

PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE INVENTORY AND PLAN

Parks, recreation, and open space provide tangible and significant economic and quality-of-life benefits at the local level. Long recognized as a way to protect natural resources and preserve agricultural lands, parks and open space are increasingly recognized for other community benefits. These include improving health for children and seniors, the opportunity to provide pedestrian connections between uses, and their value in creating community gathering spaces. This chapter provides an inventory of parks, recreation facilities, and open space and recommendations for their management, maintenance, and possible expansion in the following framework:

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Inventory

Park and Recreation Terminology

Municipal recreation and open space planning requires the use of a number of terms that should be clearly defined to set policies that can be implemented through ordinances and regulations. The key terms are:

Park

A park is an outdoor facility established to provide the public with opportunities for recreation. A park can be a wildlife preserve, a historic site, a quarter-acre tot-lot, or the 5.4 square miles of Valley Forge National Historical Park.

Linking Landscapes: A Plan for the Protected Open Space Network in Chester County, PA (Chester County Planning Commission, 2002) defines a park more specifically as any outdoor property with few if any structures that is: 1) owned in-fee or permanently eased for recreation by a government agency, 2) is open to the general public, 3) is specifically managed to provide public recreation, and 4) has public recreation as its primary use. This definition stresses that parks are acquired, designed, and managed to be public recreation facilities.

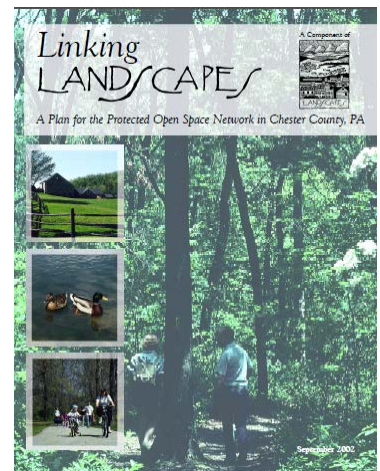
Recreation and Recreation Facilities

Recreation can be generally defined as an activity that provides therapeutic restoration of one's mind or body. Recreation facilities can refer to any public- or privately-owned property used for recreation, including indoor or outdoor activities. Recreation facilities can range from sport fields and nature preserves to indoor pools and gyms. A recreation facility can even be a paved downtown plaza or a municipal parking lot used as seating for an outdoor summer movie.

Passive and Active Recreation

Parks and other recreation facilities are typically identified based on the type of recreation opportunities they provide, which can be described as active or passive recreation. *Linking Landscapes* includes the following definitions for passive and active recreation:

Active Recreation includes recreation activities that are usually rigorously athletic, not quiet, and have a noticeable impact on the surrounding environment. These may include individual or team sports, large picnics, children's playgrounds, and recreational events with a high density of people. Parks that provide active recreation commonly include tennis, volleyball and basketball courts; swing sets, playgrounds, and tot-lots; or fields for team sports such as football, soccer, and



Linking Landscapes provides a vision for multi-municipal open space planning on a countywide basis.

baseball/softball. Active recreation parks can be quite small, as in the case of a tot-lot, or they can cover multiple acres, as in the case of a sports field complex.

Historically, active recreation parks in Chester County have been purchased and managed by municipal governments. Municipal parks currently provide the majority of public active recreation opportunities within the County. This situation is likely to continue. County or state facilities are primarily designed for passive recreation and may require a further distance to travel. Some sports fields are owned by sports leagues or schools, which may be closed to the public.



Elverson's Livingood Park includes active recreation in the form of sports fields and playground equipment, as well as trails for passive recreation.

Passive Recreation includes recreation activities that are usually quiet and not rigorously athletic, and have a low impact on the surrounding environment. These activities may include walking, hiking, fishing, bird watching, and quiet picnicking. Parks that provide passive recreation may include trails, public gardens or memorial parks, open areas, and picnic areas. Passive recreation parks in suburban or rural settings tend to be larger than active recreation facilities and may have natural or scenic significance, containing a stream, woodland, or historically significant resource.

Active vs. Passive Recreation

The same recreational activity may be regarded as passive in one situation, but active in another, depending on the scale of the activity or the size of the park. For example, most people would classify a pair of hikers or a small picnic of four people as being passive recreation, while a hiking group of 50 energetic teenagers or a large family reunion picnic would be called active recreation. Similarly, a group of mountain bikers or horseback riders in a 5,000 acre wilderness preserve might have little impact and be called passive recreation, while the same group in a 20 to 50 acre park might be called active recreation.

Simply put, there are some activities that cannot be clearly categorized as being exclusively active or passive recreation. Each municipality needs to define what constitutes active and passive recreation based on the facility needs, and include these definitions in regulations and ordinances. In this way, parks can be designated as active recreation facilities, passive recreation facilities or both. In some instances parts of one park can be designated for active use, while other parts can be set aside for passive recreation. What is most important is to make these designations clear to park users.

Parks and Recreation

Park and recreation facilities fall under the following three general categories of ownership:

Public parks or recreational facilities are owned and maintained by governments to provide recreation opportunities to the general public. The governmental body may impose access limitations that are related to the health, safety, and welfare of the public, such as closing the park at dusk or requiring permits for large group activities.

Limited-Public Access recreation facilities are owned and maintained by schools and other institutions, for the most part. They are commonly used by the public for informal recreation, but the facility owner maintains the option to limit or ban public use. Limited-public access facilities also include fields that provide playing fields and practice areas for organized leagues.

Private parks and recreational facilities are privately owned properties such as golf courses, arboretums, and internal trail/sidewalk systems. Public access is usually granted by permission of the owner, and may be limited to paying members. These facilities may be non-profit or commercial facilities.

Existing Conditions

Public Parks within Elverson Borough

Elverson Borough has two municipally-owned and managed parks - Livingood Park and Borough Hall Park. Details regarding each park, including a list of the park and recreation features located at each are listed in Figure 8-1.



Sidewalks in Parkside link with public trails in Livingood Park to create a long pedestrian loop and community amenity.

Figure 8-1: Public Parks and Recreation Facilities within Elverson Borough

Park or Recreation Features	Livingood Park	Borough Hall Park
Size	12.10 acres	2.26 acres
Active Recreation Features	playground, basketball and tennis courts, baseball/softball fields, all-purpose field	playground, basketball court, swing set
Passive Recreation Features	gazebos, picnic tables, trails	pavilion, picnic tables
User Support Amenities	parking, restrooms, water fountain	parking, restrooms (when Borough Hall is open) and porta potty
Level of Maintenance	high	low
Ease of Access by Pedestrians	accessible from South Chestnut Street, West Main Street, and Parkside Drive	accessible from South Chestnut Street



Livingood Park is a community park with a wide array of passive and active recreation features.



The Borough Hall Park is located immediately adjacent to Borough Hall and provides neighborhood recreation features.

Livingood and Borough Hall Parks are located within a short distance of one another along South Chestnut Street (Route 82) in the western half of the Borough. Both parks are easily accessible by sidewalk from properties along South Chestnut Street and West Main Street (Route 23) and the Parkside development. Unfortunately, residents of Summerfield (whose western boundary is less than ¼ mile from the boundaries of both parks) have no direct pedestrian access to the features of these two public amenities, as shown on Figure 8-2. Detailed mapping of the recreation and open space inventory is found on Map 8-A within Appendix B.

Limited Public Access

The Twin Valley Elementary Center is located along Route 401 near the intersection of Routes 401 and 23 in the western end of the Borough as shown on Figure 8-2. Recreation features at the Elementary Center include a large playground, basketball and tennis courts, and an all-purpose field, and are accessible by the public outside of regular school hours.

Parks and Recreation Facilities used by Elverson Borough Residents

Residents of Elverson Borough have access to a number of publicly-owned community, regional, and state parks and recreational facilities located within five to ten miles of the Borough. They include: French Creek State Park, State Game Lands No. 43, Struble Lake Recreation Area, and Marsh Creek State Park. Figure 8-3 provides a list of current recreation features and programs and Figure 8-4 depicts the general location of these facilities.

Figure 8-2: Recreation and Open Space Inventory

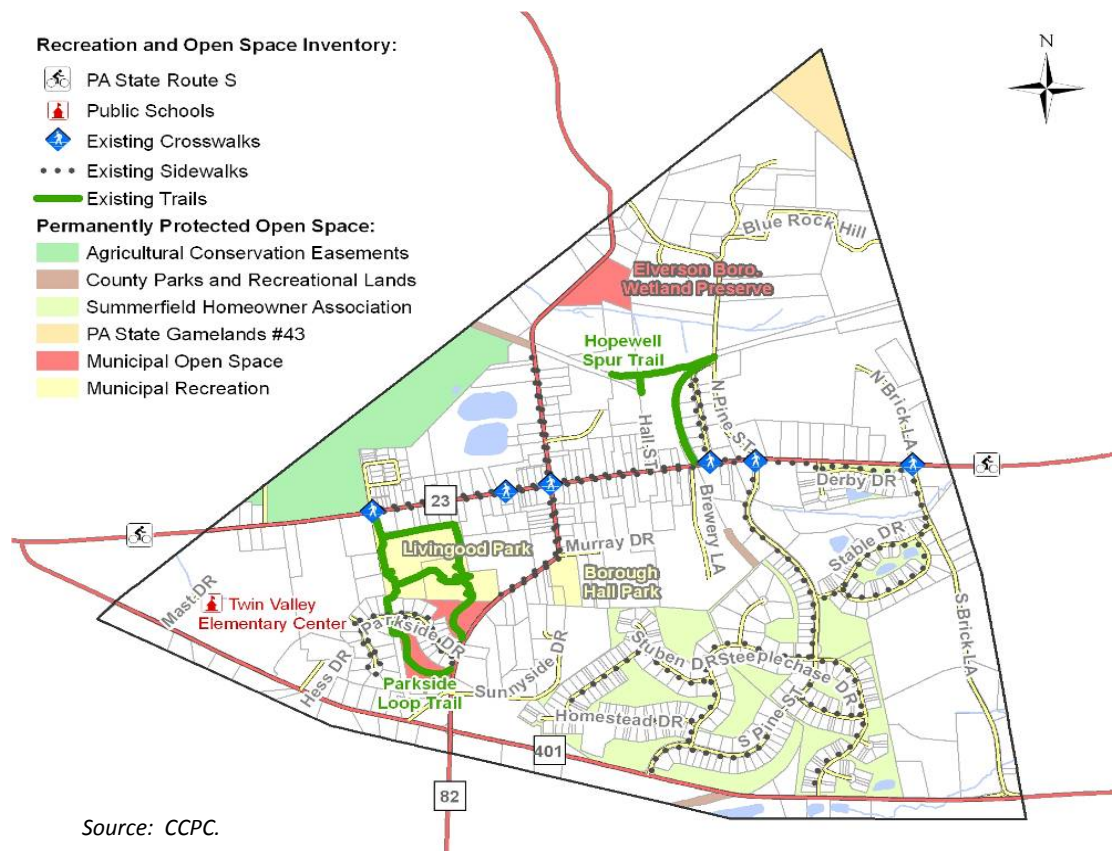
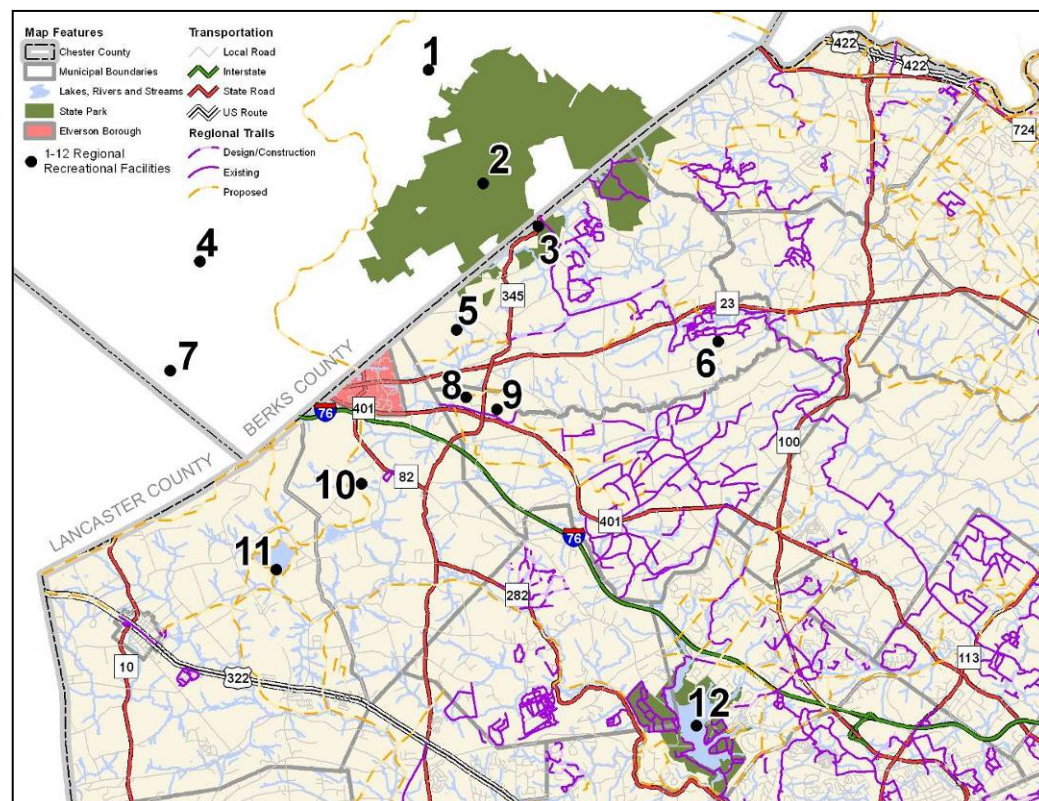


Figure 8-3: Recreational Facilities Used by Elverson Residents (north to south)

#	Facility Name/Location	Recreation Features and/or Programs (active and passive)
1	Birdsboro Waters	hiking trails, rock climbing
2	French Creek State Park	hiking/mountain biking/equestrian trails, camping, boating, fishing, swimming, picnicking, hunting, disc golf, orienteering, ice skating, and ice fishing
3	Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site	educational programs, self-guided walking tour, visitor's center/museum, picnic areas, historic demonstrations, walking trails
4	Joanna Furnace	educational programs, tours, day camps, festivals
5	State Game Lands Number 43	hunting, fishing, shooting range (rifle)
6	Warwick County Park	trails (hiking, biking, horseback riding), picnic pavilions, picnic tables, play areas, sand volleyball court, horseshoe pit, quoit pit, and ADA-accessible fishing deck
7	Twin Valley Swim Club	swimming pool
8	French Creek Golf Course	golf
9	Stonewall Golf Course	golf
10	West Nantmeal Township Park	tennis courts, basketball court, picnic pavilion, playground, walking trail, baseball/softball field, and sand volleyball courts
11	Struble Lake Recreation Area	fishing and boating
12	Marsh Creek State Park	hiking/mountain biking/equestrian trails, boating, fishing, picnicking, hunting

Figure 8-4: Location of Regional Recreational Facilities



Source: CCPC

Needs Evaluation

Land Use and Population Trends

For most of its history, Elverson was a thriving rural village that provided services to the surrounding agricultural community where traditional outdoor physical activity was part of everyday life. Today, as a result of a more sedentary lifestyle, a growing number of residents rely on dedicated parks and recreation facilities for their recreation needs.

Understanding the demographics of the community can help ensure that the recreation needs and preferences of all age groups are taken into consideration. For example, age distribution data from the 2010 Census shows that almost 27 percent of the Borough's population is in the 45 to 64 age group. The 65 and older age group represents more than 37 percent of the Borough's population. Elverson's median age is 56.7, in comparison to a median age of 39.3 for Chester County overall. These characteristics indicate a need for recreation planning and programming to place a special emphasis on seniors, while providing appropriate facilities for all age groups.



Recreation planning should take into account the senior population in Elverson.

Population-Based Recreational Park Needs: Active Recreation

Linking Landscapes provides an updated philosophy and guidelines for the evaluation of existing facilities called the “Chester County Recreational Park Standards,” which are presented in Figure 8-5. In 2002, *Linking Landscapes* applied the County standards to evaluate Elverson Borough's projected recreation needs considering the existing parkland (21.1 acres in 2002) and the projected population for 2025. This analysis determined that the Borough would not need any additional park or recreation land for the 25-year horizon (or until 2025). This finding is reflective of acreage and not amenities, Elverson should continue to ensure that the recreation needs of all current and future residents continue to be met.

Figure 8-5 Chester County Recreational Park Standards

	Regional Park	Sub-regional Park	Community Park	Neighborhood Park	Mini Park
Service Radius	30 mi. (equal to a 60 min. drive)	7.5 mi. (equal to a 15 min. drive)	2.5 mi. (equal to a 5 min. drive or a 30 min. walk)	0.5 mi. (equal to a 15 min. walk)	0.25 mi. (equal to an 8 min. walk)
Minimum Acreage	20 ac. per 1,000 people	8.5 ac. per 1,000 people	3.0 to 6.0 ac. per 1,000 people	2.5 to 3.5 ac. per 1,000 people	0.25 ac. per 1,000 people
Maximum Population*	None	100,000	25,000	5,000	2,000
Size of Park	1,000 acres or more	400 acres to 999 acres	20 acres to 399 acres	0.5 acres to 19.9 acres	0.01 acre to 0.49 acres

Note: * Maximum Population is the largest recommended population for a given service area.

Passive Recreation Needs

Typically, passive parks focus on protecting or conserving a specific natural, historic, or locally significant landscape regardless of population. In Elverson, examples would include the historic train station and freight station and the nearby Elverson Bank building. The current trails in the Borough, and the proposed extension of these trails discussed later in this chapter, represent a significant passive recreation feature in the community. Regional passive recreation is extensive, as shown in Figure 8-3.

Sports Fields and Outdoor Facilities

When planning to acquire property for sports fields or other outdoor recreation facilities, local officials and community leaders should be aware of the dimensional standards for the facilities that they wish to accommodate. The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) includes design standards for the most common sports and outdoor recreation facilities on their website: www.nrpa.org.

Trail and Bicycle Networks

A trail is a type of recreation facility. In this chapter, trails, paths, and routes will be discussed using definitions in *Linking Landscapes* and based on terminology used by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (PADCNR).

Terminology

A **trail** is an off-road facility with a permanent alignment that is open to the general public and that is designed, constructed, and maintained as part of a public park system, and used for a variety of non-motorized forms of travel including walking, hiking, bicycling, cross-country skiing, or horseback riding.

A **path** is a specific type of trail that has been designed, constructed, maintained, and used primarily for one form of travel. Thus a bike path is an off-road facility that has been designed to be used primarily by bicyclists. Although paths are designed for only one mode of travel, they are usually used by other types of users. Limiting the use of a path to one type of user is difficult to enforce, and so path managers commonly must rely on voluntary compliance by the users. For the purposes of this Chapter, sidewalks are considered a type of path.

A **route** is a facility that utilizes the shoulders of paved streets or the motor vehicle travel lanes of roads with low traffic volumes. In general, bicycle routes extend along streets or rights-of-way owned by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT). Roadside routes are sometimes used to link together trail segments that cannot be linked by an off-road corridor, and so should be considered in any trail network project. Pennsylvania State Bike Route S is a bicycle route that passes through the Borough along Main Street (Route 23) as presented on Figure 8-2.

Existing Conditions

Local Trails

The trails in Elverson are located in two areas of the Borough: Livingood Park and north of Main Street near the historic train station (Figure 8-2).

Livingood Park Loop (Parkside)

The multi-use trails located in Livingood Park create a recreational loop around the field area of the Park and link up with trails or sidewalks in Parkside to create a significant recreational amenity for local park users and visitors.



The historic train station.



Multi-use trails in Livingood Park link with trails in Parkside to create a recreational amenity for residents.



The Hopewell Manor Trail link.

Hopewell Spur Trail

The Hopewell Spur Trail is located between Hopewell Manor and Park Avenue and the trailhead is located near the train station, immediately to the north of Main Street (Figure 8-2). The Hopewell Spur Trail is less formal than the trails located in Livingood Park, with a gravel surface that limits users to bicycles and walkers/hikers. The trail runs along the property line of Hopewell Manor and curves to the east as it heads north and ends at North Pine Street. The trail also travels west for a short distance from North Pine Street back to the western edge of the Hopewell Manor property. There is a link that connects to the south of the Hopewell Manor parking lot, providing access to residents and employees.

Sidewalks

While sidewalks do not meet the same needs as trails (bicycles are typically prohibited on sidewalks), the Borough does have a nearly complete network of approximately five and one half miles of sidewalks that provide a circulation network for pedestrians. The Transportation Plan (Chapter 5) identifies gaps in the Borough’s sidewalk network and includes a recommendation to fill those gaps.

Pedestrian Amenities

Elverson’s recent streetscape improvements along Main Street supported the development of a pedestrian network by providing opportunities for safe crossing of this busy thoroughfare. Figure 8-2 depicts crosswalks, which are located at several locations in the Borough. See Chapter 5 for additional discussion of crosswalks.



This mid-block crosswalk on West Main Street to the west of Chestnut Street improves safety for pedestrians.

Needs Evaluation

Heritage and Recreation Destination

During the 2010 Revitalization Plan update, Elverson identified a vision to become a “Trail Town” by connecting to proposed regional trails and bicycle routes and providing associated amenities and facilities within the Borough. Elverson’s surrounding area is home to a number of regional recreational facilities and trails, including French Creek State Park and the Brandywine/Hibernia Trail. Proposed trail connections to the recreation resources, as well as general pedestrian connectivity improvements throughout the Borough, were identified as the “Emerald Necklace” in the Revitalization Plan. The *Hopewell Big Woods Trail and Recreation Concept Plan* supports Elverson’s vision to build on these resources.

As discussed in the Revitalization Plan, there are significant benefits to the Borough building on their existing recreation characteristics, as well as tying them more closely to their existing historic resources. One significant benefit is the opportunity for visitors to take advantage of the commercial and cultural opportunities in the Borough. Visitors could take part in community events such as the Farmer’s Market, pick up lunch, or grab a cup of coffee. With its proximity to French Creek State Park, many hikers, cyclists, anglers, boaters, and campers already visit Elverson.



The riverside village of Frenchtown, New Jersey caters their commercial uses to the needs of visitors to the nearby Delaware and Raritan Canal Trail.

Another positive feature in the pursuit of a heritage and recreation destination reputation is in regard to available parking. Unlike other small Boroughs, Elverson has sufficient on-street parking to accommodate trail users and other visitors.

Proposed Pedestrian Connections

The Borough's approach to a pedestrian network should focus on creating an interconnected network of trails and sidewalks that link residential neighborhoods to commercial, institutional, and recreational uses in the Borough in a safe and efficient manner.

While Elverson does have a nearly complete network of sidewalks, there are Borough residents who are unable to access the facilities in Livingood and Borough Hall parks without the use of motorized vehicles. The extensive sidewalk system in Summerfield, for example, provides access to the commercial core of the Borough but not to the community's parks located along South Chestnut Street. A link from the end of Homestead Drive across Route 82 to the sidewalks along Route 82 is shown as a proposed pedestrian connection on Figure 8-6. These proposed links in the network are not specified as sidewalks or trails, simply as some type of connection. Another proposed pedestrian connection would link the sidewalk and trail system in Livingood Park Loop Trail to the Twin Valley Elementary Center. The implementation of these two connections along with the proposed trail expansion, and the recommendations regarding sidewalks in Chapter 5: Transportation would result in a complete network in the southern part of the Borough. Detailed mapping of the recreation and open space plan is found on Map 8-B within Appendix B.

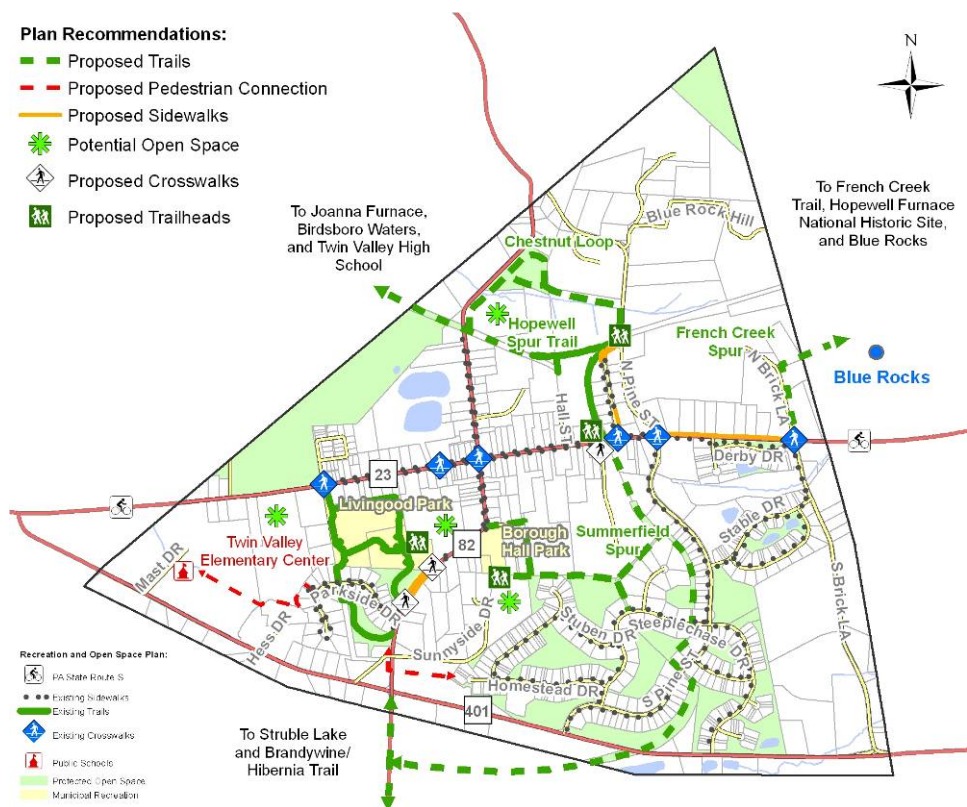


Linking the sidewalk system in Parkside to the Twin Valley Elementary Center is one of two proposed pedestrian connections.

The northern half of the Borough is less populated, and existing developed areas are almost entirely connected through the sidewalk system. Proposed trails depicted on Figure 8-6 could link properties further from the town center and provide a recreation resource.

Local and Regional Trail Network

Any discussion of trail planning must consider the trail network that is expected to connect the Borough to its neighboring municipalities. While available funding and the economic downturn have slowed the development of regional trails, in the future Elverson will likely have a number of regional trail



Source: CCPC.

opportunities just outside its borders that may be used by residents in surrounding communities to access the Borough’s amenities, and provide Borough residents with improved pedestrian circulation and recreational options.

To the east, the French Creek Trail will provide access to many amenities along French Creek as well as a connection to Phoenixville and the expansive Schuylkill River Trail and Perkiomen Trail systems; to the west, trails can provide access to historic, recreational, and institutional opportunities in Berks County, including the Twin Valley High School. To the south, Elverson Borough can link into the Brandywine/Hibernia Trail that will provide access for residents to Struble Lake, the Struble Trail, Hibernia County Park, and Marsh Creek State Park. There is also an opportunity to provide a link from the Twin Valley Elementary Center in the Borough to adjacent municipalities, accommodating local students who wish to walk to school.

Link to Regional Trails

In order to link to regional recreational facilities and future regional trail corridors, Elverson needs to extend their existing trails to the Borough boundaries. The Hopewell Spur Trail should be extended to the western boundary of the Borough along the abandoned railroad right-of-way. The French Creek Trail and the unique Blue Rocks formation could be accessed by utilizing the existing sidewalk along the southern side of Route 23 to North Brick Lane. A trail could be constructed along the eastern side of North Brick Lane, the “French Creek Spur,” to the northern edge of the Whitford Corporation property and provide access to the east as shown on Figure 8-6. This trail would link to the southern portion of the Borough via the sidewalk along Brick Lane and the sidewalk system in Summerfield.



The Blue Rocks are a unique rock formation located just outside of the Borough, near the proposed alignment for the French Creek Trail.

Proposed Trails and Trailheads in the Borough

There are two trail sections that could improve connections in the Borough and augment the sidewalk system as shown on Figure 8-6. The “Summerfield Spur” could provide a link between Summerfield and the two Borough parks, and the “Chestnut Loop” could provide a short exploratory trail that would access the area of preserved wetlands north of Main Street, providing an educational amenity along the trail network and a recreational loop in the Borough’s northern triangle. Trailheads should be provided at key intersections in the trail network with signage and parking, as shown on Figure 8-6 (Map 8-B in Appendix B).

Trail Planning Considerations

The State Planning Code – Act 247

Sections 303(a)(3), 401 (a)(3), 503.3, 603(b)(2), and 604.(1) of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) empower a municipality to address trail planning through its ordinances and regulations.

Public Safety Concerns

Addressing public concerns such as crime and accidents is important. Local landowners and the neighborhood watch can also be used to identify issues, such as areas that flood, or locations that are already prone to vandalism. Trail planners and



This sign in Livingood Park could serve as a kiosk for proposed trail head location.

the public should be aware that, to function properly and safely, public trails and paths need to be 1) well-designed, 2) well-maintained, and 3) well-policed.

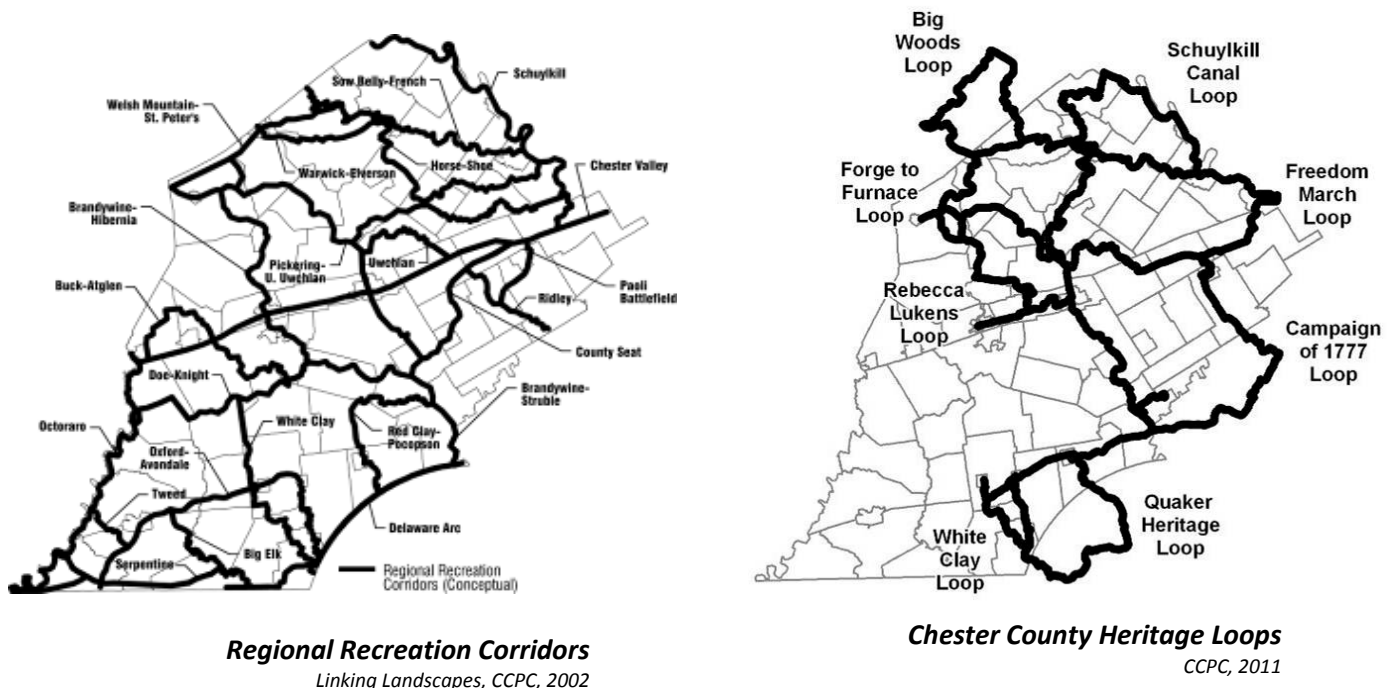
Regional Planning

The Iron and Steel Heritage and Recreation Region, a cooperative self-guided tour program coordinated by the National Park Service, National Lands Trust, the County of Chester, French and Pickering Conservation Trust, and the Brandywine Valley Association (BVA), is an existing program that already highlights Elverson as a site to stop, shop, and eat on the Forging Freedom Tour. Interpretive stops on the tour include Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site, Joanna Furnace, and French Creek State Park. More information is available at: <http://clients.2010solutions.com/ironandsteel/index.php>.

County Planning

Elverson is intersected by two county designated Recreation Corridors, which are conceptual planning zones that are a prime location for the construction of a multi-municipal trail (Figure 8-7). In 2011, Chester County mapped Heritage Loops, which are potential trail corridors that are well suited to link natural or cultural resources. The Borough is a major destination for two Heritage Loops, the Big Woods and Forge to Furnace Loops (Figure 8-8). These designations should be taken into consideration when planning new trail alignments in the Borough.

Figure 8-7: Regional Recreation Corridors and Figure 8-8: Chester County Heritage Loops



Local Trail groups

The Borough should work with local groups, such as the Warwick Walkers, to promote trails within the region.

Recreation Administration and Programming

In the past, municipal recreation planning focused primarily on acquiring and constructing parks and recreation facilities. Increasingly, local governments use civic events such as parades, concerts, and craft festivals as a way to improve their quality-of-life while boosting the local economy. Overall coordination of recreational events or programming is necessary to ensure that events respond to the community's needs.

Existing Conditions

Cultural Events

Downtown Elverson Borough and Livingood Park are used for a number of popular outdoor events and festivals that draw visitors from the community and surrounding area. These events are organized by the Events Committee or others and funded almost entirely through donations by local businesses. The Borough provides assistance and, in some cases, funding for events. A Borough Council member described the events as a way for residents to gather and have “fun together.”



Events such as the Farmers Market draw visitors and serve the community.

Figure 8-9: Outdoor Events and Festivals in Elverson

Event	Activities	Location	Time of Year
Easter Egg Hunt	kid's activities	Livingood Park	Easter Saturday
Community Wide-Yard Sale	yard sale, refreshments	Main Street	2 nd Saturday in May
Elverson Day	5k walk/run, kid's activities, music and fireworks	Livingood Park	Saturday in June
Jack-O-Lantern Contest	pumpkin carving and judging	Main Street	Sunday before Halloween Parade
Halloween Parade	parade activities	Main Street	3 rd Wednesday in October
Farmer's Market	sale of locally-grown products	Livingood Park	Weekly: May – September
Winter Market	sale of locally-grown products	Livingood Park or Twin Valley Fire Department	Monthly: October - April

Recreational Sports Programs

Residents of Elverson Borough participate in a variety of team and individual sports programs. These programs are privately organized and utilize fields located in Livingood Park.

Figure 8-10: Sports Programs

Group	Grades/Ages
Twin Valley Lacrosse	Grades 3-8 and 8-12
Twin Valley Baseball	Ages 6-8, 9-10, 11-12, 13-15, 16-18
Elverson Futbol Club	
Pennsylvania Pioneers National Travel Baseball Club	Under 12
Elverson Baseball	Ages 5-15

Other Recreation: Non-Sports Programs and Events

Recreation includes a diversity of activities in addition to unstructured play, sports, and other conventional programming. These events may include arts and crafts; dance, drama and music; or clubs, hobbies, and collecting. Such activities are often

popular for families, seniors, or civic groups. In Elverson Borough, these include activities of local Boy Scout Troop 37 and Cub Scout Pack 37, and Elverson Garden Club.

Recreation Administration and Staffing

Elverson Borough does not have an active parks and recreation commission or dedicated staff for the administration of recreational features in Livingood or Borough Hall Park. The Borough Administrator manages the use of playing fields and the gazebos in Livingood Park and the pavilion in Borough Hall Park and records reservations for park facilities on the “Park Calendar” on the Borough’s website: www.elversonboro.org/calendar. The Borough includes a link to a Park Use Application on their website. The Borough does not currently have a fee schedule for use of recreation facilities. Organizations can provide a donation.

Needs Evaluation

The parks and recreation committee is currently inactive, which increases the workload for the Borough administrator. An active committee could schedule use of the Borough’s park facilities, help in organizing cultural events, monitor the use of the existing parks and features, and plan for the upgrade or renovation of existing facilities, as necessary.

Open Space

What is Open Space?

For the purposes of this Plan, open space is categorized as protected or unprotected. In *Linking Landscapes*, protected open space is defined as: Land and water areas that have little or no development; are used for recreation or preserving cultural or natural resources, including agricultural soils; and are protected either permanently or on a long-term basis. This definition focuses on how well the land is protected from development, usually by a non-profit land trust or by a municipality or other government. If there is no formal written agreement stating that a parcel of land is protected open space, the parcel should be regarded as unprotected.

Unprotected open space is any undeveloped land that is not protected from development, and can include private golf courses or municipally owned land that is not designated as a park or public recreation facility.

Open space contributes to a quality environment by providing wildlife habitat and protecting environmental functions such as water filtration and groundwater recharge. The economic benefits of open space include the maintenance of property values and the ability to attract both employers and employees to the area, as well as



The farm on Elverson’s western boundary is open space protected from future development by a conservation easement that is focused on preserving the agricultural use.

a lower financial impact and tax burden for municipalities than developed land. In Chester County, open space is closely linked to the vitality of the agricultural and equine industry. Tourism, such as taking a scenic drive, visiting historic sites, or bicycling, is another important part of the local economy that depends on open space.

Existing Conditions

There are approximately 96 acres of protected open space in Elverson, which is approximately 15 percent of the total land area of the community. Figure 8-11 breaks out the different types of open space in the community, which are depicted on Figure 8-2 and Map 8-A.

Figure 8-11: Protected Open Space within Elverson

Type of Open Space	Acres
Agricultural Conservation Easements	25.80 acres
County Parks and Recreation Lands	1.92 acres
Summerfield Homeowners Association	39.69 acres
State Game Lands No. 43	6.07 acres
Municipal Open Space	8.26 acres
Municipal Recreation – Livingood and Borough Hall Park	14.36 acres
Total	96.1 acres

The county parks and recreation land open space category includes two short sections of the former railroad. These segments may accommodate portions of the Hopewell Spur and Summerfield Loop. There are three parcels identified as municipal open space. Two parcels were dedicated as part of Parkside and host the Livingood Trail Loop and provide recreational space. The third is located along North Chestnut Street and was dedicated to the Borough for protection of a significant wetland area.

A conservation easement restricts the manner in which the land may be developed in an effort to conserve a resource for future use and involves a third party, usually a non-profit land trust or a government agency. As Figure 8-2 shows, there is one property in Elverson Borough that is protected by a conservation easement, which is focused on preserving the existing agricultural use.



Almost 40 percent of Elverson’s protected open space is managed by the Summerfield Homeowners Association.

Needs Evaluation

There are several parcels of vacant land located throughout the Borough that, if acquired as open space, could accommodate additional park and recreation land and/or facilitate an expansion of the trail system and pedestrian access to existing facilities. These parcels are identified on Figure 8-6.

Planning Implications

Parks and Recreation

Livingood Park, the Livingood Loop Trail, and Borough Hall Park provide residents with a variety of recreation opportunities. Minor additions to existing Borough facilities, continued maintenance, and a focus on meeting changing resident needs (young and old) should be the focus in the near future.

Trail, Path, and Pedestrian Networks

In recent years a few isolated trail loops have been established in Elverson Borough. Linking these existing trail loops and expanding the trail and sidewalk network would provide a significant recreational amenity for Borough residents and aid in implementing Elverson's vision as a heritage and recreation destination.

Recreation Programming and Administration

Park and recreation administration has grown in recent years with the increased use of Livingood Park. However, Elverson has largely stayed out of recreation programming, as outside entities have filled this need in the area. Coordination with outside entities is essential to meeting the recreation needs of Borough residents, as is administration of Borough facilities. The re-activation of the Parks and recreation committee could facilitate this coordination as well as provide assistance to the Borough Administrator on park and recreation issues.

Open Space

Approximately 15 percent of the Borough is currently protected open space, whether in the form of homeowners' association lands, Borough recreation facilities, or lands with a conservation or agricultural easement. Continuing support of these open space lands, and additions to the open space network as opportunities arise, are important to maintaining the character of the Borough and implementing Elverson's vision as a heritage and recreation destination.



Livingood Park is a destination for residents and visitors to the Borough.

Recommendations

The recommendations below focus on how to best manage, maintain, and enhance parks, recreation facilities, and open space in Elverson Borough and best implement the related goal and objectives (as detailed in Chapter 2). Priorities for the implementation of these recommendations are established in Chapter 9, Implementation Strategies. Implementation of the recommendations identified below will help Elverson achieve its recreation and open space goal to:

Promote the establishment and maintenance of a network of recreational facilities and open space lands that provide public health, ecological, economic, and quality of life benefits.

Overall

8-1 Re-active the Parks and Recreation Committee.

During the development of this Comprehensive Plan, the Taskforce re-committed the Borough to developing Elverson as a heritage and recreation destination. This concept took shape during the development of the Borough's Revitalization Plan (2010). In order to move forward with this concept and continue to address other community recreation and open space needs (scheduling of facilities, maintenance, inspection, monitoring usage, etc.), the Borough should re-active the Parks and Recreation Committee. There are several recommendations included below that could fall under the purview of the Parks and Recreation Committee and may not be possible to implement without a committee dedicated to this effort.

8-2 Pursue outside funding to support parks, recreation, and open space initiatives and pedestrian and bicycle safety initiatives.

For trails, potential funding sources include programs such as the Pennsylvania Community Transportation Initiative (PCTI), which is available through PennDOT and administered in this region by the Delaware Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC). DVRPC itself can be a source for grants, and also compiles a Municipal Resource Guide that summarizes funding opportunities. The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources is another potential source for recreation grants, particularly their Community Conservation Partnership Program (C2P2). Information on open space grant programs in general, and grants specific to certain open space projects, can be obtained from the Chester County Open Space Preservation Department.

Ordinance Amendments

8-3 Amend municipal ordinances to include and consistently define common terms as they relate to park, recreation, and open space planning.

Consistency in the use of park, recreation, and open space terminology can clarify expectations among the public and Borough officials. Currently only the terms "common open space" and "restricted open space" are defined in the land use ordinances. In accordance with the Borough's heritage and recreation destination concept, the following terms (at a minimum) should be defined: park, active and passive recreation, trail, path, bicycle route, sidewalk, and trailhead. Illustrations should also be included to provide additional clarification of these terms, as necessary.

8-4 Update ordinances to include provisions which address planning for sidewalks, trails and bicycle routes and that require recreation lands, open space, or green areas.

Current requirements regarding sidewalks are limited and located in the Borough's subdivision and land development ordinance. As written, sidewalks are only required in certain circumstances at the discretion of Borough Council. The Borough should consider amending the land use ordinances to require sidewalks through subdivision and land development, and in particular in those areas where sidewalks have been proposed to fill gaps identified in the network. See Map 5-B: Transportation Needs and Figure 8-6.

Borough land use ordinances should be amended to require recreation lands and open space or a fee-in-lieu of these amenities. The Borough can require that a fee-in-lieu of recreation facilities be provided based on the number of lots associated with a new residential subdivision or the square footage of a commercial or institutional use. The Borough should also consider providing flexibility in their land use ordinances that would allow an applicant/landowner to provide a trail, path, or other amenities (public square, pocket park, etc) as an alternative to a sidewalk when appropriate due to property layout or the purpose or location of the proposed land use.

8-5 Evaluate the Borough's requirements for the maintenance and inspection of open space within residential developments.

There are nearly 40 acres of open space in Summerfield that provide recreational and scenic amenities to residents and visitors alike. As the Borough continues to grow and additional areas of open space are preserved and utilized for recreational purposes the maintenance of these facilities should be a priority. The requirements for open space management plans and inspection thereof should be reviewed and revised, as necessary, to ensure that these areas do not become a safety issue for residents or a liability issue for the Borough, and they continue to provide the functions intended when they were dedicated as open space. Land stewardship information can be found online from the Natural Lands Trust (natlands.org) and The Land Conservancy for Southern Chester County (tlcforscc.org).

8-6 Amend (or adopt) the Official Map and Ordinance to identify potential parks, trails, bike routes, potential open space, and other facilities.

An Official Map and Ordinance provides options without requiring an immediate commitment for acquisition or improvement on the part of the Borough. Elverson Borough could map, among other things, potential trail corridors, trail heads, bicycle routes, or areas that are a high priority for open space protection (see Figure 8-6 or Map 8-B).

An Official Map provides notification to property owners and applicants/developers about the location of potential future public improvements. By identifying improvements on the Official Map, the municipality is provided a one-year time period in which to acquire (or ease) the mapped area once the property owner has provided written notification to the municipality of the intent to subdivide or build on the mapped lands.

In cases where the municipality expects public improvements to be dedicated by the developer to the municipality, the Official Map is equally useful because it establishes the desired pattern of the improvement.

Parks and Recreation

8-7 Continue to provide a variety of active and passive park and recreation facilities and activities to meet the needs of current and future residents.

A mix of passive and active recreation facilities provides recreation opportunities across a broad range of demographics, helping to meet the needs of all residents, young and old. It should be clear to the public which areas are passive and which are active, with specific activities identified as permitted or prohibited. Active recreation facilities that can serve multiple uses can adjust with changing desires or needs. This includes fields that can accommodate multiple activities, or facilities that can serve as community gathering areas or host community events (such as Elverson Day at Livingood Park).

8-8 Address maintenance and improvements to existing park and recreation facilities.

Currently the regular maintenance of the Borough's parks and recreation facilities is completed by a sub-contractor as administered by the Borough Administrator. Improvements to park facilities are implemented on an as needed basis. The tennis courts in Livingood Park are currently in need of maintenance. A Parks and Recreation Committee could designate responsibilities for the maintenance of park and recreation facilities and conduct formal maintenance inspections at parks and recreation facilities based on a schedule developed in such a way as to minimize liability and insurance costs. The committee could also work on a Capital Improvements Program (CIP), which focuses on funding land acquisition and the construction of facilities, and is a critical first step to a long-term vision for the Borough's park and recreation facilities.

8-9 Establish additional parks and recreational facilities as opportunities arise.

While Elverson has an adequate park and recreation network currently, opportunities may arise to add new facilities, particularly to link important community features and complete the pedestrian and bicycle network (see Figure 8-6 or Map 8-B).

There are several options that can be explored in order to facilitate the development of new parks and/or recreational facilities in the Borough. In addition to regulatory options (see Recommendation 8-4) the Borough can also consider establishing a park and recreation endowment fund that can receive cash donations as gifts while maintaining a gift catalog that describes needed recreation equipment and structures that can be funded by a donation.

8-10 Explore options for reducing recreation costs through regional cooperation when evaluating or planning recreation initiatives.

Elverson can meet with the municipal officials of West Nantmeal Township and the Northern Federation to explore opportunities to share facilities across municipal boundaries. The Northern Federation, of which Warwick Township is a longtime member, recently adopted a Regional Parks and Recreation Plan. Opportunities should be explored to not only share existing facilities such as the West Nantmeal Township Park and Livingood Park, but also to partner on the expansion of the regional trail network that may someday link the Borough with West Nantmeal, the municipalities that are included in the Northern Federation, and municipalities in Berks County. This task could be led by a park and recreation committee.

Trails and Pedestrian Networks

8-11 Pursue the establishment of a network of trails and sidewalks within the Borough and links to regional trail facilities as part of becoming a heritage and recreation destination.

A strong network of trails and sidewalks is critical to the Borough's goal to be identified as a heritage and recreation destination, and should be a priority for the Borough (Figure 8-6 illustrates improvements critical to this recommendation). Such a network would provide access between residential, commercial, institutional, and recreational land uses, serving both residents and visitors. Formally, one step to implement this would mean participation in the Schuylkill River Heritage Towns and Tours Program, offered by the Schuylkill River National and State Heritage Area in collaboration with the William Penn Foundation.

8-12 Work with local property owners to establish trail easements to enhance the trail and sidewalk network.

The establishment of a local trail and sidewalk network can be a challenge for municipal officials because of the limited availability of public lands and funding for such facilities. While the Borough has identified potential open space on Figure 8-6, it is limited to only a few parcels. While the development of trails and sidewalks can be required or negotiated through the land development process, this option is market driven and will only occur as the Borough develops over time. In order to accommodate a network of trails and sidewalks in the Borough within a reasonable timeframe and implement the heritage and recreation destination concept, it may be necessary to coordinate directly with local property owners.

The Parks and Recreation Commission or other Borough representatives should meet with owners of properties that are located along the proposed trails and pedestrian connections shown on Figure 8-6. Narrow trail easements can be established along the perimeter of properties to accommodate a formal or informal trail based on the type of connection needed and expected user activity. An example of this concept would be the Horseshoe Trail, where much of the alignment of this regional trail is located on the edge of private parcels.

In Pennsylvania, the Recreation Use of Land and Water Act (RULWA) of 2003 limits the legal liability of private landowners who make their land available to the public without charge for recreation, such as hiking, fishing, or mountain biking. The goal of this law is to make it easier for people to open their land for public recreation. Under RULWA, a land owner “owes no duty of care to keep the premises safe for entry or use by others for recreational purposes, or to give any warning of a dangerous condition, use, structure, or activity on such premises to persons entering for such purposes.” In general this law states that a land owner who does not charge an entrance fee and who maintains his or her land using safe, conventional management practices cannot be successfully sued by someone who has an accident while using the land for recreation, such as hiking.

Recreation Administration and Programming

8-13 Continue to support a balanced diversity of recreational facilities and activities through coordination with adult and youth athletic leagues, public schools, and other recreation stakeholders.

In order to support this balance, the Borough should meet with the appropriate stakeholders on an annual basis or as necessary. Availability of facilities is an ongoing concern for athletic leagues and any organized group activity. Coordination among all stakeholders can help identify concerns and opportunities on a broad basis. Public input is critical to meeting recreational needs of all age groups. Seeking public input via the Borough website and/or newsletter on a periodic basis helps to inform future efforts.

As with other communities in Chester County and nationwide, the needs of the Borough’s younger and older population are changing. The average age in Elverson Borough is 56.7 years old, and a favorite activity of this age group is walking. Walking is a low impact activity that does not require expensive equipment and is easily accessible for any income level. Safety and convenience are the primary considerations in regard to walking facilities. The Borough’s vision to be a heritage and recreation destination involves the expansion of the existing trail and sidewalk network to provide pedestrian access throughout the community. The changing recreation needs of the Borough’s younger population need to be considered as well. The Borough should consider seeking public input via the Borough website and/or newsletter on a periodic basis particularly with respect to active recreation for youth.

The Parks and Recreation Committee or other Borough representatives should meet with District representatives to discuss the use of the Elementary Center’s recreational facilities. These facilities include a large playground, basketball and tennis courts, and an all-purpose field. The use of these facilities by Borough residents, even on a limited basis, would expand the Borough’s recreational opportunities.

Another opportunity which should be discussed with the District is the potential to provide a pedestrian link to the Elementary Center from Parkside and

Livingood Park as shown on Figure 8-6. This link could facilitate students walking to school from areas of the Borough as well as points south such as West Nantmeal Township.

8-14 Continue and expand special events planning.

Cultural events are very popular among the residents and business owners of Elverson Borough. Events such as Elverson Day and the community-wide yard sale bring residents together and attract visitors to the Borough's shops and restaurants. The Parks and Recreation Committee or the Borough officials should consider expanding the current offering of outdoor events and festivals (Figure 8-9). Seeking public input via the Borough website and/or newsletter on a periodic basis would help to identify other potential events.

8-15 Provide current recreation opportunities available to Borough residents on the Borough's website.

The website currently includes a park calendar and a park reservation form. The webpage should be expanded to include a list of recreational facilities in the Borough and, as the network of trails and sidewalks expand in the future, a map of the network. Links to area athletic organizations could also be provided.

8-16 Evaluate the establishment of a fee schedule for use of recreational amenities to generate income for park maintenance and/or upgrades.

The level of funding that is made possible through coordination with sports leagues has been sufficient to date, but further growth or additional usage of the municipal parks may require more coordination to improve the efficiency of how the money is spent, and better realize revenue from rental fees and possible user fees. User fees should be based on a logical and practical rationale that is developed with community input. Seeking public input via the Borough website and/or newsletter regarding the opportunities and challenges of user fees would help to gauge public opinion on fees and use.

8-17 Create formal recreation policies/guidelines that address property issues and organizational structure.

Formal recreation policies/guidelines should address security, safety, liability, maintenance and Americans with Disabilities Act compliance at a minimum, and could extend to marketing and special events planning. These policies/guidelines should include a schedule for annual inspection of facilities (including trails, fields, playgrounds, etc.) and related structures (gazebos, pavilions, etc.). Such policies/guidelines would inform the planning, development, and operation of parks and recreational facilities, to include inspection, maintenance, and repair of existing facilities and development of new facilities. The development of these policies/guidelines may involve the participation of other volunteer groups such as the neighborhood watch.

Open Space Planning

8-18 Establish an open space network in the Borough linking existing and future protected open space, including parks and trails.

While 15 percent open space is fairly substantial for a Borough or urban landscape, opportunities to preserve critical parcels (such as parcels that could accommodate the trail network or with important natural, historic, or scenic features) can present themselves at any time. Potential lands to target for preservation are identified on Figure 8-6. Supporting efforts could also include facilitating communication between landowners and land preservation organizations, or providing information on the appropriate management of open space. Maintaining open communication with preservation organizations active in the area can help to facilitate preservation when opportunities arise. Additionally, it is important to advocate for, and when possible, require the proper monitoring of lands that are a eased or owned by land trusts. It is also important to continue to work with applicants/developers who utilize the open space options presented within the Zoning Ordinance.

Links

Birdsboro Waters

www.keystoneconservation.org/featured/Birdsboro

Chester County Planning Commission, *Linking Landscapes*

<http://www.chesco.org/planning/openspace>

Elverson Baseball

www.elversonbaseball.com

French Creek State Park

www.dcnr.state.pa.us/stateparks/findapark/frenchcreek

Joanna Furnace

www.haycreek.org/joanna_furnace.htm

Hopewell Furnace National Historical Park

www.nps.gov/hofu/index.htm

Marsh Creek State Park

www.dcnr.state.pa.us/stateparks/findapark/marshcreek/

National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA)

www.nrpa.org

Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

www.dcnr.state.pa.us

State Game Lands No. 43

www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/state_game_lands

Struble Lake Recreation Area

www.fishandboat.com/water/lakes/struble_lk/oostruble.htm

Twin Valley Lacrosse and Baseball – Morgantown Athletic Association

www.leaguelineup.com/morgantownaa