhancement program	Staff Time; coordination and cooperation with “friends of,” master gardener and corporate partners	√	⇒	⇒
Creation and implementation of the Middletown Millennium Parks Partnerships Program	Staff Time; cooperation with Parks Dept. and Recreation Dept.	√	⇒	⇒
Additional “long field” development at Veteran’s, Beechwood and Poplar Parks	Staff Time; approximate funds to be determined based on master plan for fields	√	⇒	⇒
Upgrades to Core Creek Park and Maple Point School Sports Area	Staff Time; coordination with Count and School District; approximate funds to be determined by master plans.	√	⇒	⇒
Development, design and construction of Middletown Indoor Sports Complex	Staff Time; approximate funds to be determined by master plans		√	⇒
Creation and provision of Master Site Improvement Plans. Consider “bundling” master plans for cost savings and effective planning.	Staff Time. Master Plans: Major master plans: \$50-60,000 per park. Smaller Master Plans: \$10-20,000 per park. Grant funding.	√	⇒	⇒

Key

√ - Start project

⇒ - Continue implementation

## Goal 4

Provide recreation opportunities that will enrich the quality of life for the people who live, work and visit in Middletown Township.

Project	Cost	2005-07	2008-11	2012-15
Develop a mission statement for park & recreation programming	Staff Time; Park and Recreation Board time.	√	⇒	⇒
Assess and expand programming capacities when feasible based upon capacity of staff.	Staff Time. More programs will generate revenues.	√	⇒	⇒
Plan for the future provision of indoor facilities providing lifelong recreation opportunities	Staff Time; input from focus groups; design/ development activities	√	⇒	⇒
Develop an orchestrated recreation marketing program	Staff Time; promotion expenses 3% of the budget.		√	⇒
Research and acquire computer software for recreation programming	Staff Time; cost of staff training; \$20,000.	√		
Draft and institute a league sanctioning policy	Staff Time; cooperation of existing groups; public input	√	⇒	

Key

√ - Start project

⇒ - Continue implementation

## Goal 5

Manage the parks and recreation system professionally to convey the greatest possible benefit to the public.

Project	Cost	2005-07	2008-11	2012-15
Hire a part-time, to be expanded to full time, program coordinator	\$25,000-\$35,000 full time salary	√	⇒	⇒
Establish a public relations specialist from a part time position of 500 hours working up to full time over the next five years	\$10,000 annually for initial park time hours up to full-time salary to be determined		√	⇒
Hire an administrative assistant. This could be phased in from a part-time person during peak hours based on seasonal demands from 1,000 hours a year to over the next five years	\$10,000- 12,000 annually for part time up to full-time salary to be determined.			
Develop and enact a workload cost tracking system for park maintenance	Obtain DCNR Peer-to-Peer grant; collaboration with park maintenance staff	√		
Calculate the impacted maintenance increase/decrease created by all capital improvement projects	Staff Time; collaboration with park maintenance staff	√	⇒	⇒
Formalize the park maintenance management system	Staff Time; collaboration with park maintenance staff	√	⇒	
Establish and execute employee development program	1-2% of total yearly budget and \$8,000 seed money	√	⇒	

### Key

√ - Start project

⇒ - Continue implementation

## Goal 6

Invest in parks and recreation to sustain and enhance the quality of life in Middletown Township.

Project	Cost	2005-07	2008-11	2012-15
Develop a revenue strategy and policy plan	Staff Time	√		
Expand the mandatory dedication of land ordinance to include trails and land or fees-in-lieu from commercial development	Staff Time; collaboration with Township Solicitor; services of professional planner	√	⇒	⇒
Work towards a minimum operating investment on par with the statewide average (\$33.00 per capita) of similarly sized communities. Needed to support expansion of park system, maintenance and staff.	An additional investment of about \$600,000 annually to be phased in over 10 years.	√	⇒	⇒
Hire new program staff to increase revenue, in order to increase non-tax park funding to between 30 and 50% of total budget	\$20,000 - \$28,000	√	⇒	⇒
Explore creation of new and enhancement of existing partnerships to improve park operations	Staff Time	√	⇒	
Explore options and create a park endowment	Funds to be procured from Township's Capital Reserve Funds	√	⇒	

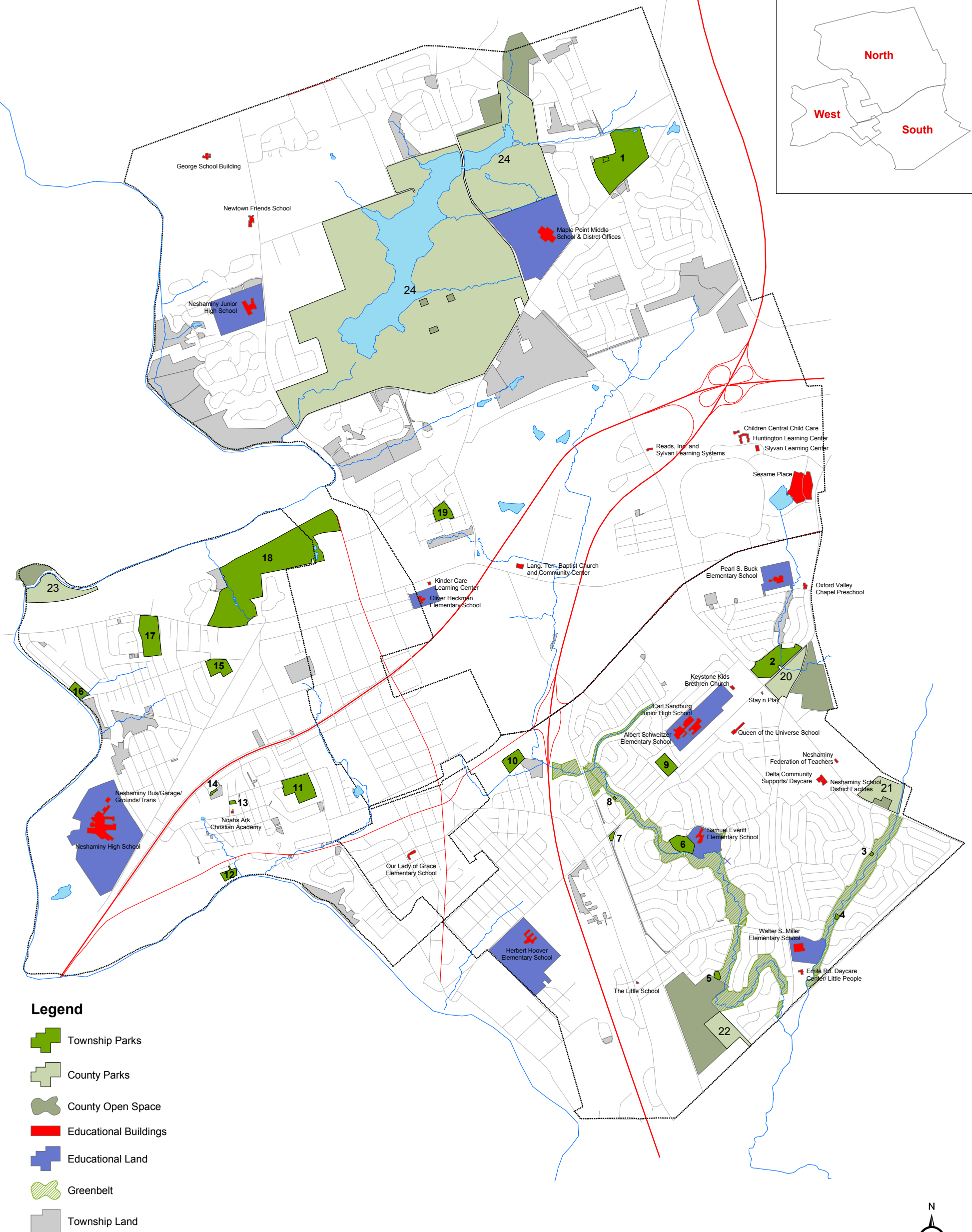
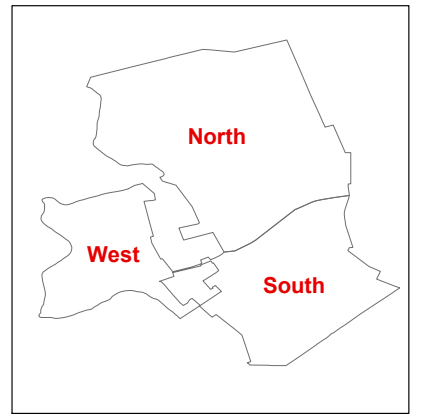
### Key

√ - Start project

⇒ - Continue implementation



# Middletown Open Space and Recreational Plan

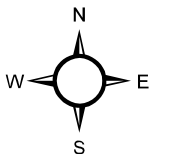
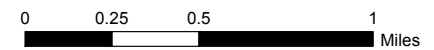


## Legend

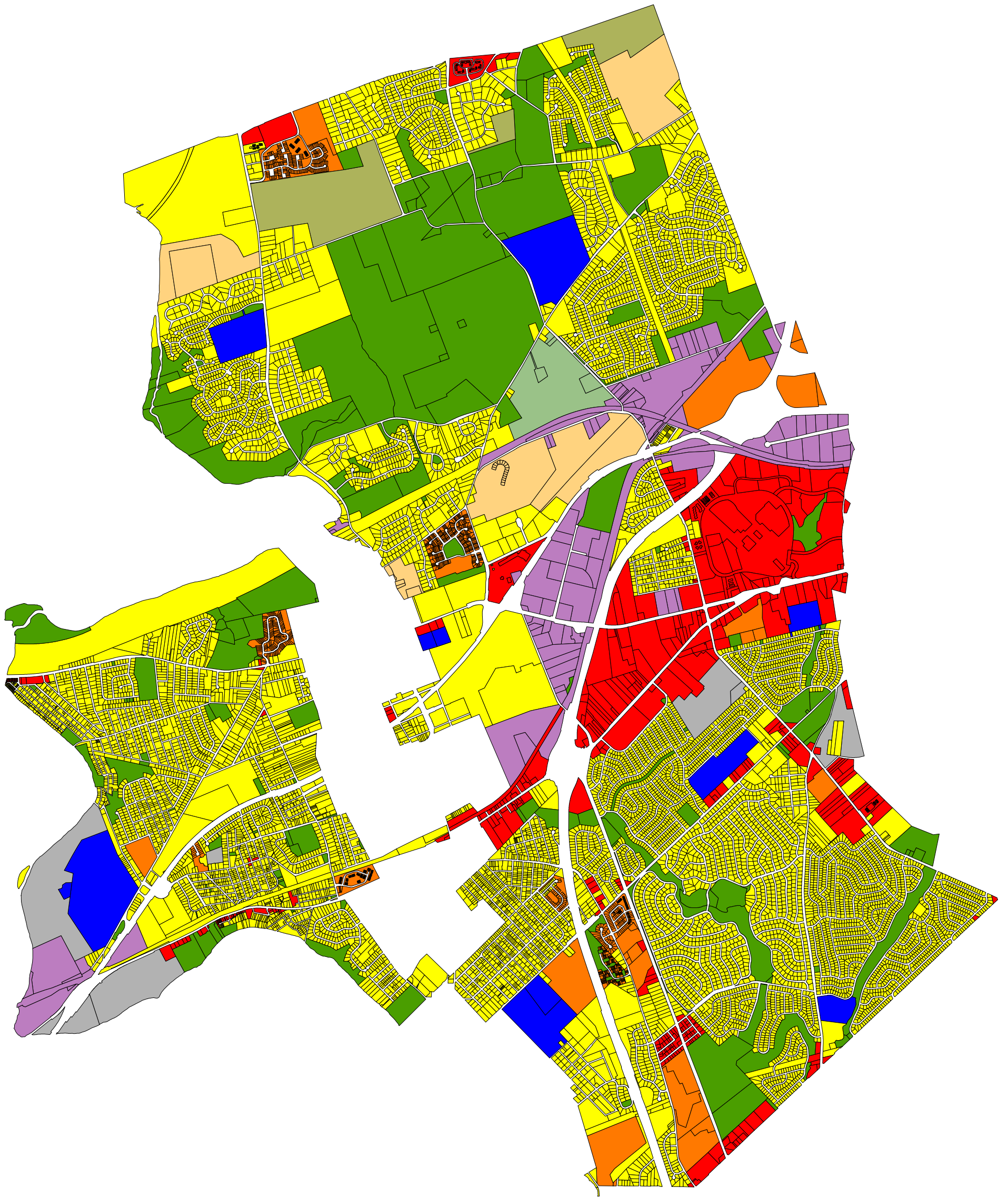
- Township Parks
- County Parks
- County Open Space
- Educational Buildings
- Educational Land
- Greenbelt
- Township Land

## Middletown Parks

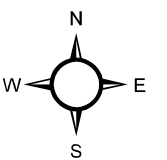
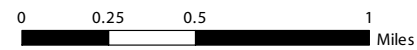
- |                              |                                |                             |                                |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Middletown Community Park | 7. Lion's Park                 | 13. Sunflower Park          | 19. Tareyton Estates           |
| 2. Twin Oaks Park            | 8. Deep Dale East              | 14. Detweiler Park          | 20. Chicken Foot Park (County) |
| 3. Cobalt Ridge              | 9. Middletown Community Center | 15. Veterans' Park          | 21. Queen Anne (part) (County) |
| 4. Quincy Hollow             | 10. Delaware Park              | 16. Periwinkle Park         | 22. Frosty Hollow (County)     |
| 5. Upper Orchard             | 11. Poplar Park                | 17. Beechwood Park          | 23. Playwicki Park (County)    |
| 6. Forsythia Crossing Park   | 12. Harris Park                | 18. Middletown Country Club | 24. Core Creek Park (County)   |



# Middletown Open Space and Recreational Plan



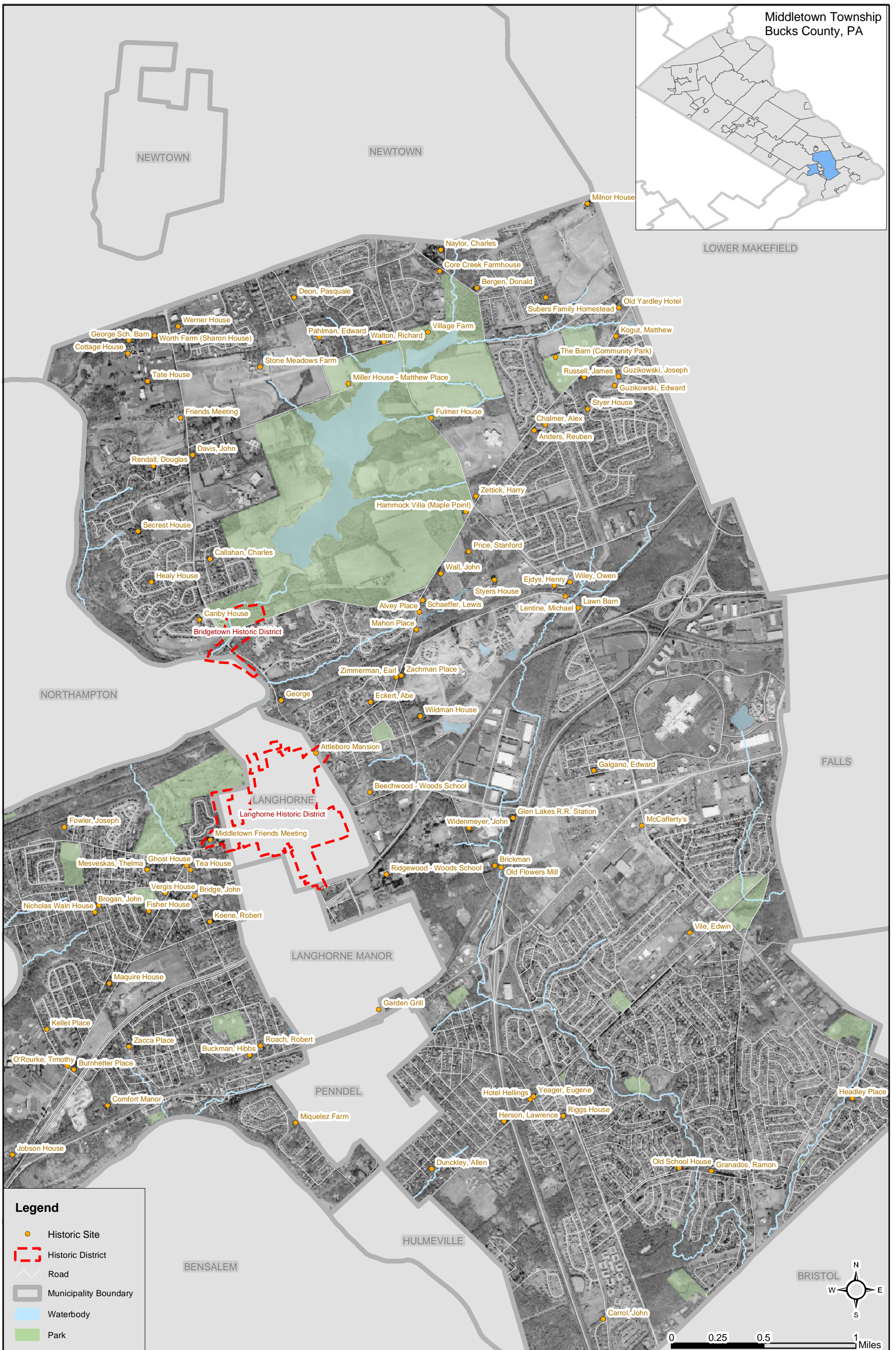
## Middletown Land Use



### Legend

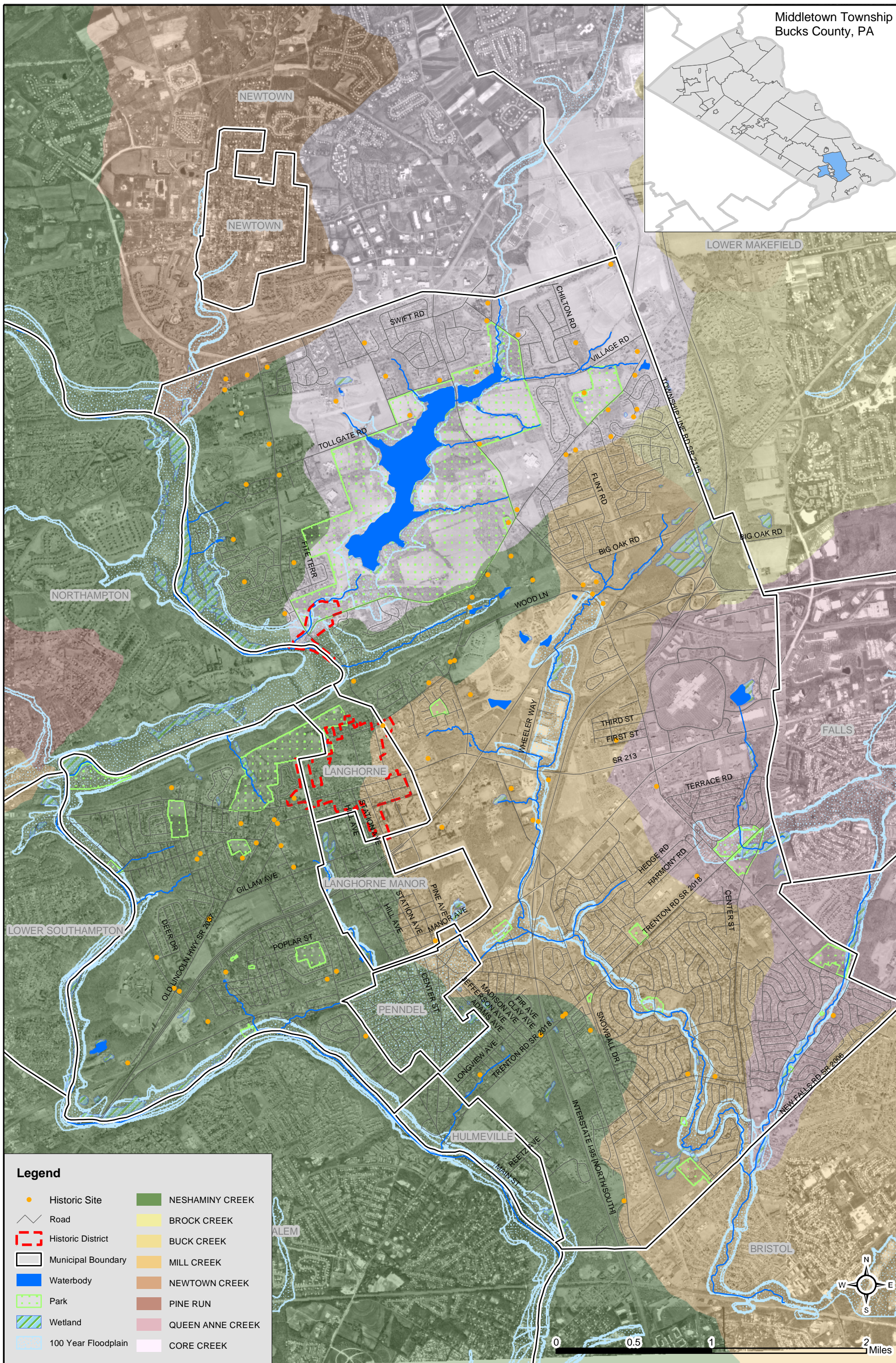
- |                            |                         |                            |                     |             |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|-------------|
| Age Restricted Residential | Mixed Unit Multi-Family | Preserved Agricultural     | Light Manufacturing | Commercial  |
| Single Family Residential  | Agricultural            | Public Open Space/Drainage | Institutional       | Vacant Land |





# Middletown Township Parks and Recreation & Open Space Plan

## Historic Resources



**Legend**

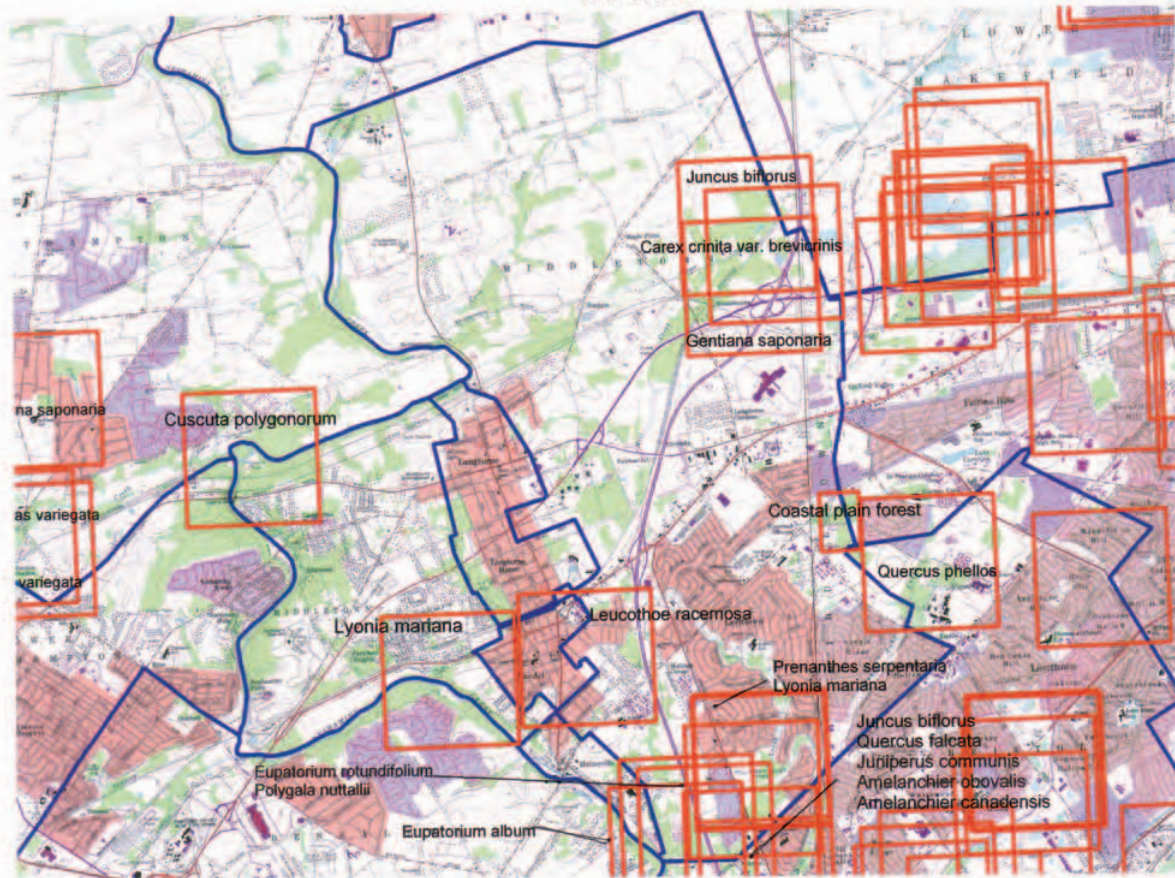
● Historic Site	■ NESHAMINY CREEK
— Road	■ BROCK CREEK
⬜ Historic District	■ BUCK CREEK
⬜ Municipal Boundary	■ MILL CREEK
■ Waterbody	■ NEWTOWN CREEK
■ Park	■ PINE RUN
■ Wetland	■ QUEEN ANNE CREEK
■ 100 Year Floodplain	■ CORE CREEK

# Middletown Township Parks and Recreation & Open Space Plan

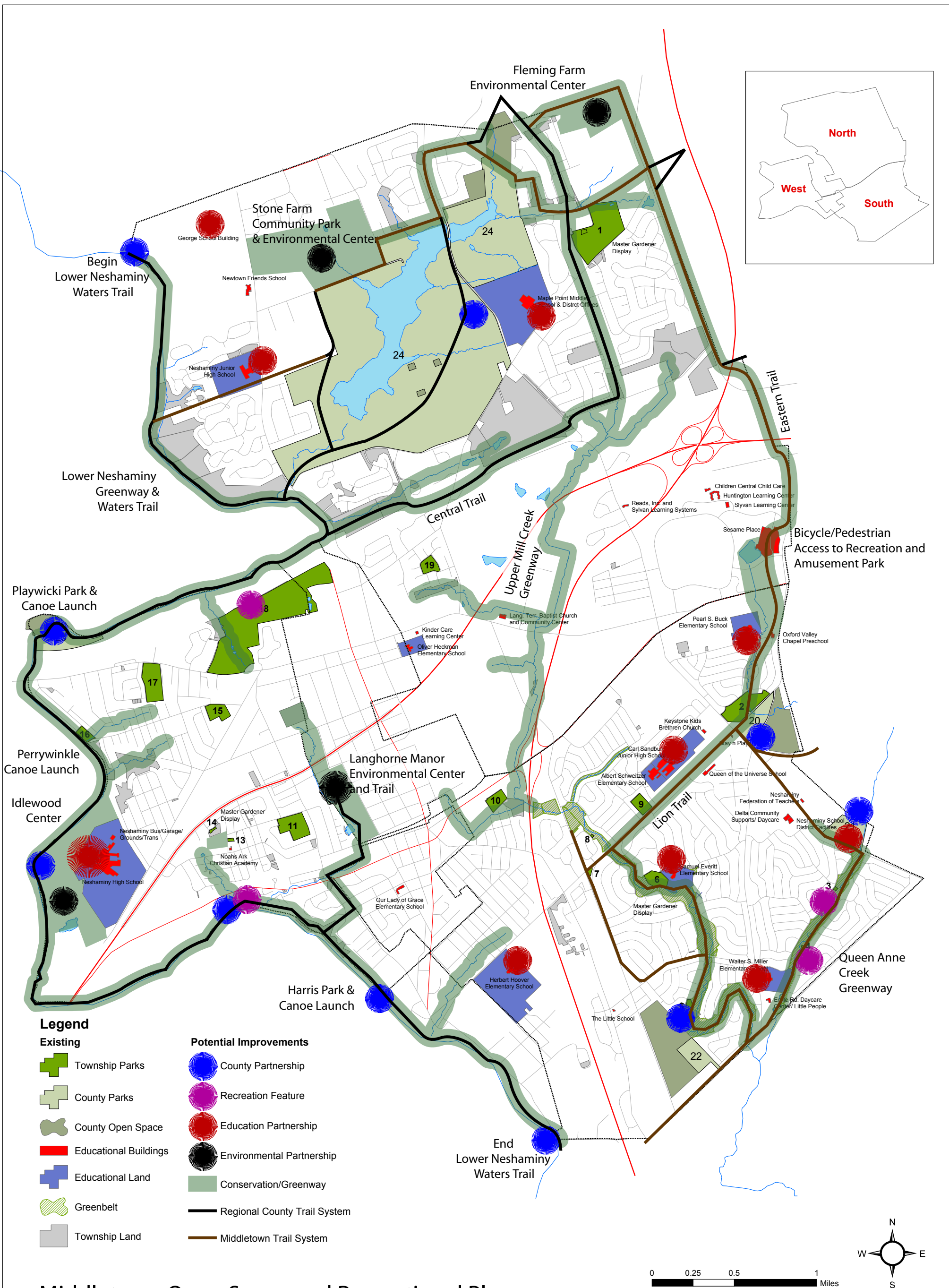
## Comprehensive Resources

# Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Inventory In Middletown Township

## Middletown Township Plant Species of Special Concern 12/1/04

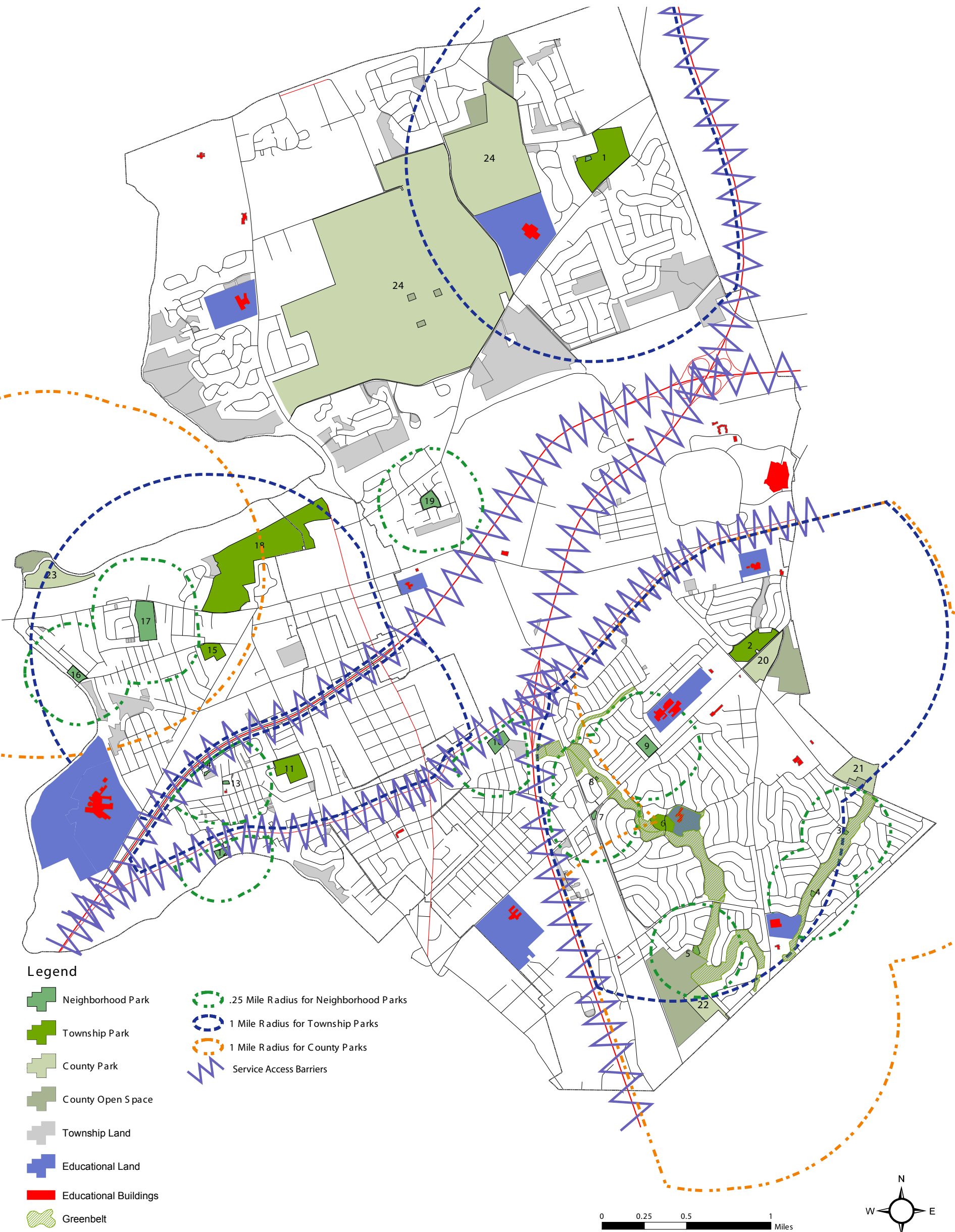


Scientific Name	Common Name	State Status	Proposed State Status	Occurrence Date
<i>Amelanchier canadensis</i>	Serviceberry	None	Undetermined-PA Endangered after field Work	1956
<i>Amelanchier obovalis</i>	Coastal Juneberry	Tentatively Undetermined	PA Endangered	1956
<i>Carex crinita var. brevicrinis</i>	Short Hair Sedge	PA Endangered	PA Endangered	2001
	Coastal Plain Forest	PA Natural Community		1984
<i>Cuscuta polygonorum</i>	Smartweed Dodder	Tentatively Undetermined	Tentatively Undetermined	1998
<i>Eupatorium album</i>	White Thoroughwort	PA Extirpated	PA Extirpated	1956
<i>Eupatorium rotundifolium</i>	A Eupatorium	Tentatively Undetermined	Undetermined-PA Threatened after Field Work	1956
<i>Gentiana saponaria</i>	Soapwort Gentian	Tentatively Undetermined	PA Endangered	1960
<i>Juncus biflorus</i>	Grass-leaved Rush	Tentatively Undetermined	PA Threatened	1998
<i>Juniperus communis</i>	Common Juniper	None	Tentatively Undetermined	1953
<i>Leucothoe racemosa</i>	Swamp Dog-hobble	Tentatively Undetermined	PA Threatened	1998
<i>Lyonia mariana</i>	Stagger-bush	PA Endangered	PA Endangered	1955
<i>Prenanthes serpentina</i>	Lion's Foot	None	Tentatively Undetermined	1956
<i>Polygala nuttallii</i>	Nuttall's Milkwort	None	Tentatively Undetermined	1956
<i>Quercus falcata</i>	Southern Red Oak	PA Endangered	PA Endangered	1956
<i>Quercus phellos</i>	Willow Oak	PA Endangered	PA Endangered	1998



# Middletown Open Space and Recreational Plan

## Action Plan for Park System Recommendations



**Legend**

- Neighborhood Park
- Township Park
- County Park
- County Open Space
- Township Land
- Educational Land
- Educational Buildings
- Greenbelt
- .25 Mile Radius for Neighborhood Parks
- 1 Mile Radius for Township Parks
- 1 Mile Radius for County Parks
- Service Access Barriers

**Middletown Open Space and Recreational Plan  
Existing Facilities and Service Areas**

Middletown Parks			
1. Middletown Community Park	7. Lion's Park	13. Sunflower Park	19. Tareyton Estates
2. Twin Oaks Park	8. Deep Dale East	14. Detweiler Park	20. Chicken Foot Park (County)
3. Cobalt Ridge	9. Middletown Community Center	15. Veterans' Park	21. Queen Anne (part) (County)
4. Quincy Hollow	10. Delaware Park	16. Periwinkle Park	22. Frosty Hollow (County)
5. Upper Orchard	11. Poplar Park	17. Beechwood Park	23. Playwick Park (County)
6. Forsythia Crossing Park	12. Harris Park	18. Middletown Country Club	24. Core Creek Park (County)