



a multi-municipal parks, recreation, trails and open space plan for

# Nether Providence Township and the Boroughs of Swarthmore, Rutledge and Rose Valley

Delaware County

December 17, 2017

DRAFT



Toole Recreation Planning

6081 Honey Hollow Road  
Doyletown, PA 18902  
Phone: 287-561-7888 Fax: 215-794-0282  
E-Mail: [anntoole@comcast.net](mailto:anntoole@comcast.net)



Nether Providence Township  
and the  
Boroughs of Swarthmore,  
Rutledge and Rose Valley

DELAWARE COUNTY, PA

**Multi-Municipal Parks, Recreation,  
Trails and Open Space Plan**

December 2017



Hildacy Preserve  
1031 Palmers Mill Road  
Media, PA 19063  
610-353-5587  
natlands.org

and

**Toole Recreation Planning**



# acknowledgements

## **Nether Providence Township Board of Commissioners**

**Swarthmore Borough Council**

**Rutledge Borough Council**

**Rose Valley Borough Council**

**Wallingford Swarthmore School District**

## **MUNICIPAL, SCHOOL DISTRICT AND COLLEGE ADVISORS**

Gary Cummings, Manager, Nether Providence Township

Dave Grady, Assistant Manager, Nether Providence Township

Jane Billings, Manager, Swarthmore Borough

Paula Healy, Secretary, Rose Valley Borough

Gennifer Guiliano, Rutledge Borough

Greg Brown, Vice President, Swarthmore College

Rich Noonan, Superintendent (Retired), Wallingford Swarthmore School District

Lisa Palmer, Superintendent, Wallingford Swarthmore School District

## **PLAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Bonnie Smith, Chairperson

Paul Fritz            Monica Gagliardi

Roger Latham        Marie Govannicci

Rachel Sten         Susan Kelly

Laura Memeger      Jon Penders

Ben Pickup

## **with assistance from**

Natural Lands (Planning Consultant)

Hildacy Preserve

1031 Palm

Media, PA 19063

Toole Recreation Planning (Recreation Planning Consultant)

6081 Honey Hollow Road

Doylestown, PA 18902



This project was funded in part with funds from the Community Conservation Partnerships Program, under the administration of the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Bureau of Recreation.

This project was funded in part with funds provided by PECO, through the Green Region program, under the administration of Natural Lands.



## **table of contents**

CHAPTER 1		<b>introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
CHAPTER 2		<b>goals and objectives</b> .....	<b>5</b>
CHAPTER 3		<b>plan for open space</b> .....	<b>11</b>
CHAPTER 4		<b>plan for trails</b> .....	<b>21</b>
CHAPTER 5		<b>park and recreation facilities analysis</b> .....	<b>35</b>
CHAPTER 6		<b>recreation opportunities</b> .....	<b>83</b>
CHAPTER 7		<b>operations, management, and financing</b> .....	<b>95</b>
CHAPTER 8		<b>implementation strategies</b> .....	<b>108</b>

## tables

TABLE 1 - parks by the numbers .....	<b>36</b>
TABLE 2 - 2017 parks and recreation budgets .....	<b>100</b>

## appendices

### Maps

- 1 – Existing Resources
- 2 – Open Space and Trails Opportunities



# Chapter 1 - Introduction

## Context

The planning area made up of Nether Providence Township and the Boroughs of Rutledge, Rose Valley and Swarthmore, exists in central Delaware County. Nether Providence, Rose Valley and Swarthmore are contiguous, with Rutledge as an island, separated by Springfield Township. The four municipalities are similar in many ways, the most notable being that they are dense and nearly fully developed, and they make up the Wallingford Swarthmore School District. But each municipality has its own character, separating it from the rest. Nether Providence is a bustling suburb, with many distinct neighborhoods and commercial and social centers. Rose Valley has a quieter feel, with mature woodlands and continuous tree canopy defining the community. Rutledge is a small community, nearly completely residential. Swarthmore is a walkable community, with a lively, central downtown, which serves residents and students alike.

Route 476, commonly referred to as the Blue Route, brings opportunities and obstacles. The highway provides the community with access to Philadelphia and the surrounding highway network. The Leiper-Smedley Trail, a hidden gem, runs alongside the highway. But the wide highway corridor and its tall bridges, separate the Nether Providence and Rose Valley on the west side, from Swarthmore and Rutledge to the east. This separation is physical, visual and psychological.



**The Blue Route divides the community physically, but provides a corridor for the Leiper Smedley Trail.**

Approximately 3.5 miles of the Blue Route are contained within the community. Roads cross over or under the Blue Route at only eight locations. However, none of these crossing points accommodate adequate pedestrian facilities. In some cases, sidewalks exist on the bridge above or within the underpass beneath the Blue Route, but do not connect to a sidewalk or trail network. Due to this impediment, the community features few pedestrian routes east and west. The Nether Providence

Sidewalk/Walkway Committee is working towards improving this situation, by proposing and implementing new segments of sidewalk in developed areas. Swarthmore Borough is also undertaking construction of additional sidewalks in strategic locations.

Creeks and streams flow through the community providing recreation, nature and beauty to many of the parks. The community takes pride in keeping the streams clean and undertaking restoration projects to enhance stream banks and habitat. Crum Creek, which roughly follows the Blue Route, is the most visible creek, as it flows through Smedley Park, Swarthmore College, and Leiper Park. Ridley Creek flows along the southern edge of Nether Providence and through Rose Valley, where it is most accessible within the Saul and Longpoint Sanctuaries. Little Crum Creek



**Crum Creek and other streams provide beauty and recreation opportunities to the communities' parks.**

provides the name for the park in Swarthmore through which it flows. Vernon Run and its tributary, Minquas Run, originate in Nether Providence and flow into Rose Valley, passing the Veterans Memorial Garden and the Old Mill, before meeting the Ridley Creek. Dick's Run originates near and flows through Furness Park before meeting Crum Creek on land owned by Swarthmore College. These creeks offer some opportunities for fishing and scientific endeavors within many of the parks.

## **Findings**

The planning team of landscape architects and community, park and recreation planners, and cartographers conducted extensive field work in the parks, assessing facilities, trails and community connections. This research along with public opinion gathered through the community engagement process resulted in the following findings:

### **About the Area**

The four municipalities in central Delaware County have a population of 21,661, in accordance with the latest census data. The Wallingford Swarthmore Area School District is one of the best in Pennsylvania. Strath Haven High School ranks seventh among 676 high schools in Pennsylvania according to U.S. News & World Report. Forbes ranks Swarthmore College as the third best college, tenth best among all colleges and universities, in the USA. Housing, income, and educational attainment also rank high in Delaware County and Pennsylvania. Together, Nether Providence (4.6 sq. mi), Swarthmore (1.4 sq. mi.), Rose Valley (0.73 sq. mi.) and Rutledge (0.14 sq. mi.) cover a compact area of slightly less than seven square miles. The area is nearly fully developed with little open space remaining. Making the best use of all public spaces is crucial.

## The Area as a Community

While the four municipalities are distinct jurisdictions, each with their own elected officials, they really function as one community. Residents are not bound by their jurisdiction's borders. They play in organized sports leagues with service areas that extend beyond municipal boundaries. Citizens in all the boroughs and the township use Swarthmore College for walking and partaking in the programs and events held there which are open to the public. The town centers of the boroughs attract residents from throughout the community for shopping, special events, recreation, services, library, faith based services, and restaurants.

## Recreation: A Way of Life

Active living and the enjoyment of the community is the hallmark of the four municipalities. In the boroughs of Rose Valley, Rutledge and Swarthmore, people enjoy walking and experiencing nature close to home as a way of life rather than simply as recreation. Nether Providence complements this lifestyle with the parks and recreation facilities designed for active organized recreation, primarily for sports. The Township's recent acquisition of Gouley Park will serve residents of various ages, interests, and abilities with year round recreation opportunities. While people do bicycle, they would like to have more and safer places to bicycle within the community and connections to the Delaware County Trail system and the Circuit.

## Parks and Trails

The area has 20 municipal parks totaling 132.21 acres. About 3 percent of the area's land is contained in municipal parks. The 78-acre, county owned Smedley Park also serves the community. Many of the school district properties also act as parks, permitting informal use of fields by area residents. The Wallingford Swarthmore School District owns approximately 116.85 acres of land in the community. Private entities including the Taylor Arboretum and home owners associations own another 121 acres. The four municipalities contain a total of 452 acres, or 10% of the land area, of parks, public open spaces, school district lands and private open spaces. Approximately 6.21 miles of trail exist within the community, including 2.39 miles of trail on the privately owned Swarthmore College property, which is used by community members.

## Programs

The Swarthmore Recreation Association operates as a community based organization providing programs and services year round, primarily for children and youth, serving residents throughout the



**The Old Mill is a popular location for events in Rose Valley.**

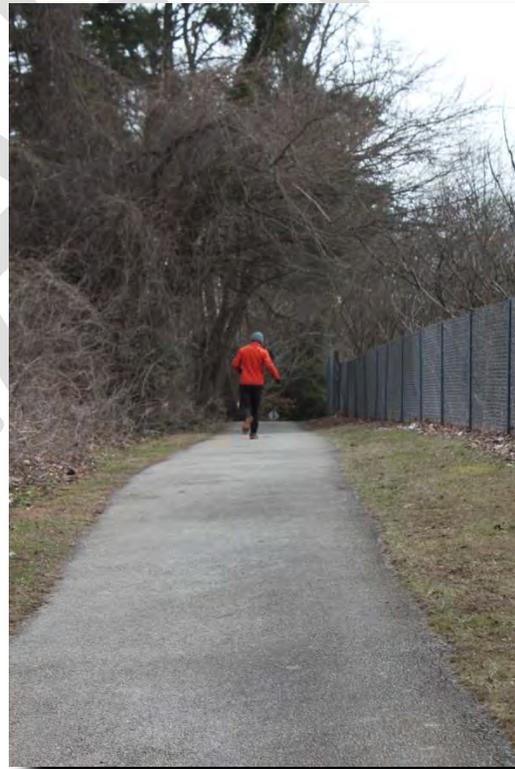
School District. Nether Providence offers recreation programs through volunteers on township boards as well as summer camps with paid staff. Nether Providence Athletic Association also provides programs and activities. Rose Valley prides itself on nature based programs. In Rutledge, the Fire Company is the main provider of community special events. All four municipalities provide the facilities for the organized sports leagues that serve residents throughout the community.

### Management and Financing

Each municipality develops, maintains and finances its own parks and recreation facilities. The highway or public works departments in Nether Providence Township and Swarthmore Borough undertake park maintenance. The municipalities each have some form of parks and recreation advisory board or committee except for Rose Valley. Rose Valley has an Environmental Advisory Council, which has a leadership role in managing the borough's three wildlife sanctuaries. While none of the municipalities has a parks and recreation department, Swarthmore Borough has a partnership with the Swarthmore Recreation Association providing an annual contribution. In 2016, the Borough increased their contribution from \$18,000 to \$25,000. The Swarthmore Recreation Association leverages this donation with fees and charges for recreation programs. Overall, the region spends about \$200,000 annually on operating parks and recreation ranging from \$12,000 in Rose Valley to about \$100,000 in Nether Providence. This equates to about \$9.25 per capita. The average per capita municipal investment in parks and recreation operations is \$30 in Pennsylvania.

### Moving Forward

In terms of parks, recreation, open space and trails, Nether Providence, Rose Valley, Rutledge, and Swarthmore are at an important moment in their history. With the communities nearly fully developed, now is the time to act on creating trails and preserving land for parks, recreation, and open space. The strategy for improving parks and recreation and creating safe places for people to walk and bicycle throughout the community will benefit many generations far into the future.



**The Leiper-Smedley Trail already serves the community, but holds far greater potential as a regional trail.**

## Chapter 2 - Goals and Objectives

Nether Providence, Rose Valley, Rutledge, and Swarthmore are among the best places to live in Pennsylvania. Comprising the Wallingford Swarthmore School District, this charming, scenic community is home to top-rated schools, a world class college, highly desirable housing, low crime, excellent health care, convenient access to Philadelphia with all of its amenities, and a parks and recreation system that has been developing over many decades. The people who live, work, and visit here can enjoy recreation opportunities year round, mostly for free. Whether they use the parks or not, they appreciate the importance of having green open spaces and opportunities to engage in active healthy living. The conservation of natural resources and the aesthetics of the area are a high priority to the residents who treasure these features as the foundation for this distinctive way of life.

This Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation, Parks and Open Space Plan presents a strategy for the area that enables the municipalities to collaborate to their advantage as well as to move ahead as unique entities in improving their own parks, recreation facilities, and programs. This plan will help to ensure that the community remains green and beautiful, has plenty of recreation opportunities year round, and provides safe places for people to walk and bicycle. To be implemented over time, the plan will result in the establishment of a new community recreation center at the Summit School at Gouley Park, creation of Furness Park as a nature-based facility, public spaces that will be used and treasured by the community, additional ball fields for sports leagues, new or improved playgrounds, better signage, new or improved multi-use and nature trails to better connect people to their parks and open spaces, enjoyable recreation programs for people of all ages and interests, and continuing maintenance to ensure that parks are places where people want to spend their time. The plan suggests management strategies and policies to protect natural resources and provide quality recreation opportunities for all citizens.

Below are the key findings, values, vision, mission, and key recommendations for how the municipalities, both together and/or independently, and their partners can connect the communities, provide great public spaces, access nature close-to-home, and offer top-notch recreational experiences for the residents. The strategy of this plan is to enable the four municipalities to plan regionally and act locally or together depending upon the project or program under consideration.

### **Core Values, Vision, Mission and Goals**

The following core values, vision, mission, goals, and recommendations for implementation will advance the community's work in protecting community character, conserving natural resources, and establishing an excellent public park and recreation system.

## Core Values

As the qualities valued by the community, the core values are embodied in the mission, vision, and recommendations for open space conservation, parks, recreation, greenways, and trails. All policies and actions should be ingrained in the following core values.

- **Community Character** – The four municipalities feature many distinctly different neighborhoods, from the historic village of Wallingford, the classic grid of Rutledge, the charming college and railroad Borough of Swarthmore to the woodland village of Rose Valley, whose historic district is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Every neighborhood is different and their parks and open spaces should reflect their important features.
- **Connections** – Connecting people to nature and helping them to get around the Boroughs and the Township and to the regional trail network safely on foot or bicycle is important.
- **Natural Resource Conservation** – Woodlands, creeks, wildlife, and clean water and air must be conserved.
- **Health** – The health and wellness of citizens of all ages is paramount. Recreation fosters active healthy lifestyles through facilities, programs, and services that benefit individuals and the community.
- **Collaboration** – Continuing to work in partnership with our citizens, neighboring communities and community-based organizations in the public and private sector is vital. None of the four communities can meet all conservation and parks and recreation needs on its own.
- **Historic Resources** – Swarthmore College campus, the Thomas Leiper House, Thunderbird Lodge, Rutledge Community Hall and the many other historically important buildings and properties are vital threads in the community fabric.
- **Financial and Environmental Sustainability** – Making the best use of municipal resources and outside funding to steward the environment, respect human and financial capacity, and provide a legacy for future generations is vital.



The communities already have a strong connection to nature through their parks.

## Vision Statement

*The recreation, parks, and open space system of Nether Providence, Rose Valley, Rutledge, and Swarthmore enriches the community through the preservation of its character and scenic beauty, conservation of natural, cultural, and historical resources, and recreation opportunities that support active healthy lifestyles.*



**Safe places to walk can connect people to nature and support active, healthy lifestyles.**

## Mission Statement

*To plan regionally and act locally or in partnership where appropriate on acquisition, development, operation, and maintenance of a park, recreation, and open space system that enriches the quality of life for those who live, work, and visit here.*

## Goals

Parks, recreation and open space work very well in the Nether Providence, Rose Valley, Rutledge, and Swarthmore community. Each municipality has a strong sense of place and community. Achievement of the following goals will build on previous successes and follow the values, vision, and mission that emerged through the planning process.

Goal 1: Protect the remaining open space, natural, cultural and historical resources.

Goal 2: Improve and expand the existing parks and recreation facilities to be community destinations where residents can have fun, experience nature, socialize, and lead active healthy lifestyles.

Goal 3: Connect the four municipalities through a system of trails, sidewalks, and paths.



**More sidewalks and paths can better connect people to their parks and trails.**

Goal 4: Facilitate recreation opportunities to help the citizens engage in active, healthy living.

Goal 5: Provide operational excellence and financial sustainability that will garner widespread public support for parks, recreation, open space and trails.

### Key Recommendations

There are numerous opportunities to improve the parks, recreation, open space and trails network in the community. Some minor tweaks may improve individual facilities, while some big opportunities also exist. The following list includes the eight most important recommendations. These are the big picture recommendations, which are often broad and may encompass many more detailed recommendations within them.

1. **Plan regionally and act locally.** The four municipalities do not need to enter into formal agreements to operate together or to acquire land together. The municipalities have demonstrated the ability and propensity to work together and share information through this planning process and through the completion of the earlier multi-municipal comprehensive plan. The municipalities can continue to operate independently, while agreeing to share information and support each other in new endeavors.
2. **Connect the community through a network of pathways and trails for safe walking and cycling.** Extend the Leiper-Smedley Trail north and south and transform it from a forgotten trail into the spine of the local trail network. Link the local trails to **The Circuit** trails and other regional trails. The Circuit is southeastern Pennsylvania's 750-mile bicycle path system that is largely completed in Philadelphia and the Counties of Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery.
3. **Transform the Summit School at Gouley Park into an important community asset providing year round recreation for people of all ages and a broad range of interests.** Develop a plan for use of the site, including the existing building. The plan should provide recommendations for short and long term use. A short term plan should allow for building use as soon as possible, pending bigger changes that would require more financial support. A longer term plan should address how the needs of the community could be met here. Consideration should be given to all aspects of recreation, including the arts.

4. **Improve Furness Park through a combination of volunteer efforts and professional services, including master planning, stewardship planning, trail building and provision of other amenities.**
5. **Add parkland where possible through the acquisition of parcels adjacent to existing parks and open spaces, underdeveloped properties and undeveloped, forested parcels.** In this community, where few undeveloped parcels remain, the community must consider acquiring developed parcels and demolishing or modifying existing structures and changing land uses. Additionally, small additions to parks and open spaces through preservation of adjacent parcels can go a long way to improving access and expanding uses.
6. **Convey a strong vision and purpose in each park, established through good design with a focus on how people enjoy using public spaces.** Parks should be designed by landscape architects, planners or park and recreation planners, with a significant amount of public input and expertise in the successful planning, management, and programming of parks and recreation facilities. It is vital to include maintenance management, recreational programming, and future operating budget during the design phase.
7. **Enter a formal agreement including the four municipalities and the school district, to share spaces such as Henderson Field and the Rutgers Avenue Fields.** A school – park arrangement would benefit all parties, as the public would officially gain access to the properties, and the municipalities and district can plan improvements together and share costs where applicable. The five entities could also pursue preservation of certain parcels together, in order to protect them from future sale and development and keep them for the use and benefit of the public.



The Summit School at Gouley Park offers an opportunity to create a new park and recreation center.



## Chapter 3 – A Plan for Open Space

### **Context**

The four municipalities own a total of 135 acres of active and passive parks or open spaces. These lands are complemented by an additional 78 acres of land owned by Delaware County in Smedley Park and 117 acres of land owned by the school district. Homeowners associations own another 94 acres and nearly 27 acres of privately owned land are conserved. These lands contain approximately 450 acres total, which is comparable to individual surrounding municipalities including Ridley (273 ac), Springfield (363 ac) and Upper Providence (485 ac). Middletown Township contains 2,539 acres of open space, as it contains Ridley Creek state park.

The community also contains a number of un-conserved, semi-public properties which contribute to its character, but are not truly open spaces. Swarthmore College, with the trail system through Crum Woods, provides recreation and access to natural areas. The College contains approximately 291 acres of undeveloped land, and allows the public to relax in its green spaces, walk its trails, and enjoy the Scott Arboretum, as if they were public parks. The Springhaven Country Club is private, but contributes to the community character as it is nearly 110 acres of open land. Four swim clubs, which also serve as community gathering spaces, contribute 23 acres.

### **Strengthening of the Community Fabric**

In dense communities with small lots, parks, recreation facilities and open spaces are especially important, as people truly depend on them for recreation, relaxation and socialization. Small lots may not afford residents opportunities to build swimming pools, erect play equipment or hold a large family cookout in their own yards. They need park and recreation facilities for these things. Additionally, where the landscape is filled with homes with little accompanying green space, natural areas and trails are needed to give people a place to connect with nature. Natural areas also break up the monotony of home after home, provide services such as stormwater management and beautify the community. Parks and recreation areas allow people to play, to commune with nature and to meet their neighbors, all of which can contribute to healthier individuals and healthier communities.

### **Prioritizing Conservation**

In a landscape with so few opportunities for traditional land conservation, it is important to identify lands for conservation and set priorities, in order to act quickly when opportunities arise. The community will need to be strategic in conserving land so as to get the biggest bang for their buck. As there are few large parcels left, smaller properties, pieces of properties and previously developed properties will play a large role in improving and growing the community's parks, recreation and open space system.

The existing parks and open spaces serve the community well and are obviously well loved. However, the community would benefit from creation of a true community park and additional passive recreation.

The residents support the preservation of additional open space and understand that there are few opportunities left for preservation, so action must sometimes be taken on short notice.

In order to grow the community's open space system, the municipalities will need to focus on the following priorities:

1. **Protect the remaining natural resources by preserving properties which contain woodlands, wetlands, stream corridors and other important resources.** Many of the parcels which remain undeveloped are not ideal development sites. They feature steep slopes, floodplains, streams and other impediments to development but may be ideal for open space preservation or trail corridors. A number of these properties exist along the Ridley Creek, in southern Nether Providence and Rose Valley. These parcels should be considered for fee acquisition if many of them can be acquired together to create a natural area park. If these parcels cannot be acquired, trail easements could accommodate an important segment of the proposed multi-municipal trail system, described in chapter 4.

2. **Expand greenways, trails and recreational opportunities by preserving properties which are contiguous to other parks, preserved natural areas, historical features and recreational facilities.** With so few large parcels left in the community, it will be difficult to create new parks. It would be better served by expanding existing parks piece by piece. In many cases, this would necessitate buying out existing homeowners or businesses. This approach should be taken cautiously, but can reap great benefits when an additional property would greatly improve park access, divert traffic out of a neighborhood, preserve an important natural resource or provide a place for a facility that the community may currently be lacking. Parks which may have opportunities and could benefit from additional acquisition of adjacent lands include: Gouley, Leiper, Houston, Morris Sapovitz and Woodrow Wilson Parks in Nether Providence; Longpoint and Saul Sanctuaries and Todmorden Woods in Rose Valley.



**Properties adjacent to existing parks should be considered for acquisition where appropriate.**

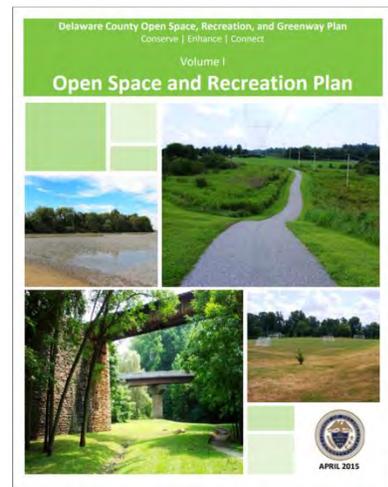


Golf courses, churches and schools, which may face uncertain futures, should be considered for acquisition for parks and open space.

3. **Acquire properties which are underdeveloped, are occupied by obsolete uses or unexpectedly become vacant.** Nether Providence Township has recently acquired the site of the Summit School and renamed it the Summit School at Gouley Park. This sort of acquisition would be considered outside the box thinking in many communities. However, in this community, acquisition of underdeveloped lands may be the best opportunity for creating additional parks and open spaces. The community contains many properties which don't look like traditional open space, but could be future candidates for acquisition, including churches, athletic fields and facilities, schools and golf courses, such as the Springhaven Club.

Additionally, where residential lots may become vacant, these could be acquired for the creation of pocket parks or tot lots, similar in size to Thatcher Park in Swarthmore.

The sale of Summit School by the Wallingford Swarthmore School District sets a precedent, which could mean other district owned properties, including the Rutgers Avenue and Henderson fields, could become available. IN this case, Swarthmore Borough should follow the lead of Nether Providence and work towards acquiring these large properties.



Recommendations in the DCPD Open Space and Recreation Plan and other plans should be considered for implementation as well.

4. **Protect lands where preservation or acquisition can advance the goals of this plan, the Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan, Delaware County Parks and Recreation Plan and other relevant planning documents.** The recommendations contained in this plan should be considered as complimentary to recommendations contained in other documents prepared previously or in the future. Helping to achieve the goals in other plans aligns well with the mission statement of this plan, to “plan regionally and act locally.”

## History and Parks and Recreation

With six individually listed sites and one historic district on the National Register of Historic Places, the community is rich with history. In Swarthmore, the Ogden House and the birthplace of Benjamin West are each located on the campus of Swarthmore College. Nether Providence Township owns the Thomas Leiper House and operates it as a house museum, while Westlawn and Wolley Stille, each in Wallingford, have become private residences. In Rose Valley, much of the borough is within a registered historic district, recognizing the importance of the Arts and Crafts Movement in the history of the community. Thunderbird Lodge, also individually listed, is owned by the Centennial Foundation, and maintained by live-in caretakers.

These properties present few opportunities to contribute to the open space, parks and recreation system of the community going forward. The buildings in private ownership remain as homes with any previous estate land subdivided away. The buildings on Swarthmore’s campus may be accessible to the public and can provide some educational opportunities, but the college maintains control over them.

The Leiper House does provide an interesting opportunity as it is owned and controlled by Nether Providence and is abutted by Leiper Park. This plan recommends major changes to Leiper Park. Improvements at the park could be done in conjunction with the Leiper House to provide improved parking, programming and events.

## Methods for Preserving Open Space

The four municipalities have conserved the majority of their parks and open space by acquiring it fee simple. This method, supported by grant funding, may continue to be the most effective way to



Historic sites such as the Thomas Leiper house can add interest and character to neighboring parks.

conserve land. However, use of other methods, including conservation easements and land protection through the development process may also be worthwhile.

### Conservation Easements

In addition to purchasing land outright, municipalities purchase conservation easements to meet local open space goals. A conservation easement limits certain uses on a property (such as development) in order to advance conservation purposes while keeping the land under private ownership and control. Conservation easements relieve the municipality of the burden of managing the land. Conservation easements are often used to preserve farmland, prohibiting future subdivision and enabling the farmer to live on and farm the property. While there are no farms within this community, this tool could still be applied to wooded properties or other mid-sized properties which could be subdivided and developed further. Conservation easements can only be created through an agreement with a willing landowner. They cannot be decreed by the municipality.

### Trail Easements

Similar to conservation easements, a trail easement limits certain uses on a property. In this case, the easement would permit the Township or Borough to construct a trail within private property, guaranteeing public access to that trail. The property would remain privately owned, while the municipality would be responsible for maintaining the trail. Trail easements are agreements to be reached with willing landowners, which may be a private citizen, commercial land owner, homeowners association, a local government or other private or public entity. Like conservation easements, trail easements can only be created through an agreement. They cannot be decreed by the municipality.

### Purchase or Other Fee Simple Acquisition

The most common means for a municipality to fully control land is through fee simple acquisition. This means the municipality owns the property and may manage it as they see fit. Acquisition may be the best solution for a municipality to provide parkland and active recreation facilities, but it also comes with the burden of maintaining the land. Acquisition should be considered for parcels suitable for conversion to parks and recreation uses or when a parcel can augment an existing facility. Acquisition should also be considered when an adjacent parcel contains a sensitive use, such as a school, a natural area with important features or a historic site which would benefit from buffering.

In some cases, fee simple acquisition may be followed by establishment of a conservation easement. The municipality may find itself with the opportunity to acquire a parcel which it does not wish to manage, but may be well suited for preservation due to the presence of natural features. In this case, the municipality may wish to acquire the land, place trail and conservation easements on the property, ensuring its protection and contribution to the trails network, and then sell or lease the property to a private owner. If the land is able to be leased for a revenue generating use, it then also generates income for the municipality.

### Cluster and Open Space Development Options

While the community is significantly developed, there may be situations where open space development options could benefit the community. The same types of underdeveloped properties or

obsolete uses recommended for conservation could also become development sites. While their development may not be imminent, developers interested in this area could identify these parcels for redevelopment in the future. Cluster and open space development options could provide some open space alongside the new development.

Natural Lands Trust's Growing Greener: Conservation by Design program requires a developer to set aside all of the unbuildable land – steep slopes, floodplains, creeks, wetlands and hydric soils- in addition to 50% of the buildable land, to be used as public open space. The density remains the same, but the homes are built on smaller lots. Typically, developers make a similar profit on smaller lots adjacent to protected open space as they do on large lots in a conventional pattern with no dedicated open space.

Typical cluster design ordinances require 30 to 40% of the site to be dedicated as open space. However, these ordinances don't usually have requirements in place to ensure that the open space is good, usable land. Oftentimes, the open space is leftover land, which can't be built upon, but also can't be used for recreation due to steep slopes or wet soils.

In the mid 2000's, Rose Valley faced this very scenario. The last large parcel in the borough, the Saul Estate, was going to be developed. The Borough, the developer and Natural Lands worked together to design a development layout, in accordance with Conservation by Design principles, which provided an adequate number of homes for the developer, preserved open space to be added to the Saul Wildlife Refuge and preserved the existing, historically important house, "Schonhaus", rehabilitated by architect Will Price.



**Development options which preserve open space can provide balance with new development on the few remaining large parcels, as was the case at Traymore in Rose Valley.**

Just as the Saul Estate in Rose Valley and the Summit School in Nether Providence were marketed as development sites, so too could other schools, athletic facilities, estates, churches and golf courses in the community. The township and borough should consider establishing zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances which require open space to be preserved, in preparation for future redevelopments. This may be the only way to save even a portion of some of these sites, if the landowners are not willing to negotiate with the community.

## Funding

It appears that the municipalities have procured funding for open space on an as-needed basis. This approach is fine as long as the municipalities are comfortable using the general fund or other non-dedicated funds. Referenda require a great deal of work and do not appear to be necessary in these communities. Grant funding from agencies such as the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and

Natural Resources, should always be considered. Matching funds from the municipalities, Delaware County, private foundations or other agencies would strengthen any application.

## Evaluation Criteria

Each municipality should establish a set of criteria for evaluating open space. The plan provides recommendations for what types of properties, locations and situations to consider when reviewing potential acquisitions or easements. However, situations change over time, and properties recommended for preservation now, may no longer be suitable in the future, and vice versa. Therefore, it is important to have a set of criteria for use in judging whether a property is right for conservation. The four municipalities should each adopt or otherwise recognize a set of criteria, which may include all or a subset of the following:

1. *Is the property available? Is the landowner willing to sell or donate an easement?*

A willing landowner is necessary for any means of conservation to go forward. The municipality should attempt to engage in discussions with landowners to determine their willingness and focus their efforts where landowners are most interested in conservation.

2. *Is the property contiguous to an existing or potentially preserved open space or park?*

Preserving contiguous properties is the most efficient way to grow the parks and recreation system, as additional preserved parkland or open space may be able to take advantage of existing facilities such as parking, utilities, and bathrooms. In open space or natural areas, contiguous lands can better preserve habitat and the health of the ecosystem.

3. *Is the property currently suitable or easily made suitable for active or passive recreation?*

It is important for the community to determine whether the property is actually usable and meets our needs. Just because a property is available and undeveloped, doesn't mean it should be conserved. The community must ask whether a property can accommodate sports facilities, trails, playgrounds or active recreation, or does it preserve important habitat, provide vital ecological services or meet some other need.

4. *Does the property meet a need or fill a void within the overall parks and recreation system? Or that of an individual municipality? Or that of a neighborhood?*

The community has a nice variety of different types of parks, recreation facilities and open spaces. However, each different facility is not easily accessible to the entire community. For instance, Swarthmore features small parks for passive recreation, but lacks opportunities for larger scale active recreation. Furness Park provides a place for passive recreation in nature, but is not easily accessible to residents on the outer edge of the community. The overall park system includes many recreational facilities, but lacks a dog park and a splash pad. The community should consider whether the parcel can meet a discrete need of the community, a municipality or a neighborhood.

5. *Is the property adjacent to an existing or proposed school? Or offer the opportunity to provide improved or increased pedestrian and/or bicycle access to a school?*

The community has demonstrated that they support the ability for students to walk to school. Additionally, schools, as semi-public places, offer access to recreation facilities such as playgrounds and fields when school is not in session. By identifying conservation opportunities adjacent or close to schools, the community can provide recreational facilities close to the children, foster partnerships with the school district on programming and expand the trail network to help provide safe walking routes to school.

6. *Does the property offer the opportunity to provide improved or increased pedestrian and/or bicycle access to a community based use such as a library, community center or public building?*

Like schools, these buildings are hubs of the community. By providing improved access to these places, we make it easier for residents of all ages to get there safely, meet their neighbors and strengthen their bonds with the larger community.

7. *Does the property contain a historic resource? Is it contiguous to an important historic site?*

The community has demonstrated an affinity for its historic resources by preserving and caring for many of them. Where parcels containing or adjacent to historic resources are preserved, we preserve history. Adjacent parcels can also help to preserve the surrounding context of historical buildings and landscapes. Where parks can be established in close proximity to historical resources (like Leiper Park and the Thomas Leiper House), the two amenities can be used together to increase visitation to each, through coordinated programming and events and shared facilities and management.

8. *Is the property at or near a gateway to the community?*

A visitor's first impression of the community is made when they see the signs letting them know that they've just entered one of the four municipalities. Swarthmore and Rutledge have been proactive in constructing signs and gardens in their gateway parks welcoming visitors to the boroughs. When parcels on the edges of the community become available, the municipalities should consider taking the opportunity to shape the visitors first impression.

9. *Is the property adjacent to an existing trail? Could the trail be extended or accessed through the parcel under consideration?*

The community is already expanding the trail and sidewalk network through the work of various committees and commissions. They have made great progress in improving the walkability of the community. However, as is to be expected in developed communities, there are still many gaps in the network. Parcels which can accommodate the extension of existing trails, sidewalks or paths should be strongly considered.

*10. Does the property offer an opportunity to advance the multi-municipal trail plan or other relevant planning document?*

In some cases, opportunities may exist to advance the multi-municipal trail plan, even if there are no existing trails on contiguous properties. This could apply where a parcel is large enough to provide a self contained trail loop or crossing trail, which could then spur trail, sidewalk or path construction on its neighboring properties or streetscapes. Additionally, some properties may represent a very important link in a future trail corridor, one which the trail cannot be built without. While a property may lack some of other resources typical of most preserved open space, a potential future trail connection may make conservation worthwhile.

*11. What is the potential impact of development of the site?*

Where cluster or open space development options are available (as recommended above), the municipality should consider the probability of whether those options would be pursued and how much preserved open space would result. In cases where a large amount of open space would be preserved, it may be determined that the township's space funding would be better spent on a parcel not likely to be developed under an open space option. Similarly, if a parcel is severely constrained by natural features, the development impact may be minimal, leading the community to save its funding for other opportunities. However, if sensitive natural features, rare plants or habitat are present, and in need of stewardship or threatened by development, the community may wish to acquire a parcel without much development parcel in order to better steward the natural resources.

The use of these criteria should assist the community in making decisions regarding potential conservation of land. The criteria should not be used as a score sheet or a ranking tool. They should be used to foster discussion to identify the opportunities and obstacles associated with each parcel.



## Chapter 4 – A Plan for Trails

### Context

This community contains a very complex pedestrian network. The character and extent of each individual network is tied to the character of each community. Nether Providence, largely developed as a typical, mid-century, vehicle dependent suburb, lacks sidewalks altogether in many neighborhoods. Swarthmore, a railroad and college town, was always envisioned as a walkable community, and features sidewalks along most of its streets. Rutledge is similar, in that it is a walkable community near a train station with sidewalks. Rose Valley, a woodland community, lacks sidewalks, but features many secret paths, informal walkways shared amongst the neighbors. The inconsistent pattern is challenging, but the municipalities are making progress towards improving the network, as Nether Providence and Swarthmore have made great strides in retrofitting streetscapes with new sidewalks.



**The Leiper-Smedley Trail seems to be underutilized now, but could become an important regional trail.**

The community also features very few trails. The Leiper-Smedley Trail functions well for recreation, and also represents a great opportunity for growing the trail system for improved recreation and commuting. Swarthmore College allows residents to use its trails, including Valley Walk, the main trail through Crum Woods. Some of the parks, including Hepford and Houston in Nether Providence and Little Crum Creek in Swarthmore, feature internal paths which can be used for recreation. The Saul and Longpoint Sanctuaries in Rose Valley also feature nature trails.

The sidewalks, Leiper-Smedley Trail, and community paths form a strong backbone to the proposed trail network. The Nether Providence Sidewalk Committee and Swarthmore Sidewalk Improvement Plan both continue to advance the pedestrian network. This plan proposes new pedestrian connections big and small- an extension to the Leiper-Smedley Trail is the main recommendation for recreation, while numerous smaller connections are proposed to help residents easily walk to parks or from one neighborhood to the next. The plan builds on the planned and existing trails and sidewalks to create a connected network which will serve the community's needs for recreation, commuting and day to day travel.

## Walking as a Way of Life



**Crum Creek and the utilities that follow it offer a potential corridor for extending the Leiper-Smedley Trail.**

Due to the fragmented pedestrian network in the community, it is difficult to walk from most homes to schools, parks or social centers. The public has shown strong support for creation of additional places to walk safely. They want to be able to walk to the library, to a coffee shop, to a local park without getting into their cars. They also want to be able to just go for a walk through their neighborhoods, with no specific destination in mind, without dodging traffic. They also want to be able to walk, run and bicycle for exercise and commuting.

Trails, sidewalks and paths help people get where they are going, but they also play an important role in building community. Neighbors say hello to each other and chat as they pass on the sidewalks. Multi-purpose trails provide places for groups of friends and neighbors to safely run, walk and cycle together. Nature paths provide hikers and birders with places to meet and connect with nature together. Trails, sidewalks and paths are social spaces, like parks, where people meet, gather and strengthen the community.

### **Priorities and Opportunities**

In trail planning, like open space preservation, opportunity often trumps prioritization. Therefore, the following prioritization should be considered as a rough guide, rather than step by step instructions to building a trail network. The mechanisms for trail creation described later depend on cooperation with

third parties including other municipalities, public utilities, private citizens and developers. In some cases, a trail which may be considered a high priority may not be implementable due to a lack of partnership opportunities or funding. When this situation arises, it may be more efficient to move on to another opportunity, and revisit the higher priority at a more favorable time.

This plan cannot account for opportunities which may, or may never, arise. Therefore it is recommended that the community review the proposed trails shown on the Opportunities Map included in this plan in conjunction with the list of priority destinations below on a routine basis, with current opportunities in mind. The community should use these resources and the knowledge of the municipal staffs and volunteers to identify trail priorities with a high probability of success.

## Priority Destinations and Connections

Feedback from the public, focus groups, key person interviews and the advisory committee indicates that residents want access to safe places to walk in their neighborhoods, to parks and recreation facilities, schools, natural areas and social centers. This feedback has shaped the formation of the list of priority destinations and connections below. As noted above, these lists should be considered in the context of current opportunities and obstacles to trail connections.

### 1. Primary Destinations

Parks, schools and trails are the most important destinations for trail connectivity as these are the places people go for recreation. Every front door should be viewed as a trailhead when the destination is a place of recreation. The parks, school and trails are spread throughout the township, close to the places where people live. However, in most cases the infrastructure is not in place to permit safe walking or riding. Trails and paths should first be established



**Schools are important trail destinations as students, parents and other residents visit them for education and events.**

to connect residents to these places. In this community, train stations are also a primary destination, as many residents travel to the train stations for their daily commutes.

*The Leiper-Smedley Trail* – This hidden gem provides the community with a two mile long recreational trail, where they can walk, run or ride bicycles with few conflicts with vehicles. This trail could serve even more community residents and the region, by extending it north and south and providing more connections.

*Smedley Park* – At nearly 80 acres, this Delaware County Park is one of the largest in the area. It also draws visitors of many age groups and interests, as it features natural areas, trails, playgrounds and active recreation facilities. The park is the current trailhead of the Leiper-Smedley Trail and the

proposed trailhead for the Media-Smedley connector. These and other existing and proposed trails could make Smedley Park a major regional trail hub.

*Community Parks* – Each municipality has a flagship park or group of parks. These include Furness and Houston Parks in Nether Providence, Little Crum Creek Park in Swarthmore, the Longpoint and Saul Sanctuaries in Rose Valley and Triangle Park in Rutledge. These parks may draw residents from up to a mile away. They should be connected by trails to make them more easily accessible from greater distances.

*Schools* – The public and private schools in the community provide recreation, programming, services and places to gather socially. They should be connected by trails, sidewalks and paths to enable children, and other residents, to walk to school. In many cases, schools are situated in a manner that a simple footpath, or even their open fields, can provide pedestrian travel routes through the neighborhoods.



The Wallingford, Moylan-Rose Valley and Swarthmore train stations are important destinations for pedestrians.

*Train Stations* – Many community residents travel to and from the Moylan-Rose Valley, Wallingford, and Swarthmore regional rail stations every day to begin their commutes to Philadelphia. These stations are fairly well served by sidewalks and additional sidewalks are currently planned as part of the Nether Providence Sidewalk Committee’s work. Further connections to these sidewalks could make the stations even more accessible to a greater number of residents.

## 2. Secondary Destinations

This group of destinations includes places which may be visited less often or by fewer of the community residents. Smaller neighborhood parks may only need to be accessible to the immediate neighbors. The social centers may be weekend trips for most residents, rather than daily. The other existing trails or sidewalks are more likely to be segments for pedestrian travel, rather than recreational destinations.



**Neighborhood parks such as Woodrow Wilson should be easily accessible to surrounding residents, but don't need to be connected to a larger trail system.**

*Neighborhood Parks* – These small parks, like Umoja, Pew, Woodrow Wilson and Little Crum Creek, draw most visitors from the neighborhoods which surround them. Therefore, these parks don't need to be on the main trails. However, improvements to make them more safely accessible to the neighbors should be installed. These may include sidewalks, crosswalks, or pedestrian islands.

*Social Centers* – Places which feature restaurants, cafes, arts venues, and other social gathering spaces should also be connected by trails, sidewalks and paths. In this landscape, there is little opportunity to provide major trails to these places. However, by adding segments of sidewalks or paths here and there, they can be made to be much more accessible to pedestrians.

*Existing and Planned Trails, Sidewalks and Paths* – The Leiper-Smedley Trail is the only major trail in the community. However, in addition to the sidewalk systems of Swarthmore and Rutledge, there are many other segments of existing and planned sidewalks. The sidewalk which was implemented

by Nether Providence, along Providence Road, can be a major spine of the trail network. The other existing segments can also be connected and extended to slowly expand the community wide pedestrian network.



Residents don't stop walking when they reach a municipal boundary, so commercial areas in neighboring municipalities, such as Morton Borough, should also be made accessible to pedestrians.

### 3. Tertiary Destinations

*Neighboring Parks* – The surrounding communities feature parks near the four communities in the planning area. Where trails can connect to these, such as Chester Park in the City of Chester and Church Road Park in the Borough of Morton, they should be incorporated into the trail system by partnering with those municipalities.

*Neighboring Commercial Areas* – Like their parks, commercial areas in neighboring communities also serve the residents of the planning area. Where they can be easily connected to the pedestrian network, such as the Springfield Mall and Edgemont Avenue, they should be linked by trails by partnering with the neighboring municipalities.

### Connection Types

Walking is a way of here, and as such, trails, sidewalks and paths already connect many parts of the community. The different types of connections accommodate different users and offer beauty, character and utilitarianism. New connections are proposed throughout the community, continuing the use of multi-purpose trails, sidewalks and paths.

#### Multi-Purpose Trails

The Leiper – Smedley Trail is the only multi-purpose trail in the community. Extensions and new multi-purpose trails, as proposed by Delaware County, are recommended in this plan. Multi-purpose trails are typically paved to widths of 8 – 12', and are primarily intended to serve walkers, runners and cyclists. Installation of additional multi-purpose trails requires additional study, public input and detailed design to determine the appropriate width, paving material and permitted uses.

### Sidewalks

The character of each of the municipalities is directly associated with the abundance of sidewalks found in each. The compact boroughs of Swarthmore and Rutledge offer well connected sidewalk systems, allowing residents to walk to train stations, parks and downtowns. Swarthmore is working to fill in the few remaining major gaps. In Rose Valley, a community initially planned during the Arts and Crafts movement, sidewalks don't fit the character of the landscape. Nether Providence, featuring typical automobile oriented suburbs, has a mix of neighborhoods with and without sidewalks. The Nether Providence Sidewalk Committee and Walkable Wallingford movement are working to provide safe places to walk through major sidewalk installations. Sidewalks are typically concrete, between 3 to 5 feet in width. Those proposed in the plan should generally match those they connect to, but should also consider expected pedestrian traffic volumes.

### Paths

The term "paths" includes all other types of trails existing and proposed throughout the community. In Rose Valley, these include nature trails through the wildlife preserves and other properties. In Nether Providence, asphalt, concrete and natural surface paths exist within many of the parks. Where new paths are proposed, they would most likely be constructed using natural surfaces, compacted stone fines, or other soft surfaces in accordance with the character of the surrounding community. Additional design and public input would also be necessary in most cases.



Existing paths within parks could be expanded to improve access and create walking and running loops.

## Key Recommendations

- 1. Continue advancing the goals of the MMCP, by improving pedestrian access to schools and train stations. Also provide better connections to parks, open spaces and other community destinations.**

By providing connections to the local places people visit most often, the community can lessen its dependence on the automobile and reduce needs for parking, while providing opportunities for

active recreation and a healthier lifestyle. The community utilizes three train stations: Swarthmore, Wallingford and Moylan-Rose Valley. The Swarthmore Station is well connected to the pedestrian network. The Wallingford Station is connected to new sidewalk along a stretch of East Possum Hollow Road, with more sidewalks planned by the Nether Providence Sidewalk Committee.

The Moylan – Rose Valley Station is not well connected. New sidewalks or footpaths along Rose Valley Road and the remainder of East Possum Hollow Road would greatly improve pedestrian accessibility. Rose Valley and Nether Providence could partner to implement and connect these paths.

- 2. Position the Leiper-Smedley Trail to become a regionally important trail which better serves the community.** Partnerships with PennDOT and Delaware County could lead to improved access and functionality of the existing trail as well as new extensions of the trail to better serve the community. This trail is currently a hidden gem, known well to the community, but not up to its fullest potential. The two mile trail could be expanded and improved to take its place alongside some of the best regional trails. Expansion of the trail is also recommended in the Delaware County Parks and Recreation Plan and labeled as the Blue Route Bikeway.

*Extend the Leiper-Smedley Trail north-* The trail currently ends within Smedley Park, near the Penn State Extension building. A great deal of park land exists further north of this point. The trail could be extended along Crum Creek approximately one mile further north before reaching the park boundary. Extending the trail to this area would improve the trail, bring more users to other parts of the park, and provide opportunities for connecting to the Beatty Road and Pine Ridge Road neighborhoods as well as Springfield Township.

*Extend the Leiper-Smedley Trail south –* It would require partnerships and bridges, but the trail could be extended further south. The trail currently ends where Yale Avenue and East Rose Valley Road connect, near Swarthmore College and a Blue Route underpass. The trail could cross Yale Avenue with a crosswalk into property owned by Swarthmore College. A bridge would be needed to cross Crum Creek. There



**Despite its close proximity to the Blue Route, some stretches of the Leiper-Smedley Trail offer a sense of peace and solitude.**

it could run south along an existing access road. Further south, it could cross back over to the west side of the creek and run further south through Leiper Park. South of Leiper Park, the trail would continue through lands owned by Delaware County and PennDOT, until reaching Bullens Lane. Along the way it could connect to Swarthmore College, the Thomas Leiper House, the Crum Creek Valley Condominiums, the Governor's Drive neighborhood, and Black Rock Park in Ridley Township.

*Improve Connections* –The trail is surrounded by residential neighborhoods, commercial centers, existing parks, Swarthmore College and the Plush Mills Senior Living Community. Formal connections to these places through the creation of trailheads and spur trails and the addition of signage, could make the trail more accessible to the people who live in these neighborhoods and use the college, commercial areas and parks. Additionally, some connections already exist but could be improved by filling sidewalk gaps, such as where the trail access steps meet Callender Lane. Here, an additional sidewalk could connect the access to the planned sidewalk at Copples Lane. The existing stairs could also be removed in favor of a universally accessible ramp system.



**More paths like this one could better connect residents to the trail system.**

*Re-align the Trail Beneath Baltimore Pike* – The trail currently crosses Baltimore Pike at grade through a crosswalk. The crosswalk crosses five lanes of traffic and is approximately 85' long. It is not especially well marked as it consists only of two white lines. The crosswalk is basically functional, but not a pleasant experience. This crosswalk could be circumvented by realigning

the trail to go beneath Baltimore Pike, partially following an existing social trail. This realignment would require a partnership between Delaware County, PennDOT and Plush Mills Senior Living Community.

*Improve Trailheads, Amenities and Parking* – Opportunities exist to improve the visibility and attractiveness of the existing trail by upgrading existing facilities and adding new ones. The trail currently lacks true trailheads and dedicated parking. Should the trail be extended, trailheads with parking could be created in Smedley Park, Leiper Park, Black Rock Park (Ridley Township) and at the intersection of Bullens Lane and Governor’s Drive. Amenities such as benches, water fountains and bike pump and maintenance stations could also be provided at trailheads or along the trail.

The trail is approximately 6’ wide in most locations. The trail could be widened to 8’ to 10’ in some places to better accommodate multiple users and multiple modes, including bicycles, pedestrians and dog walkers. A widened trail may also improve sight lines at tight corners.

- 3. Implement footpaths along Rose Valley, Possum Hollow, Woodward and Manchester Roads in partnership with NP.** The street pattern in Rose Valley is made up of culs-de-sac, loop streets, arterial and collector streets. This pattern discourages through traffic, making most of the local streets safe for walking. However, this same pattern makes it difficult for the residents to walk to any destination, as most of the local streets connect directly to major roads which lack sidewalks. Pedestrian paths along Rose Valley and West Brookhaven Roads would improve the situation greatly. The Nether Providence Sidewalk Committee has already proposed sidewalk for Brookhaven Road, where it borders Rose Valley. Additional paths and other traffic calming measures, such as speed humps or tables along Possum Hollow and Woodward Road, would improve conditions for pedestrians and establish a safe walking loop within the neighborhood. A path along Manchester Road would connect Pew Park to the Saul Sanctuary, through the surrounding neighborhoods in Middletown and Providence Townships.

A sidewalk would not be appropriate for Rose Valley Road, as typical concrete squares would not fit the character of the community. An earthen footpath, tamped gravel and stone fines or a narrow macadam path, similar to the one along Croton Road in Upper Merion Township (pictured on next page), would be more appropriate. Paths in these areas would also help to achieve the goals of improving pedestrian connections to schools and train stations, by serving the School at Rose Valley and the Moylan-Rose Valley Train Station. A path along Rose Valley Road would provide a safe pedestrian route to the Hedgerow Theatre, as well as the Centennial Foundation’s Thunderbird Lodge, two important destinations for Rose Valley residents. Paths would also provide more walkable loops within neighborhoods.

Additionally, Rose Valley will soon need to comply with state regulated MS4 requirements. New paths along Rose Valley Road could be combined with stormwater bmp's, such as rain gardens and



**Paths made of natural materials such as crushed stone are more appropriate than sidewalks in natural areas.**

vegetated swales. The path could be constructed with pervious paving and could incorporate stormwater holding capacity below. Artfully designed gardens could meet MS4 requirements, manage stormwater and provide beauty to a path and garden experience!

- 4. Support Delaware County's efforts to create a spur trail connecting Smedley Park to Media Borough.** The Delaware County Parks and Recreation Plan, Volume II, recommends the creation of the Media-Smedley Connector Trail, to roughly follow the existing trolley line from the park to the borough. The County has received grant funding from DCNR to support this project. This trail could benefit the community by improving access to Gouley Park and providing a pedestrian connection from other parts of Nether Providence to the Leiper-Smedley Trail and Smedley Park.
- 5. Create a spur trail connecting the extended Leiper Smedley Trail to the Sanctuaries in Rose Valley.** Should the trail be extended south to Bullens Lane, it could also be a starting point for an additional trail across the landscape. Nether Providence Township and Rose Valley Borough could partner with Ridley Township, Chester County Redevelopment Authority, private landowners and the City of Chester to establish a new trail connecting the proposed southern end of the LS trail to Bullens Lane Park, Houston Park, Taylor Arboretum, Chester Park and Brookhaven Road. This trail could use the existing sidewalk along Bullens Lane, coupled with sharrows or bike lanes. Undeveloped land along the Ridley Creek could accommodate a multi-use trail from Bullens Lane, across Brookhaven Road and north to the sanctuaries. Portions of this route are also recommended in the Delaware County Parks and Recreation Plan, and labeled as the Ridley Creek Greenway.

**6. *Improve connections to the existing trail and sidewalk system.*** The existing pedestrian network is inconsistent, but enough sidewalks, paths and trails exist to form a backbone for a larger network. In many places, short segments can be implemented which will substantially improve connections between neighborhoods and amenities. Continue supporting the Nether Providence Sidewalk Committee the Swarthmore Borough Sidewalk Improvements Plan and implement their existing recommendations.

**7. *Continue implementation of the Nether Providence Sidewalk Committee recommendations and Swarthmore Borough Sidewalk Improvements Plan.*** These initiatives have already paid dividends for the community's pedestrian network. Additional committees or initiatives in Rose Valley and Rutledge may also assist the municipalities in many trail and sidewalk related functions.

Committees may help the municipalities draft ordinance revisions requiring sidewalks in new developments, redevelopments and building permit projects. They could also require sidewalks to be in good repair prior to issuance of Use & Occupancy permits when a house is sold. Committee members, who are members of the community, may also be better suited than the municipalities to approach neighbors regarding new trails or trail easements.

Sidewalk, trail or pedestrian committees could also help to continue cooperation between the four municipalities and other neighboring communities. They could also connect with the Wallingford Swarthmore School District, local churches and other community oriented landowners to gain permission for neighbors to walk through their properties.

**8. *Improve the user experience on existing trails and sidewalks.*** User safety should be prioritized when improvements are considered. This may mean adding crosswalks where none exist, improving sight lines on existing trails and providing wayfinding signage and GPS locations for use in emergencies. Crosswalks are an inexpensive way to quickly improve pedestrian safety. They should be added at all intersections where sidewalks or trails are existing or proposed.

**9. *Improve, connect and extend the trail system within the sanctuaries.*** The existing trails within the Saul and Longpoint Sanctuaries provide a nice, quiet place to walk, and they should remain as such. However, they can be improved to provide better access and connectivity.

The trails currently lack a trailhead. One could be created at the Old Mill/ Borough Office, where it could share parking and bathrooms. Modern signage would also benefit trail users and should be placed at all trailheads.

The sanctuaries are not well connected. The trails in each are disconnected. Todmorden Woods is also completely segregated from the sanctuaries. Two bridges across Ridley Creek could connect all three sanctuaries and expand the trail systems. Alternatively, additional trails could be established along the creek, through trail easements over private properties, to connect the sanctuaries and Todmorden Woods.

A partnership with the residents of Todmorden Drive, Forest View Road or Tanglewood Circle could result in a trail easement or other arrangement to permit neighbors to access Todmorden Woods. Partnerships with Middletown Township, private landowners and the Ohev Shalom cemetery could also allow a footpath to be created from the sanctuaries to the vicinity of Brookhaven and Waterville Roads, with a spur connecting to Scott Park.

**10. Improve access to the existing parks.**

Many of the existing parks are nestled into neighborhoods, but lack pedestrian amenities to allow the neighbors to easily and safely walk to the parks. Creating sidewalks and trails within and along frontages of parks and other municipally owned lands could improve access and safe walking. In Nether Providence, the residents of Garden City would benefit greatly from the addition of sidewalks and crosswalks along the Harvey Road frontage of Houston Park. In Rose Valley, Pew Park could be used as a pilot project for the creation of the Rose Valley Road footpath. In Rutledge, the addition of sidewalks and crosswalks along Swarthmore Avenue could improve safety for pedestrians. In Swarthmore, the addition of sidewalks on Widener Way and Riverview Avenue at Henderson Field would improve access to the fields and better connect the neighborhoods. Other opportunities exist for implementation of trails and sidewalks within parks, as noted in Chapter 5 Facilities Assessments.



**Safer pedestrian access would make the parks more accessible to nearby residents.**

- 11. Update the trails plan again!** This trail plan contains many, many recommendations for improving the existing pedestrian network. However, over time, situations and resources change, which may make some recommendations more or less achievable. For that reason, the municipalities should reassess this plan and its recommendations in five to ten years, regardless of how much progress has been made on the recommendations within. This would also be a good time to reassess the available funding sources, potential for grant funding and possible partnerships with other municipalities, the school district, Swarthmore College and other potential collaborators.



## Chapter 5 - Parks and Recreation Facilities Analysis



### Overview of Parks and Recreation Facilities

Active living is a hallmark of the community. In the boroughs of Rose Valley, Rutledge and Swarthmore, people enjoy walking and experiencing nature close to home as a way of life rather than simply as recreation. Nether Providence complements this lifestyle with the parks and recreation facilities designed for active organized recreation, primarily for sports. The Township's recent acquisition of the Summit School at Gouley Park will serve residents of various ages, interests, and abilities with year round recreation opportunities. While people do bicycle, they would like to have more and safer places to bicycle within the community and connections to the Delaware County Trail system and the Circuit.

The area has 20 municipal parks totaling 132.21 acres. About 3 percent of the area's land is contained in municipal parks. The 78-acre, county owned Smedley Park also serves the community. Many of the school district properties also act as parks, permitting informal use of fields by area residents. The Wallingford Swarthmore School District owns approximately 116.85 acres of land in the community. Private entities including the Taylor Arboretum and home owners associations own another 121 acres. The four municipalities contain a total of 452 acres, or 10% of the land area, of parks, public open spaces, school district lands and private open spaces. Approximately 6.21 miles of trail exist within the community, including 2.39 miles of trail on the privately owned Swarthmore College property, which is used by community members.

This plan advises the community to continue to plan regionally and act locally. This approach is evident in the existing parks and recreation facilities, as the character of the parks generally aligns with the overall character of each municipality. Nether Providence parks feature an abundance of amenities, serving its large and diverse population. The wildlife sanctuaries in Rose Valley blend with the wooded landscape. The Triangle Park in Rutledge packs many uses and facilities into a small space. Swarthmore's mix of tot lots and passive parks blend nicely with the surrounding neighborhoods.

**Table 1. - Parks by the Numbers**

	Name	Size (Acres)	Pool/ Splash Pad	Amphitheatre	Memorial	Tennis	Basketball	Playground	Baseball/ Softball	Soccer	Multi-Use Field	Informal Field	Welcome Sign	Pavilion/ Gazebo	Buildings	Parking	Bathrooms	Garden/Nat'l Area	Seating Areas	Trail/ Path	Historic Resource
1	Furness Park	16.1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
2	Hepford Park	4.15	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0
3	Houston Park	36.13	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
4	Leiper Park	6.8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0
5	Mickey Vernon/Bullens Lane	0.55	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
6	Morris Sapovitz Park	4.39	0	0	0	0	2.5	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0
7	Summit School at Gouley Park	9.8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0
8	Woodrow Wilson Playground	0.43	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
9	Triangle Park	0.75	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
10	Longpoint Wildlife Sanctuary	17.6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
11	Saul Wildlife Sanctuary	20.95	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
12	Todmorden Woods	5.8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
13	Pew Park	0.32	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
14	Heritage Garden and Veterans Memorial	0.55	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1
15	Little Crum Creek Park	5.29	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1
16	Gateway Park	0.29	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
17	Keystone Park	0.42	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
18	Umoja Park	1.25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
19	Thatcher Park Tot Lot	0.22	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
20	Centennial Park	0.42	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0
21	Smedley Park	78	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	7	1	2	0	0	2	1	0	1	1	1	0
	<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>210.21</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>

## Strategies for Improvement

- **Incorporate stormwater management projects** within new and existing trail corridors and parks. Improvements to the parks and trails will bring more impervious surfaces, such as asphalt and concrete, and turf grass and playing fields, which offer very little stormwater management. New improvements would require stormwater management measures to accompany them. However, the parks should also be assessed for opportunities to retrofit old stormwater management features to bring them up to current standards, or to implement new stormwater management features which could also help the municipalities meet their MS4 requirements.
- **Further public input and design would benefit many of the parks.** A master plan for each park would examine issues of access, circulation, uses, parking, stormwater management, landscaping and other matters. Preparation of a master plan would involve significant public involvement and should be prepared by a landscape architect, planner or park and recreation planner. Master plans can cost between \$30,000 and \$100,000, depending on the size of the park and scope of recommended activities. The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) and the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) may offer funding to offset portions of this cost. A completed master plan will also make the community eligible to apply for funding to construct new or rehabilitate existing elements in the parks. Master plans should be developed for the Summit School at Gouley Park, and at other parks where major improvements may be planned.
- **Consider additional facilities** as part of the master planning process. The community currently lacks a dog park and may benefit from incorporating features currently trending in parks and recreation, such as splash pads and outdoor gyms. These items are not vital additions to the park and recreation system now, but should be considered in future planning endeavors.
- **Evaluate all of the parks** for compliance with the Consumer Product Safety Commission criteria and the Americans with Disabilities Act regulations, prepared and governed by the United States Department of Justice. It is typical for older parks to no longer meet modern regulations. This assessment has not reviewed all elements of the parks in detail in regard to these regulations.
- **Prepare stewardship and maintenance plans** for parks featuring natural resources, such as Houston and Furness Parks in Nether Providence, Saul and Longpoint Sanctuaries in Rose Valley and Little Crum Creek in Swarthmore. As many of the parks center around natural areas, with creeks,



**Public comment and input should accompany master planning or other big decisions recommended in this plan.**

woodlands and earthen trails providing the focal points, these parks require a different kind of maintenance. Stewardship plans would help identify potential issues relating to the natural areas, including prevalence of invasive plant species within woodlands, the need for prompt removal of dead and hazard trees, erosion and sedimentation of creeks, erosion of earthen trails and establishment and maintenance of grass and wildflower meadows.



Consistent signage shows that parks are well thought out and well cared for.

- Undertake hazard tree assessments in all parks on an annual basis.** The community should hire a Certified Arborist, preferably with a Municipal Specialist Certification, to assess trees in the public parks and open spaces yearly, and additionally on an as needed basis, after storms or major snow and ice events. An arborist can assess the health and condition of individual trees and the risk that they may damage property or injure someone. An arborist can also provide recommendations regarding pruning or removal of hazard trees. Regular monitoring followed by reasonable action will not only prevent potential injury or damage, it will help to significantly reduce the community’s liability if a tree does cause injury or damage.
- Create a unified signage system** for community parks, trails and open spaces. The community must decide whether the parks and recreation facilities should be identified together, across the municipalities and school district. The community would need to agree to design signs jointly, in a way which shows inclusion of each entity. A unified signage system would show unity and could also present cost savings by designing the system together and fabricating signs in bulk.

In many communities, signage is addressed on an as-needed basis, leading to an uncoordinated, mismatched display of signs of all different colors, fonts, shapes and sizes. While the signs typically do the job of displaying information, the mismatched display is not very pleasing to the eye. It also demonstrates a lack of planning. A unified signage system should convey the necessary information, but do so in an aesthetically pleasing manner. Signage should be consistent in colors, fonts, size and messaging.

The signage should use the community's logos and colors and clearly identify public lands. Signage should display important information such as the park name, facility names, rules and regulations, directions, interpretation and educational information. Signs should also help visitors identify their location in case of emergency. A well designed and constructed signage system helps to brand the community identity, gives a presence to the parks, commands respect and makes the public park and recreation system appear to be large and extensive. Once the signage system is created, it can be phased in over time, such as when improvements are made in each park.

- **Establish policies** for naming of parks, acceptance of gifts and creation of memorials. In many communities, residents want to contribute by donating trees, benches or properties. In some cases, they may wish for these items to become memorials. As communities struggle with maintenance, it is important to establish policies which clarify what a community may accept as a gift and who will be responsible for maintenance. For instance, if a resident wishes to donate a tree in memorial of a loved one, the community may accept responsibility for the tree, but may not wish to be responsible for maintenance of a plaque. The community may wish to create a policy governing the acceptance of gifts, including land. The policy may establish guidelines for naming of parks or requirements for endowments to pay for maintenance of benches, replacement of trees or stewardship of land. They may designate standards, or design specifications, for what gifts the community may be willing to accept.

## Triangle Park



Municipality:	The Borough of Rutledge	Facilities:	Playground
Type:	Neighborhood Park		Full-court basketball
Location:	Swarthmore Avenue, Rutledge Avenue and Waverly Terrace		Softball Field
Size:	0.75 Acres		Benches and Picnic Tables
Service Area:	2 Miles		Rain Gardens
Uses:	Active and Passive Recreation		Interpretive Signs

As the only park in the Borough, Triangle Park manages to accommodate many different uses within a small space. Active recreation is provided through the softball field and basketball court. Younger children enjoy the playground. The rain gardens manage stormwater while beautifying the park, improving the setting around the picnic tables and benches. The park appears well maintained and well loved by the community.

### Summary of Existing Conditions

- Many uses are accommodated in a small space, but there don't appear to be conflicts between users;
- The softball field is undersized, particularly in right field, as it is constrained by the small site.

- The site is served by on-street parking only.
- Street trees are provided along Rutledge Avenue.

### Strategies for Improvement

- The basketball court is adequate, but could be improved through the following measures:
    - Provide underground stormwater storage beneath the court and resurface the court with pervious paving. This will help better manage stormwater on site and make the surface playable more quickly after rain. Pervious paving also tends to reduce noise created by a dribbled basketball as the voids can muffle the sound.
    - Additional trees could be planted around the court, as it is currently exposed to the sun and players are provided with no shade.
    - Additional amenities such as benches and water fountains could be provided to improve the playing experience.
    - Fencing should be provided on the north side of the court to eliminate loose balls entering the softball field and vice versa.
- 
- The playground appears suitable, but could be improved and beautified through the following upgrades:
    - The playground landscape is stark, with the equipment floating in a sea of woodchips. The addition of plantings within and surrounding the play areas could provide screening from passing traffic, beautify the site in general and provide educational and play opportunities for the children.
    - The woodchip surface could be replaced with a more permanent surface such as soft poured foam rubber. Hills, bumps and other landforms can be molded into these surfaces, creating additional play opportunities.
  - Accessing the park is currently difficult, as pedestrians can enter only through the softball dugouts or an opening in the fence along Rutledge Avenue. Access could be improved through the following:
    - Provide crosswalks at intersections where sidewalks abut the park, to allow residents to more safely access the park.
    - Create another park entrance on Swarthmore Avenue, with a crosswalk from 9<sup>th</sup> Street leading to the new entrance.
    - Enclose the playground with a low fence to keep younger children contained.
    - Mark all entrances with architectural features such as pergolas, to make them more visible and to provide a symbolic front door to the park.

- Designate or create parking spaces on Rutledge Avenue to serve persons with disabilities. Provide accessible routes from these spaces to the basketball court, playground and softball spectator areas.
- Study the traffic and width of Swarthmore Avenue to determine whether it could be reduced. Residential Streets recommends a 22-26' width for high volume, local streets with no parking. If the street width can be reduced, this may calm traffic, making the area surrounding the park safer for pedestrians. Any reclaimed areas could be used for sidewalk or planting installations.
- The softball field is squeezed into the park and is undersized. While no land is available to increase the size of the field, the following changes could improve play and beautify the park:
  - The left field outfield boundary is undefined, meaning that a ball that gets past the outfielders will just keep rolling. A permanent fence should be added to left field, 200' from home plate. Plantings should be installed behind the fence to screen the basketball courts from the softball field.
  - Screening, such as padding, vines or other plantings should be added to the outfield fence along Swarthmore Avenue. This would screen the park from the road, and create a batter's eye, making it easier for the batters to see the pitch and blocking out glare and the distraction of passing cars.
- The street trees along Rutledge Avenue appear to be non-native cherries. As these trees die, they should be replaced with native species, which will provide greater benefit to native birds, mammals and insects, by providing food and habitat.
- The interpretive sign at the rain garden is badly faded and should be replaced.



## The Longpoint & Saul Wildlife Sanctuaries and Todmorden Woods

Municipality: The Borough of Rose Valley  
Type: Neighborhood Nature Preserve  
Location: Behind Traymore, Longpoint and Todmorden neighborhoods  
Size: Longpoint Sanctuary: 17.6 Acres  
Saul Wildlife Sanctuary: 20.95 Acres  
Todmorden Woods: 5.80 Acres  
Total: 44.35 Acres  
Service Area: 2 Miles  
Uses: Passive Recreation  
Facilities: Trails  
Natural Areas



Todmorden Woods and the Longpoint and Saul Wildlife Sanctuaries are hidden gems within a developed landscape. The trails bring visitors into nature, to view birds and other wildlife, or simply enjoy a pleasant walk in the woods. The woods act as important riparian buffers for Ridley Creek, providing flood relief and some control of erosion and sedimentation. The properties are secluded, which may add to their charm, as visitors can feel completely separated from the world outside the sanctuaries.

### Summary of Existing Conditions

- The three wildlife sanctuaries area beautiful, rustic and quiet;
- Natural surface trails provide access to most of the sanctuary areas, but not all;
- The entrances are not clearly marked;
- The woodlands appear relatively healthy, but also face many of the same issues affecting most local natural areas;
- The sanctuaries appear to be used mostly be near neighbors, with few drive in visitors.

### Strategies for Improvement

- The sanctuaries currently appear to be used primarily by near neighbors, who know the trails and entrances. If the Borough wishes to make the sanctuaries more accessible to additional visitors, the following measures should be considered:

- Improve visibility of the trail entrances by creating trailheads, with understated informational signs or kiosks. Printed trail maps and other information may also be provided here.
  - Partner with Middletown Township to create additional trails to connect the sanctuaries to the adjacent neighborhoods. These trail connections could also provide residents of Rose Valley with improved access to amenities in Middletown, including Township owned open space.
  - Increase borough holdings in the area, adding land to the sanctuaries. Prioritize acquisition of parcels which would provide access to surrounding streets, such as Todmorden Lane, Orchard Lane, Forest View Road, Tanglewood Circle and Longpoint Lane.
  - Provide pedestrian bridges (which can accommodate emergency vehicles) over the Ridley Creek, to connect the three sanctuaries and improve access to each.
  - Partner with the School in Rose Valley on educational programs and materials.
- The trails are in relatively good condition. However, if they begin to deteriorate, a detailed trail assessment should be performed. The assessment would pinpoint areas of erosion, pooling water and redundant trails and recommend strategies for improvements.
    - Some areas of the trails show some minor erosion. These areas should be monitored and addressed through stormwater management measures or trail rerouting if they worsen.
    - Water bars are currently used to divert water from the trails. These are need of maintenance as some have filled with sediment, making them less effective. Additionally, some have come displaced and are now tripping hazards.
    - Water bars and trail edge markers (cut branches) need to be coordinated, as some side markers are causing the water intended to be diverted by the water bars, to pool on the trail.
    - In some cases, the water bars may be replaced by grade dips, which require less annual maintenance. Grade dips are gentle slopes created on trails intended to drain water off the trail, similar to water bars.
- A Stewardship Assessment and Plan would catalog the natural resources present in the sanctuaries, identify invasive plant species and recommend specific strategies for improvement. It appears that some stewardship is ongoing at the sanctuaries, as there were no dominant stands of invasive species, nor an abundance of vines.
    - A Stewardship Plan could address deer management, a common issue in southeastern Pennsylvania. Deer browse has devastated the forest floor, shrub and understory layers of most of our local forests. Deer appear to be impacting these layers at the sanctuaries as well.
    - A few grass areas exist adjacent to the Saul Wildlife Sanctuary. It is unclear as to whether these areas are part of the sanctuary or part of the neighboring Traymore development. A stewardship assessment could provide more detailed recommendations, but it appears that portions of these areas could be reforested or planted in meadow grasses to reduce time and money spent on mowing.

## Pew Park

Municipality: The Borough of Rose Valley  
Type: Neighborhood Park  
Location: Rose Valley Road and  
Manchester Road  
Size: 0.32 Acres  
Service Area: .5 Miles  
Uses: Passive Recreation

Facilities: Small open lawn  
Gardens  
Architectural Pillars  
Honorary Plaques



Pew Park serves as a gateway, as it is located at the northern end of Rose Valley, where it meets Nether Providence Township. The park is home to two historically important pillars, originally located on Rose Valley Road opposite the entrance to Old Mill Lane. These originally marked the entryway to the Rose Valley Land Company's real estate venture on Porter Lane and Possum Hollow Road in 1911(1). In addition to the pillars, the property holds numerous garden beds, mature trees and plaques dedicated to longtime civic servants. It appears that the park primarily acts as an entrance feature to the Borough.

### Summary of Existing Conditions

- The park is somewhat undefined in purpose and use. It should be a borough entrance feature, but could be made to better serve the neighbors.
- Stormwater management appears to be an issue, as evidence of pooling water, erosion and sedimentation were observed.
- Large spruce trees dominate the park, providing screening, but also taking up much of the usable land.

### Strategies for Improvement

- Create a combination master plan and landscape plan to improve the layout of the park and make it more functional. Consult the surrounding neighbors and gather their input. This plan may address the following:
  - Shift the masses of plantings away from Manchester Road, closer to Rose Valley Road. This shift can provide more effective screening of the road, a stronger impact to passing motorists and create more usable space closer to residents.
  - Plant lower growing understory trees and shrubs close to Rose Valley Road, which provide strong visual impact through flowers, fall color or winter fruit. Suitable native flowering trees may include redbuds, dogwoods, serviceberries, and hawthorns. Suitable native shrubs may

include winterberry holly, arrowwood and American cranberrybush viburnum, summersweet clethra, buttonbush, native shrub roses and witch hazel.

- Incorporate the plaques, pillars and a sign welcoming visitors to Rose Valley. Ideally, the sign should be located close to the northern intersection, where drivers will face it. A comfortable space should be created within the park so visitors can view the pillars and plaques on foot, without coming too close to the traffic on Rose Valley Road.
- Consider removal of the large, non-native, spruce trees. While they provide screening, they also disconnect residents from the park and take up more space than they are worth.
- The plan should consider the addition of vegetated swales and rain gardens to better manage the stormwater flowing onto the site from the surrounding roads. These features can help beautify the park, manage the water, improve groundwater recharge and water quality and may also help the Borough meet MS4 plan requirements.



## Heritage Garden and Veterans Memorial

Municipality: The Borough of Rose Valley  
Type: Memorial Park  
Location: Old Mill Lane  
Size: 0.55 Acres  
Service Area: .5 Miles  
Uses: Passive Recreation

Facilities: Small open lawn  
Gardens  
Reclaimed foundation ruins

The Rose Valley Centennial Foundation has lead the way in converting the remains of the Saul Estate gatehouse and springhouse into a lovely garden, dedicated to the veterans of Rose Valley. The site blends history, natural areas and planted gardens to create a quiet and calming space in which visitors can relax or reflect on nature and history, while listening to the water flowing through nearby Vernon Run.



### Summary of Existing Conditions

- Small lawn areas used for gatherings.
- Ruins converted to seating and gathering areas, featuring movable Adirondack chairs.
- Interpretive signage explains the meaning of the place.
- Natural areas in need of stewardship, as the RVCF plan calls for volunteers to help manage invasive species.

### Strategies for Improvement

- Incorporate stormwater management into the site design by providing rain gardens and vegetated swales in close proximity to the driveway to alleviate pooling of water. Similarly, stormwater plantings may alleviate pooling of water in mowed grass areas. These improvements may help the Borough meet MS4 plan requirements.
- Assess the mowed areas and determine whether they are oversized for the typical uses in the garden. If so, consider revegetating these areas with native trees and shrubs.
- An existing hedge which follows the property line and Vernon Run helps to define the space. However, it appears that the hedge is made up of non-native species. It is also an inadequate

riparian buffer for Vernon Run. The existing hedge should be removed and replaced with a suitable riparian buffer, comprised of native trees and shrubs, which will protect the health of the stream while adding definition and beauty to the park.

- Consider adding paths which provide universal accessibility to the ruins, particularly the seating areas. As many of our veterans are aging, they may depend on wheelchairs or other mobility tools to help them get around. Accessible paths would help all people enjoy the memorial.



## Furness Park



Municipality:	Nether Providence Township	Uses:	Passive Recreation
Type:	Undeveloped Natural Area		
Location:	Old Mill Lane	Facilities:	Woodlands
Size:	16.1 Acres		Driveway and gates
Service Area:	.5 Miles		Foundation ruins

Furness Park represents a great opportunity for Nether Providence Township and the residents of the multi-municipal plan area. This undeveloped parcel, donated to the Township 1996, awaits transformation into a natural area and passive park. The topography, stream corridor and woodlands provide a beautiful backdrop for a walk or picnic in the woods.

### Summary of Existing Conditions

- The parcel is undeveloped, with remnants of old buildings, driveways and walkways still existing.
- The property is wooded, but in need of stewardship.
- Numerous trees are down or leaning.
- Invasive species, most notably bamboo, are present.
- Deer paths and social trails lead through the property.



## Strategies for Improvement

- A master plan should be prepared for the park. The master plan should be prepared by a team of landscape architects, planners, and recreation planners. The process should include many opportunities for public input. The master plan should address the following issues:
  - The existing driveway is located on Turner Road, which accommodates high volumes and speeds. There is currently no walkway leading into this entrance to serve neighbors.
  - The park is adjacent to the Wallingford SEPTA station. It appears that the amenities associated with the train station, including the crossing and other paths, could be used by neighbors to connect to the park. Additionally, visitors could use the train line to conveniently travel to the park for events.
  - Social trails and deer paths exist within the property, but a master plan should lay out a professionally designed trail system, which addresses hierarchy, circulation and points of interest, topography, soil types, sensitive plant communities and stormwater management.
  - The building ruins remaining on the site should be researched and potentially preserved or stabilized to be used as a feature. The history of the site could also be interpreted with signage.
- A Stewardship Assessment and Plan should be prepared for the park. This study would catalog the natural resources present, identify invasive plant species and recommend specific strategies for improvement. A stewardship plan would include the following topics of concern at Furness Park:
  - Many large trees in the park have been damaged during recent storms. A stewardship plan would address proper management of these fallen trees.
  - A hazard tree assessment could be performed as part of the plan, to identify the large trees most likely to be hazardous, due to size, condition and age.
  - An inventory should be conducted to determine where Ash trees may be present. This species has been decimated by the Emerald Ash Borer, an Asian pest insect which kills them. The inventory can then inform the Township as to whether to treat or harvest any Ash trees.
  - Numerous invasive species are present on the site. One very large stand of bamboo threatens to overtake the understory of the forest. Pachysandra, barberry and other invasive species commonly used as landscape material are also present. A stewardship plan would advise the Township on how to address each of these species and others commonly found in the region.

## Hepford Park

Municipality: Nether Providence Township  
Type: Community Park  
Location: New Jersey Avenue, at  
Albany Court  
Size: 4.15 Acres  
Service Area: 2 Miles  
Uses: Active Recreation

Facilities: Three little league  
baseball/softball fields  
Perimeter path  
Concession Stand  
Playground  
Parking



Hepford Park appears to be well used and well loved by the community. It is a good community park as it provides uses for all ages. Adults may wish to walk or run laps on the path for fitness. Young children use the playground equipment, while older kids play softball and baseball. The concession stand is a great amenity, as everyone can use a snack and a drink. The park is also easily accessible to the surrounding neighborhood by foot, as many walking paths connect the park to the surrounding streets.

### Summary of Existing Conditions

- The parking area is under planted and may be undersized.
- No stormwater management facilities exist on site.
- The park is surrounded by backyards.
- Children use the park as a cut-through from their bus stop to their homes.
- The site mixes active and passive recreation.

### Strategies for Improvement

- The parking area and entrance provide visitors with their first impression of the park. This area can be improved through the following measures:
  - Assess the parking area for efficiency and functionality. The asphalt surface is not striped, so it is unclear whether visitors are parking their cars as efficiently as possible. The surface should be measured and striped to be as efficient as possible. If the lot is found to have extra asphalt, which can not be incorporated into a usable parking space, it should be removed in order to reduce the amount of impervious surface here.
  - Landscape the parking area heavily. It is currently barren, but offers many suitable planting locations. Buffer plantings should be installed at the north and south edges of the parking area

to buffer the parking from the neighboring properties. Plantings should be installed to separate the parking area from the play areas. Street trees should be installed along New Jersey Avenue. All of these planting areas should be considered for management of stormwater through installation of rain gardens, vegetated swales or infiltration trenches.



- Additional landscaping throughout the rest of the park could provide services, improve the visitor experience and beautify the park. Landscaping could benefit the park as follows:
  - Additional trees could provide shade to the dugouts and spectator areas.
  - Shrubs could be installed to screen the equipment boxes.
  - Shrub massings or hedges could be installed strategically to discourage walkers from cutting through the center of the park, damaging the turf fields and establishing social paths.



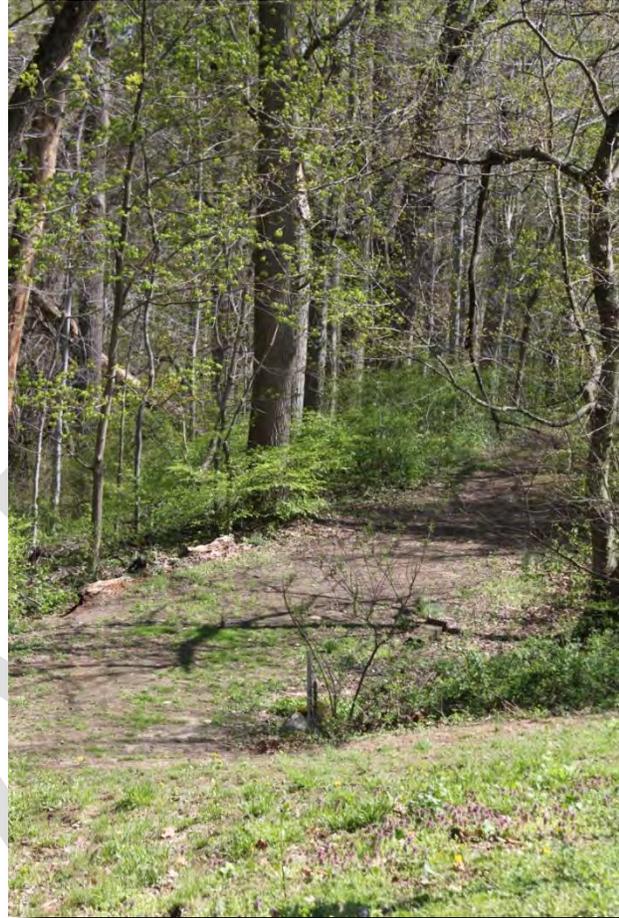
- The existing perimeter path is a great amenity which can be used by all age groups. However, portions of it should be realigned for better functionality.
  - The section which connects to the playground should continue and connect to the parking area. A designated walkway should be striped through the existing parking area or the path should be continued to New Jersey Avenue, providing pedestrians with a safe way to enter the park and access the amenities without walking through a busy parking lot.
  - The trail section which connects to the parking area near the handicapped parking spaces should continue to New Jersey Avenue, to provide pedestrians with a safe way to enter the park and access the amenities without walking through a busy parking lot.
- The park contains play equipment designed for age groups 0 to 5 and 5 to 12 years old. However, the play structures are located right next to each other with no separation. These structures should be separated with fencing or plantings. Additionally, fencing should be used to separate the play areas from the adjacent parking area.
- Consider resurfacing the playgrounds with pervious foam play surface and constructing stormwater management facilities beneath the playground.

## Houston Park

Municipality: Nether Providence Township  
Type: Regional Park  
Location: Frontages on Harvey Road and South Providence Road  
Size: 36.13 Acres  
Service Area: 5 Miles  
Uses: Active Recreation

Facilities: One baseball field  
Three soccer fields  
Storage buildings  
House  
Port a potties  
Nature trail  
Woodlands

Houston Park is the planning area's premier athletic facility. It currently functions as a place to bring youth for soccer or baseball games. The athletic fields are balanced by acres of woodlands and a nature trail. A house exists within the park, which is currently rented out to tenants. Ridley Creek provides the southern boundary of the park.



### Summary of Existing Conditions

- The site functions as an active recreation facility, rather than a true park.
- The parking area is under planted and may be undersized.
- It is unclear whether stormwater management facilities exist on site.
- Access is limited to one entry driveway.
- The demand for the athletic fields may be greater than the park can accommodate.

### Strategies for Improvement

- The Township should consider additional planning for this park. The athletic fields appear to be laid out as efficiently as possible, but other items seem to be planned piecemeal. A partial master plan and other studies could coordinate ongoing improvements necessary to address existing needs.
  - An economic development and reuse study should be performed on the house. It should be determined whether it is being used to its highest and best capability. It may be possible that



driveway to read the sign. Visitors who park in the main parking area will never see it. The sign should be relocated to a place along a pedestrian path, where it will be more visible to visitors.

- The memorial to Heather-Lyn Manza should be placed along a pedestrian path, where more visitors will see it. Additionally, trees should be planted to provide shade for visitors using the benches.
- Permanent bathrooms should be considered for use at this park. The athletic fields draw large numbers of players and spectators. Options may include permanent sewerer bathrooms inside the existing house if it is repurposed, or a standalone composting facility.
- The park is sparsely landscaped. Additional trees should be planted to provide shade to the parking areas, spectator areas and dugouts and team facilities. Additionally, shrubs and fencing can work in combination to separate fields and stop loose soccer balls that have left the field of play. Additional plantings would also beautify the park and make it more enjoyable for those not using the athletic fields.

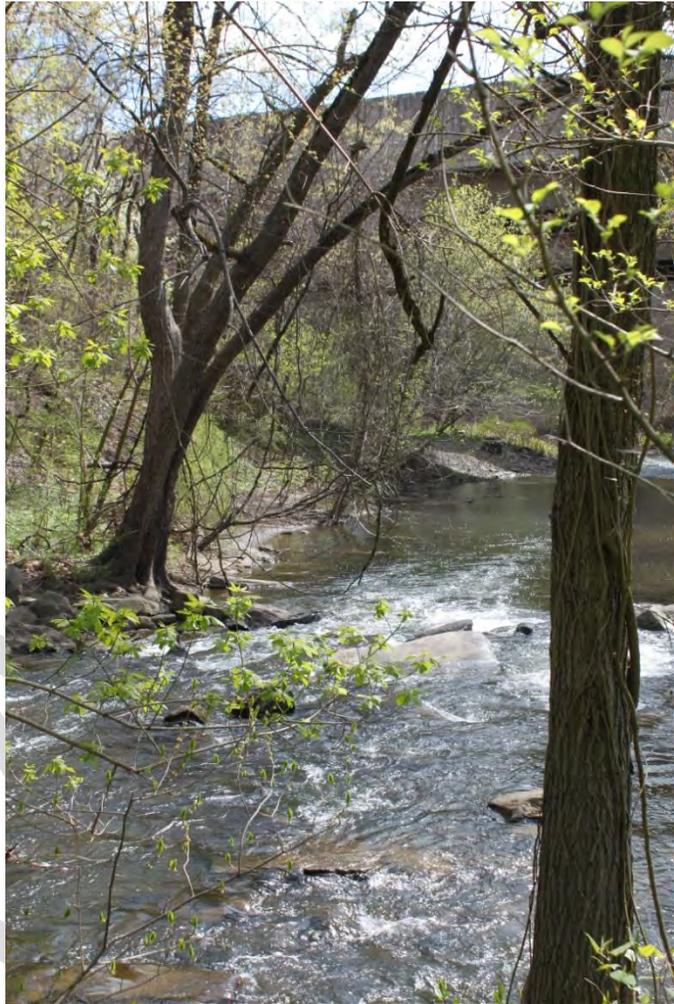


## Leiper Park

Municipality: Nether Providence  
Township  
Type: Community Park  
Location: Between Avondale Road  
and Crum Creek, South of  
E. Rose Valley Road  
Size: 6.8 Acres  
Service Area: 2 Miles  
Uses: Passive Recreation

Facilities: Crum Creek  
Unprogrammed open  
space  
Informal parking area

Crum Creek is the main attraction at Leiper Park. Visitors come to fish, walk along the banks and run their dogs. The large, grass open space is well suited to gatherings and events, but parking is limited. The Leiper House, across Avondale Road, may also draw visitors to the park. The Leiper-Smedley Trail, which ends north of the park, could be extended through the park, which would draw more visitors and change the future needs of visitors.



### Summary of Existing Conditions

- The site is unprogrammed, with no formal facilities.
- The majority of the park is mowed grass, with some plantings and natural vegetation on the edges.
- Invasive species, including bamboo and knotweed, are present at the site.
- Crum Creek lacks riparian buffer along most of the stretch through the park.

### Strategies for Improvement

- The community should consider what type and size of events they may wish to hold at this park. The park is largely open space, which is well suited to gatherings. However, some additional plantings could help define spaces, which would better contain certain gatherings and events.

- This plan contains recommendations for extending the Leiper-Smedley Trail through Leiper Park. Should the trail extend through the park, it would draw more visitors into the park, potentially necessitate creation of a trailhead and additional parking, and amenities such as water fountains and trail signage.
- Trees and shrubs should be planted along the banks of Crum Creek to provide a riparian buffer. Buffering will help absorb stormwater runoff and slow flow into the creek, protecting water quality by controlling erosion and sedimentation.
- Provide designated areas for access to the Creek for fishing or enjoyment of nature. These areas should be strategically planned and incorporated during riparian buffer planting. Paths to the creek should be angled or curved, rather than providing a straight path, which will convey stormwater and erode quickly.



- The park contains two particularly aggressive invasive species – bamboo and Japanese knotweed. It appears that these species have been cut back in some cases. However, a comprehensive plan for removal, replanting (with native species) and ongoing management is necessary. It appears that the bamboo may be spreading from a neighboring property. The knotweed is located in close proximity to the banks of the creek. This should be removed and a riparian buffer should be planted in its place.

- Hazard tree assessments are recommended for all parks included in the study. However, the assessment is particularly important for Leiper Park, as many large trees exist as specimens, in open space, where visitors walk beneath them.
- While the grass areas are well suited to dog walking and event space, there may be too much grass. Continued mowing costs money, takes time and may also be contributing to the erosion and sedimentation of Crum Creek. Some of the grass areas could be removed and replaced with large shrub massings, additional trees and stormwater management areas such as rain gardens and



vegetated swales.

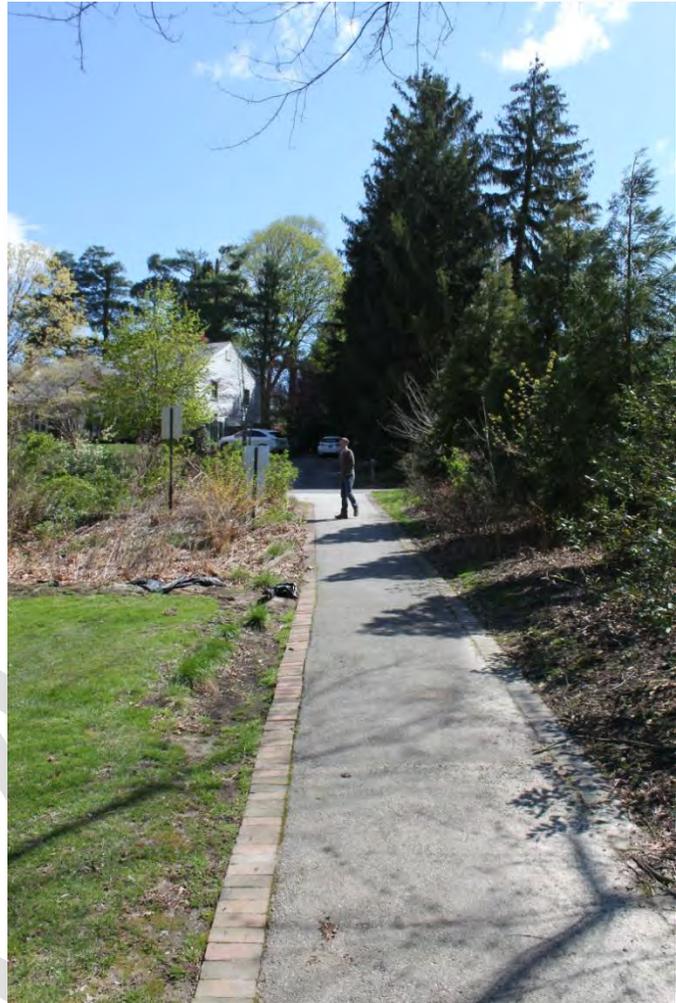
- Parking currently exists through informal, gravel pull off areas. Parking should be designed and provided more formally. The area close to, or under, the Route 476 overpass seems ideal, as it is not prime parkland and could also serve as shared parking for the Leiper House.
- Consider acquisition of adjacent parcels. Leiper Park could grow by acquiring two parcels north of the park, which don't appear to be well used by their owners. There are no homes on the parcels. One is overrun by bamboo. Acquisition of these parcels could increase the size of the park, provide greater access to Crum Creek, and provide additional opportunities for land stewardship.

## Morris Sapovitz Park

Municipality: Nether Providence  
Township  
Type: Community Park  
Location: Corner of Anderson & Leiper Streets  
Size: 4.39 Acres  
Service Area: 2 Miles  
Uses: Active Recreation

Facilities: Basketball Courts (2 ½)  
Soccer Fields  
Rain garden  
Parking (8 Spaces)  
Playground

Tucked in between neighborhoods, surrounded by homes, Sapovitz Park is well used by near neighbors and visitors from further away. The basketball courts and soccer field draw in residents from other parts of the community, while neighbors may wish to simply sit under the mature trees or bring their kids to the playground. Limited parking may restrict event size and use of the soccer field.



### Summary of Existing Conditions

- The park is surrounded by homes, with backyards facing the park.
- The majority of the park is in mowed grass. The areas with large trees have no understory and also appear to be mowed.
- The main entrance is at the corner of Leiper and Vernon Streets, but limited pedestrian access is available at Prichard Lane and between houses on Vernon Street.

### Strategies for Improvement

- Most visitors enter the park at the corner of Leiper and Anderson Streets, near the basketball courts. This entrance is not particularly inviting, as the path is eroding, there is no separation from the basketball courts and the primary view is into neighbors' backyards. This area should be planned

to provide a better first impression of the park, through the addition of plantings, signage, a redesigned entrance path and better separation between uses.

- The basketball courts sit on a flat pad, raised up above the surrounding grade. The hillsides are eroding. If this erosion continues, the edges of courts will be in danger of being damaged and collapsing. Deep rooted plants such as native grasses and shrubs could be planted on the slopes to help control the erosion.
- Circulation through the site is largely uncontrolled. A perimeter walking path would help guide pedestrians and provide an opportunity for parents to walk for fitness while their children are practicing on the soccer field. A path would also serve the neighbors who may have no use for the fields or other facilities at the park. In addition to a perimeter path, a new path should be designed and constructed from the main entrance and the existing path from Prichard Lane should be realigned so as not to connect directly into the playground.
- The entrance from Prichard Lane is a wonderful amenity for the residents of that street. Similar entrances should be provided from Vernon Street and Emerald Lane. Entrances in these locations would likely require an access easement through a private property, in cooperation with a willing landowner. If residents have concerns that these entrances would draw additional parking to their streets, the entrances could be made semi-private, with lockable gates and keys or combinations provided to the neighbors.
- Additional landscaping could beautify the park, buffer it from neighboring backyards and improve play conditions.
  - Trees and shrubs could be planted along the perimeter of the park to buffer the neighbors' backyards from the park. Trees could be placed strategically to preserve filtered views into the park for security and enjoyment.
  - Trees and shrubs could be planted between the soccer field and the playground area. These plantings would buffer the two uses, could stop loose soccer balls, beautify the park and potentially manage stormwater.



- Should a loop path be installed, additional trees and shrubs should accompany it to shade and



- beautify the path.
- Shrubs should be planted beneath the existing mature trees on the hillside to help control erosion and improve habitat.
- Additional amenities such as water fountains and benches would improve the visitor experience for players and spectators at the soccer field, basketball court and playground.

DRAFT

## Woodrow Wilson Playground

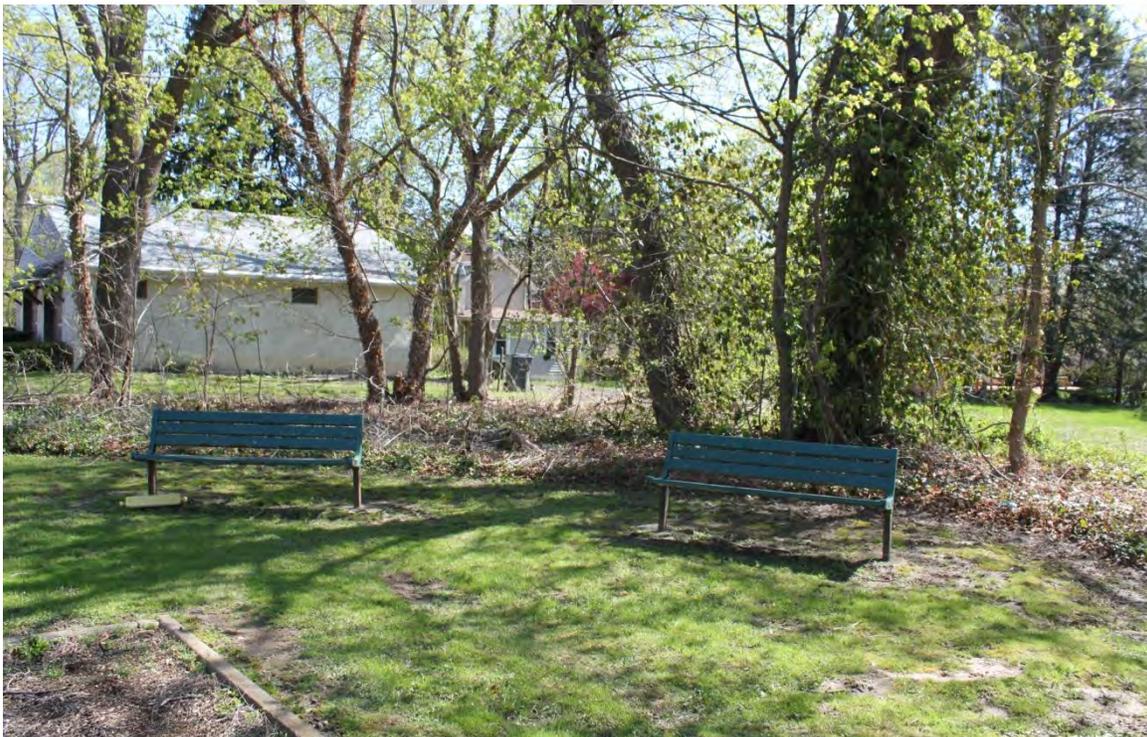
Municipality: Nether Providence Township  
Type: Neighborhood Park  
Location: Corner of Allen & Ronaldson  
Streets  
Size: 0.43 Acres  
Service Area: 0.25 Miles  
Uses: Active Recreation

Facilities: Gazebo  
Benches  
Playground equipment



### Summary of Existing Conditions

- The park is surrounded by homes, with front and back yards facing the park.
- Paths of various materials cross the playground.
- Playground equipment is scattered through site.
- A gazebo and benches provide adequate seating.



## Strategies for Improvement

- Explore the possibility of acquiring the rear portion of the neighboring property and expanding the playground. Additional land could accommodate parking, additional play features or stormwater management gardens.
- Additional planning and design would benefit this park. While a full blown master plan may not be necessary, input should be solicited from the community as to what uses they'd like to accommodate and what they like and dislike about the park as it currently exists.



- Trails connect some of the play equipment and the gazebo, but they don't form a cohesive circulation system. The trail from the gazebo to the play equipment, through the middle of the site, divides the lawn area, making it much less usable. It appears that this path can be removed. Circulation and layout should be considered if additional planning is undertaken.
- The existing vegetation adds character to the site, but there are still opportunities to plant additional trees and shrubs to beautify the park and improve the visitor experience.
  - Street trees should be planted every 25 to 30' along Allen Street and along the driveway north of the playground.
  - Shrubs should also be planted along all frontages to buffer the park from the surrounding homes. Shrubs can be planted strategically to preserve views into the park for safety and enjoyment.

## Bullens Lane Park

Municipality: Nether Providence  
Township  
Type: Neighborhood Park  
Location: Bullens and  
Westminster Lanes  
Size: 0.55 Acres  
Service Area: .5 Miles  
Uses: Active Recreation

Facilities: Baseball Field  
Playground  
Benches and Tables



Bullens Lane Park is tucked into the intersection of three neighborhoods. It is most accessible for the Westminster Drive neighborhood and the development across Bullens Lane to the south. The park does not have dedicated parking and is oriented towards pedestrian visitors. The baseball field is best suited to pick up games and practices, as the outfield fences are short, at approximately 150'. The brand new playground, benches and tables offer a nice setting for a family picnic with the kids.

### Summary of Existing Conditions

- The park is in a residential neighborhood, but is surrounded by streets on all but one side. One home abuts the park.
- The tennis court has been removed and replaced with a playground, benches and tables.
- The baseball field has 60' baselines but is short in the outfields, where the fence is approximately 150' from home plate.
- There are no sidewalks or paths in the park.

### Strategies for Improvement

- The baseball field should be assessed to determine whether it meets modern standards for safety. It is unclear whether the fencing between the field and the dugout benches is adequate to stop foul balls from entering the dugout.
- The park functions as a neighborhood park, with most visitors arriving by foot or bike. There does not appear to be adequate room to provide parking. Therefore, the park should be made more pedestrian friendly.
  - Paths meeting ADA standards should be provided from Westminster Lane to the playground and the baseball field.

- Westminster Lane is approximately 35' in width between Bullens Lane and Michaels Lane. It then narrows down to approximately 25' in width. The wider section of the road could be narrowed, with the extra room accommodating a path behind the left field line dugout. This path could then turn onto Bullens Lane and head west, beyond the left field fence, to connect to the three way Bullens Lane intersection. Crosswalks should be provided to provide safer access



to the park from the south side of Bullens Lane.

- New trees have been planted alongside the playground. However, there are opportunities to plant more trees around the rest of the park.
  - Street trees can be planted along more of Westminster Lane.
  - Evergreen trees and shrubs can be planted behind home plate and beyond center field to provide a batter's eye and solid backstop, which will make it easier for batters to see the pitch coming out of the pitcher's hand and for fielders to see the ball coming off the bat. This will improve play and the safety of the players.
  - Street trees should be planted along Bullens Lane beyond the outfield fences. Shrub massings could also be planted here to help buffer the park from the new homes across Bullens Lane.
  - Additional shade trees should be planted between the baseball field and the playground, to shade the playground, keep the equipment from getting too hot to use and keep it from fading and breaking down prematurely due to prolonged sun exposure.
  - Rain gardens and vegetated swales could be planted around the playground to help manage stormwater and capture sheet flow.

## The Summit School at Gouley Park



Municipality:	Nether Providence Township	Uses:	To Be Determined
Type:	Community Park and Recreation Center (Potential)	Facilities:	Former School Building Informal fields used for soccer Large parking areas
Location:	Plush Mill Road		
Size:	9.8 Acres		
Service Area:	2 to 5 Miles Depending on Future Use		

The preservation of the Summit School at Gouley Park is a major accomplishment for Nether Providence Township. Now the exciting process, and challenge, of converting the site into a public park begins. Nether Providence does not need to go it alone, as the park could be developed through a cooperative process between the four municipalities. The ten acre site and school building contain features which may be preserved and carried forward, including trail connections to neighboring streets, mature landscaping trees and established playing fields. But many decisions still need to be made to transform the former school into a great public amenity.

## Summary of Existing Conditions

- The park is in a residential neighborhood, but also has commercial neighbors with frontage on Baltimore Pike.
- The site has an existing path connecting it to Locust Lane to the east. The other Locust Lane, to the west, touches the site.
- The school building contains classrooms, offices and a combined gym and auditorium.
- Conservation and acquisition of the site was strongly supported by the public.

## Strategies for Improvement

- Prior to beginning the transformation, the Township must collect information about the site and determine their needs for the site. The process may include an economic development study to determine whether it is feasible to create a public facility such as a modern performing arts center, a community center or other use. The study should also determine whether the building should be expanded, renovated, removed or a combination of each.
- Regardless of proposed use, the site should be master planned, with public input.
- Should the site be transformed into a community center or similar use, the land surrounding it could become an environmental campus, featuring pervious paving, rain gardens, meadows, naturalized plantings with native species, solar and wind power generators, rainwater harvesting equipment and a green roof.
- The Township should also consider further acquisition of neighboring properties, particularly to provide access to Baltimore Pike or Sloan Lane. This would provide a direct route to the park during large events, rather than bringing additional traffic through the Plush Mill Road neighborhood.
- The final layout of the park should include a perimeter walking path with connections to both Locust Lane culs-de-sac.
- The large parking area appears to have been designed to accommodate the school buses. This large impervious area should be reduced in size or removed altogether.



## Smedley Park



Municipality:	Nether Providence Township (Delaware County Park)	Uses:	Active and Passive
Type:	Regional Park	Facilities:	Nature Trails
Location:	Land adjacent to Route 476 from East Baltimore Pike to Beatty Road		Multi-Use Leiper-Smedley Trail Baseball and Softball Fields Soccer Fields Playgrounds Parking Areas
Size:	78 Acres		
Service Area:	5 Miles Depending on Future Use		

Smedley Park exists within Nether Providence Township and affects the park and recreation systems of the surrounding communities, but is owned by Delaware County. Therefore, we acknowledge that recommendations regarding this park cannot be carried out by Nether Providence Township or the four municipalities alone. Delaware County is responsible for the park and decision making around the park. Therefore, this assessment only addresses Smedley Park in the context of becoming a major trail hub and corridor, as part of a larger trail system.

### Summary of Existing Conditions

- The park features a mix of active and passive recreation.
- The Leiper-Smedley Trail begins in the park, but lacks a true trailhead.

- SEPTA Trolley Line 101 and Route 476 run through the park.
- Crum Creek flows through the park. It is buffered in some areas but also offers recreational opportunities.

### Strategies for Improvement

- Smedley Park could be re-imagined as a trailside park, acting as a major trailhead for the Leiper-Smedley Trail. It could also accommodate a number of spur trails, connecting surrounding neighborhoods and commercial areas to the trail. The following actions could make the park and the trail work better together:



- Extend the Leiper-Smedley Trail along the banks of Crum Creek, through the park to the northernmost section.
  - Delaware County, Nether Providence Township and Springfield Township should then consider working together to extend the trail north to Beatty Road.
  - The Leiper-Smedley Trail currently ends unceremoniously at the Penn State Extension building. The trail should be rerouted to connect to the existing parking area off of Paper Mill Road.
  - The Paper Mill Road parking area should be enlarged and improved to provide trail related amenities such as signage, maps, additional information and bike pump or mechanic stations.
  - A spur trail from the park heading west towards Media, in accordance with the Delaware County Parks and Recreation Plan, should be formalized.
  - An alternate trail route should be created to follow the user created path which travels beneath East Baltimore Pike. This option would allow trail users to avoid the very wide crossing point at grade.
- The park features a mixture of different site furniture. In some areas, oil barrels are used for trash cans. A consistent palette of materials should be chosen for the park system and the trail.
  - Smedley Park is a wet site, as much of it exists within the Crum Creek floodplain. Additional riparian buffers would benefit the trail and the park.

## Little Crum Creek Park

Municipality: The Borough of Swarthmore  
Type: Neighborhood Park  
Location: Between Cresson Lane and Yale Avenue, south of Swarthmore Avenue  
Size: 5.29 Acres  
Service Area: 0.5 Miles  
Uses: Passive Recreation

Facilities: Fireplaces  
Benches  
Little Crum Creek  
Rain Gardens  
Wetlands

Little Crum Creek Park provides an interesting mix of nature, history and culture. The preserved fireplaces and chimneys offer unique centerpieces for gatherings. The wetlands, restored in 2003, are an example of how a community can help its ecosystem and native species. Little Crum Creek and the gazebo which overlooks it, provide visitors with a quiet, out of the way place to enjoy nature.



A master plan was prepared for the park in 2006 by Jonathan Alderson Landscape Architects, through the Community Design Collaborative. The master plan recommended realignment of existing trails, additional plantings, addition of a pavilion and creation of a loop trail system. New plantings have been installed, but most of the recommendations in the master plan have not been implemented. Many of the master plan recommendations are still relevant and were confirmed through this plan process.

### Summary of Existing Conditions

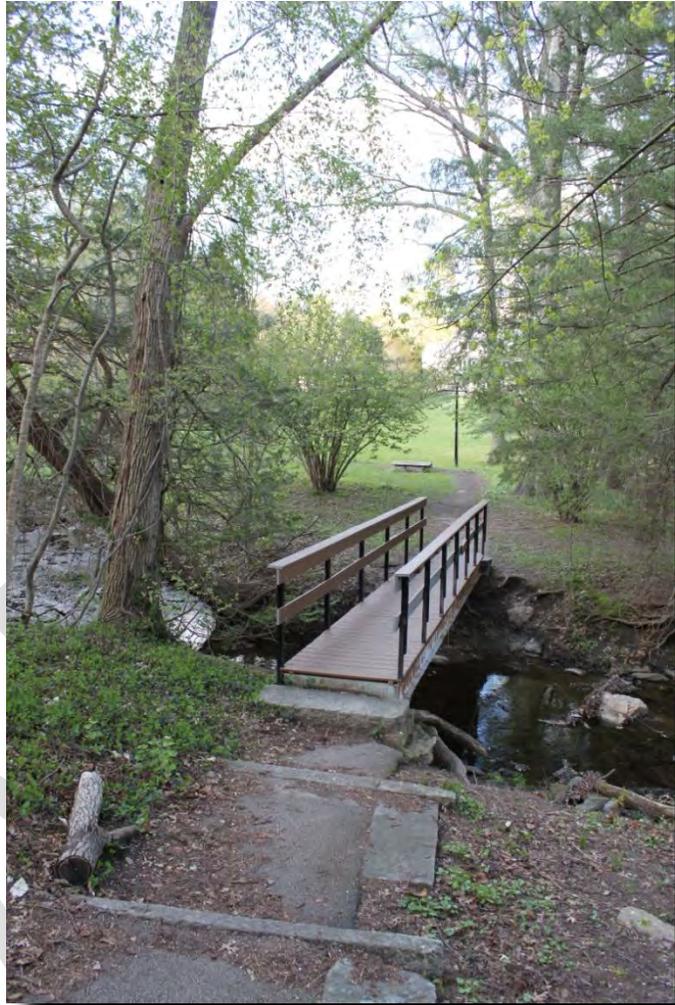
- Numerous fireplaces exist in the park, for use by the public for bonfires.
- Little Crum Creek flows through the park and is a main feature.
- The park fronts on two streets, faces backyards to the northeast and side yards to the southwest.
- The park features many mature trees which frame open grassy areas.
- The Swarthmore Improvement Plan calls for sidewalk along this stretch of Cresson Lane.

### Strategies for Improvement

- The park lacks defined spaces. The plantings recommended in the 2006 master plan could help create rooms within the park. The fireplaces and gazebo can be used as focal points.
- Follow the recommendation of the Swarthmore Improvement Plan by providing a sidewalk along Cresson Lane. Build off of that recommendation by providing an additional path through the park from the bridge to the northernmost part of the park. Additional paths as recommended in the master plan would also improve circulation.
- Provide more plantings along Little Crum Creek to strengthen the existing riparian buffer, and better define the spaces within the park.
- Provide more plantings, particularly flowering trees and shrubs, along the property lines to buffer the park from neighboring properties. The master plan also recommends additional buffering. Flowering trees and shrubs provide separation, without creating an impenetrable wall of vegetation.
- Additional flowering tree and shrub plantings along Cresson Avenue would complement the mature trees, reduce the need for mowing and buffer the park from the street.
- Assess the structures in the park for universal accessibility. The bridge and the gazebo are of particular concern.
- The fireplaces should be assessed on a regular basis for structural integrity. Records of inspections should be kept on file at the Borough office.



- The site furniture is made up of stone and wood. The different materials clash and make it appear that the park is planned piecemeal, without a plan. A consistent materials palette should be chosen for the entire borough park system.
- The corner of Yale and South Swarthmore Avenue appears to be unusable space. This area should be reforested or planted with shrubs to eliminate ongoing mowing and improve habitat.



## Gateway Park

Municipality:	The Borough of Swarthmore
Type:	Borough Sign Park
Location:	Baltimore Pike and West Sproul Road
Size:	0.29 Acres
Service Area:	0.25 Miles
Uses:	Borough Sign
Facilities:	Borough Sign Garden beds Naturalized vegetation



This park holds a “Welcome to Swarthmore” sign, surrounded by garden beds. The use seems appropriate due to the site’s close proximity to a loud, busy highway. The site is also relatively flat, offering no grade separation from the highway.

### Summary of Existing Conditions

- The sign sits approximately 60’ from the intersection.
- Crosswalks connect to the northeast corner of the site, but there are no sidewalks on the site, or on neighboring properties.
- Garden beds surround the sign, containing bulbs and small plants.

### Strategies for Improvement

- The sign should be moved closer to the intersection. At approximately 60’ back from the corner, it is likely that many drivers can’t read the sign or notice it at all.
- The site should be assessed for its ability to manage stormwater. If there are stormwater management issues nearby, rain gardens may be able to be incorporated into the site without drastically changing the character of the gardens.
- The plantings may be too small to make an impact on passing motorists. Larger massings of larger plants such as flowering trees and shrubs could make a stronger visual impact. Plants with large bright flowers, brightly colored berries or vivid fall color should be used.

## Keystone Park

Municipality:	The Borough of Swarthmore
Type:	Neighborhood Park
Location:	Triangular parcel surrounded by Baltimore Pike, Oakdale Avenue and North Chester Road
Size:	0.42 Acres
Service Area:	0.25 Miles
Uses:	Borough Sign Passive Recreation Gathering Space
Facilities:	Borough Sign Keystone Automotive Club Memorial Plaque Sidewalks Trees



The park is located on Baltimore Pike, a busy highway, an appropriate location for a park dedicated to the achievements of past presidents of the Keystone Automobile Club. The site features a hill, with a flat area at the top. This topography allows the site to be used for gatherings. There are also sidewalks on all sides of the park, connecting it to the surrounding neighborhoods and commercial areas. A series of groves of small trees along with consistent street trees, buffer the park from the surrounding roads.

### Summary of Existing Conditions

- The sign sits approximately 40' from the intersection.
- Sidewalks connect the park to its surroundings on all sides.
- Baltimore Pike forms the northern boundary of the park.



### Strategies for Improvement

- The site should be assessed for the ability to manage stormwater. If there are stormwater management issues nearby, rain gardens may be able to be incorporated into the lower areas of the site.
- Additional plantings along Baltimore Pike, particularly flowering trees and shrubs could provide a greater buffer from the highway.

## Umoja Park



**Municipality:** The Borough of Swarthmore  
**Type:** Neighborhood Park  
**Location:** Triangular parcel surrounded by Kenyon, Yale and Rutgers Avenues  
**Size:** 1.25 Acres  
**Service Area:** 0.25 Miles  
**Uses:** Passive Recreation  
Gathering Space

**Facilities:** Benches  
Tables  
Trash Cans  
Sidewalks  
Mature Trees

This neighborhood park provides a nice mix of mature trees and open grassy areas. It is easily accessible to pedestrians as sidewalks ring the park. The benches and tables allow



visitors to sit and watch kids run around the park or simply enjoy a picnic in the shade.

### **Summary of Existing Conditions**

- The park is largely a flat grassy area beneath mature trees.
- It is surrounded on all sides by borough streets and sidewalks.
- Yale Avenue carries relatively heavy traffic. Kenyon and Rutgers Avenues are local streets, with low volume and speeds.

### **Strategies for Improvement**

- The park currently holds a handful of benches and picnic tables. Additional tables and benches could encourage more groups to use the park. A grouping of tables together, in a defined space, bordered by trees, shrubs or garden beds, could encourage small groups to use the park more. Additional benches, turned inward to face the green space, could also encourage more people to sit in the park. More benches would add a variety of views, which could benefit groups such as birders.
- The park is surrounded by borough streets on all sides. It may not be difficult to access the park by foot, but the addition of crosswalks at all intersections would make it safer.
- The signs which face Swarthmore Avenue should be moved to one of the corners of the park. When signs are parallel to streets, drivers can't read them easily. By moving the signs to a corner, they would be more easily read by passing motorists, but would also place them at the main points of entrance, better serving pedestrians as well.
- The interior of the park is a nice mix of mature trees and open grass areas. However, the edges of the park would benefit from additional plantings.
  - Additional tree and shrub plantings along Kenyon and Rutgers Avenues could provide some buffering between the park and the streets. These could be placed strategically so as not to eliminate the views into the park from the surrounding homes. These plantings could also help to keep kids from running out of the park into the streets.
  - Additional shrub and flowering tree plantings would add a richer texture to the park's character. It would also improve the ecosystem and habitat, as well as beautify the park and define spaces within the park.
  - The grass strips, which are not supporting turf very well, could be converted to rain gardens to catch stormwater before it reaches the street and flows to inlets. It appears that some sections of the strip may already be essentially functioning as rain gardens, capturing stormwater, but without the plantings to hold the soil and beautify the area.
  - The hillside along Yale Avenue could be planted in native grasses, low growing shrubs or other groundcovers, which would better control erosion, reduce mowing frequency and beautify this edge of the park.

- Hazard tree assessments are recommended for all of the parks in the study. However, a hazard tree assessment is particularly important at Umoja Park, as large specimen trees area adjacent to open grass areas. Visitors are often beneath these trees.



DR

## Thatcher Park Tot Lot



Municipality: The Borough of Swarthmore  
Type: Neighborhood Park  
Location: Triangular parcel surrounded by  
Kenyon, Yale and Rutgers  
Avenues  
Size: 0.22 Acres  
Service Area: 0.25 Miles  
Uses: Playground  
Gathering Space

Facilities: Play Equipment  
Rain Garden  
Benches  
Tables  
Trash Cans  
Sidewalks  
Mature Trees

The tot lot is tucked away in a residential neighborhood close to the center of town. The play equipment includes some whimsical items, alongside traditional slides and swings. The many large trees and a few shrubs allow for some exploration of nature, while providing the necessary shade to keep park visitors comfortable.

### Summary of Existing Conditions

- The tot lot is fenced in with post and rail, backed with plastic mesh.
- The front of the park lacks equipment and is left as open grass for unprogrammed play.

- The front of the park features some manmade hills and berms for kids to play on.
- The park is neighbored by residences on the sides and office and commercial uses to the rear.
- The surface is a mix of grass, bare dirt and mulch.
- A rain garden manages stormwater near the front of the tot lot.

### Strategies for Improvement

- The tot lot would benefit from a master plan which could transform it into a play space worthy of Swarthmore Borough. The park could better serve the children and parents through the addition of more modern play equipment, new benches and tables, an improved play surface, additional plantings and improved stormwater management. A master plan should address the following topics, some of which could be undertaken without a fully fledged master plan.



- The tot lot entrance is unremarkable, as it lacks plantings, signage or other features which would indicate that it's a fun place for kids to play. The entrance could be improved to incorporate more fun or whimsical items to announce it as a great playground.
- A modern foam play surface could improve play conditions, as much of the existing surface is muddy, as grass is shaded or trampled. A foam surface would also require less maintenance than the

existing layer of mulch and wood chips. Some modern surfaces are also pervious and can contribute to stormwater management.

- The addition of universally accessible play equipment, tables and other features would allow the park to serve visitors with disabilities as well. If accessible equipment is to be added to the park, accessible routes would also need to be implemented to provide access to the
- The park is large enough to include a mix of traditional play equipment and additional non-traditional elements. These may include more graded features, nature play elements and play equipment with artistic design.
- Gaps exist at the bottom of the fence mesh in many places. Additional plantings such as hedges or masses of native shrubs could be planted along the fence. These could buffer the park from neighboring properties, beautify the park, contribute to stormwater management and keep the children away from the fence.
- The layout of the play equipment could be modified to make all of the children more visible from all angles. The equipment could be moved towards the middle of the lot, with benches and tables around the perimeter. Additionally, benches could be clustered more closely together, end to end, allowing parents on different benches to talk to each other. This encourages parents to talk to each other, forming relationships, building community and helping each other watch the kids.
- Consider the addition of a bathroom of some sort. Young children need a bathroom on short notice and parents of very young children may need a place to change a diaper.
- The pathway from the neighboring ballet studio to the park greatly improves access to the park from other parts of the borough. It does not appear that this walkway has any signage or other cues to let people know that the park can be accessed from Park Avenue. Signs or other markings could be added to the pathway.
- The borough should ensure that safety inspections are performed on an annual basis and that records of these inspections are kept on file for a minimum of twenty years.

## Centennial Park



Municipality: The Borough of Swarthmore  
Type: Neighborhood Park  
Location: Borough Office, Park Avenue  
Size: 0.42 Acres  
Service Area: 0.25 Miles  
Uses: Passive Recreation

Facilities: Amphitheater  
Plantings  
Parking  
Borough Office  
Sidewalks  
War memorial  
Benches

Centennial Park includes the planting areas around the Borough Office. The benches, grouped together for social interaction, provide a great place to watch life pass by. The memorial reminds us of the sacrifices of others. Creating a park out of the “leftover” space around the borough building is a great strategy for incorporating the borough office into the streetscape and into the community and making it feel more accessible to the populace.

The newly constructed amphitheater adds another dimension to Centennial Park. The park is no longer completely unprogrammed. The amphitheater provides opportunities for small gatherings, small events and programs at specified times, for specified groups. But it also provides a place for spontaneous or informal performances by street musicians, college drama students, or children who want to put on a show for their parents.



Centennial Park appears to be a very good use of the spaces around the borough building. The building also can provide services, such as parking, bathrooms, water and emergency services, to park visitors during events. The park appears to function well and is well maintained.

## Chapter 6 - Recreation Opportunities

Recreation is an important part of a well-balanced lifestyle. People who are engaged in active healthy lifestyles live longer<sup>1</sup>, are less in danger from heart disease and stroke<sup>2</sup>, are at significantly reduced risk of cancer<sup>3</sup>, and have improved chances of combating a wide range of chronic conditions such as diabetes, arthritis, asthma and depression<sup>4</sup>. Participation in a broad range of leisure activities has the potential to improve physiological and mental health<sup>5</sup>. It contributes to personality development and improves psychological well-being by reducing anxiety and stress. Recreation participation increases sense of well-being, deters addictions, and assists in the social learning of tolerance and respect for others. In aging communities, recreation helps to reduce the isolation of the elderly now being recognized as a major social problem.



<sup>1</sup> Gibbons LW, Macera CA. 1995. *Changes in physical fitness and all-cause mortality: a prospective study of healthy and unhealthy*

<sup>2</sup> Blair SN, Kohl HW and Gordon NF. 1992. *How much physical activity is good for health?* **Annual Reviews of Public Health.** 13:99-126

<sup>3</sup> Slattery ML. 1996. *How much physical activity do we need to maintain health prevent disease? Different diseases –different mechanisms.* **Research Quarterly Exercise and Sport** 67(2):209-212 Slattery ML, Potter J, Caan B et al.

<sup>4</sup> United States Department of Health and Human Services; Centre for Disease Control and Prevention. 1996. **Physical Activity and Health: A Report of the Surgeon General.** Atlanta, Georgia. Glasgow RE, Ruggerio L, Eakin EG et al.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. August 22, 2016. Six Reasons Why Parks Matter for Health. [rjwf.org](http://rjwf.org).

Recreation plays an important role in promoting a strong sense of community by providing settings for people to socialize, share common interests and being a major driver of community interaction and pride. Recreation facilities make an important contribution to the physical infrastructure of communities. They provide a social focus for the community and affect a resident's perception of his or her neighborhood. It is widely accepted that parks and recreation influence how a community looks, feels and functions.

The U.S. Center for Disease Control enlisted local communities in the fight against diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and hypertension by offering easier, plentiful and convenient places and programs that will help citizens to increase physical activity. This will help to reduce national health care costs, one of our country's most pressing challenges. Today public recreation is considered to be public health. Walking for 30 minutes daily has benefits to your heart, weight, mental health, and has recently been found to stave off Alzheimer's disease. Cancer does not kill most Americans: the lack of physical exercise and a poor diet do<sup>6</sup>. Public recreation has a prominent role in creating healthy people, healthy families and healthy communities.

### **Recreation in Swarthmore, Rose Valley, Rutledge and Nether Providence**

Engaging in recreational activities is a way of life in the Swarthmore, Rose Valley, Rutledge, and Nether Providence. A common thread in the public participation process was residents talking about how they walk, ride bicycles, engage with nature, play sports, enjoy fun in the great outdoors and make everyday activities an opportunity for active healthy living. In fact, most recreation and activity occurs here as residents pursue their own interests and fitness. The citizens walk anywhere, anytime, here as a way of life.

This is good news given the status of the health care industry and decreasing levels of physical activity in the United States. Inactivity is a prime factor in diseases such as heart disease, cancer, obesity, and depression. Our health care system is located in more places than hospitals and doctors' offices. People spend most of their time in community settings. Our



**Walking, biking and other forms of recreation contribute to active, healthy living in the community.**

<sup>6</sup> Oz, Mehmet. *6-Month Plan for Getting Healthy*. **AARP Magazine**. Volume 53: 3A May/June 2010. p56.

community's local neighborhoods and parks serve as the healthy person's playground for longevity, happiness, and lower health care costs for individual, families, businesses, and the federal government. Venues such as the Farmer's Market further advance healthy living through the provision of locally grown food in a setting that people enjoy going to and using as a community destination. All of this contributes to the strong sense of community in Swarthmore, Rose Valley, Rutledge, and Nether Providence.

A common thread among the four municipalities is that recreation opportunities are available 365 days a year in the community's parks. As seen nationally, about 80 percent of recreation is self-directed. Each municipality here has also established a way of providing organized programs and services unique to its own jurisdiction, staffing, and resources. These approaches vary widely from programs organized by volunteer fire companies to the Swarthmore Recreation Association (SRA). The SRA is a model for how small communities can provide structured recreation through a combination of municipal support and private resources. Typically, about 15 to 20 percent of recreation that citizens pursue is through organized scheduled programs. Most organized programs are focused on children, youth, sports, summer, and school holidays. All four municipalities:

- Facilitate recreation by providing parks and recreation facilities,
- Support the efforts of other providers who offer organized scheduled programs and community events,
- Promote parks and recreation through the municipal websites, and
- Support multi-municipal sports leagues that serve residents from throughout the Wallingford- Swarthmore School District that covers Swarthmore, Rose Valley, Rutledge, and Nether Providence.

### **Recreation: Connecting People to Nature, their Heritage, and the Arts**

An important component of recreation here is nature. Environmental Advisory Boards offer environmentally oriented programs. Parks have interpretive signage and incorporate historic elements to unify heritage, environment and recreation. A strong volunteer base operates through master gardeners and garden clubs, wildlife sanctuaries, Scott Arboretum, the Community Arts Center in Wallingford. Activities include fall native plant sales, invasive species removal projects, scout projects, wetland restoration, EAC workdays, and care of public spaces.

## *Swarthmore Recreation Association*



**Hundreds of local children participate in sports through the Swarthmore Recreation Association.**

Incorporated in 1940, the Swarthmore Recreation Association provides recreation and other activities to people of all ages in the greater Swarthmore area. The Association publishes a recreation guide four times a year that is available on the website. SRA has an email list of 6,000+. SRA provides the following:

- Sports: Baseball, basketball, bocce, lacrosse, track and field, tennis, Ultimate Frisbee, and Volleyball
- Camps: Pre-School Day Camp, Summer Club Day Camp, Freaky Friday Day Camp, Sports Camp, and Shakespeare in the Summer Camp
- Special Events: New Year's Day Race, Town Picnic, the Great Bike Races, Cris Hansen Memorial Horseshoe Tournament, and Oktoberfest.
- Arts: Shakespeare in the Park, a performing arts program for youth in middle school and high school.

### *Nether Providence Township*

Nether Providence offers programs within the capacity of volunteers. A member of the Board of Supervisors works on an annual community festival and a summer camp for children.

### *Rose Valley Borough*

In Rose Valley Borough, the focus is on environmental programs with workshops and lectures available. The Borough has an annual 4th of July celebration with a parade and picnic.

### *Hedgerow Theater*

Hedgerow Theatre Company stages approximately 20 adult and children's productions each year, offers adult and children's acting classes and runs several weeks of theatre camp in the summer in the Hedgerow Theater.

### *Rutledge Borough*

In Rutledge Borough, recreation programming centers on softball, Fire Company activities such as Halloween and Christmas events, and use of the Borough Hall for classes and activities such as Yoga. The Borough fosters community spirit by facilitating community recreation opportunities provided by others such as the Aquatics Club, block parties, outdoor movies, horseshoe tournament, and community wide yard sales.

### *Sports Leagues*

The sports leagues operate in partnership with the municipalities and the Swarthmore Recreation Association.

Bocce – SRA offers four sessions and one tournament with and Italian barbeque in June annually. Thirty people from young children to those in their 80's participate

T-Ball – SRA offers an eight-week t-ball program in the summer. The participants then move on to the Nether-Swarthmore Baseball.

Soccer – (400 participants) SRA's soccer programs are designed to provide community members of all ages opportunities throughout the year to learn, enjoy, and compete in the great game of soccer! The eight soccer program areas include Indoor,



**SRA offers soccer leagues for all ages and genders.**

Town, Travel, Spring Developmental Soccer, UK Elite Summer Clinic, Women's Soccer and Men's Soccer.

Nether-Swarthmore Baseball & Softball – The organization includes 535 participants in 45 teams within three leagues (Rookie, Minor and major) of Cal Ripken baseball for players ages 7 to 12. Players 13+ years play in senior league and American Legion baseball. The organization operates in the traditional baseball season of spring and summer from Mid-March to early August.

*Fields Used*

- **90' Fields:** Henderson Field and Strath Haven Middle School. The 90' field at Nether Providence Elementary School has been out of commission. Swarthmore College also allows use of the baseball fields and indoor facilities for training on their campus.
- **70' Fields:** Robert Urban Fields and Hepford Fields in Wallingford
- **60' Baseball Fields:** Mickey Vernon Field (Bullens Lane) and Hepford Fields in Wallingford and Swarthmore Rutledge School in Swarthmore
- **60' Softball Fields:** St. John Chrysostom Church in Wallingford, Strath Haven High School

*Field and Facility Needs*

An additional 46'/60' field for practices and games, particularly for practices is needed to alleviate conflicts with other sports and activities as well as provide more practice time. The 18 Minor and Rookie teams, in particular, need practice to learn the game and sportsmanship.

While the municipalities maintain the ball fields well, the amenities need improvement especially the restrooms and playgrounds. Parking improvements and the addition of facilities for spectators would improve all baseball/softball sites.

Nether Soccer – (900+ participants with 60 intermural and 30 travel teams) Nether Soccer, the largest oldest league in the area, occasionally has a waiting list as recreation soccer is increasing while travel soccer is slightly decreasing. The league operates year round.

*Fields Used*

- Urban
- Chester Park
- Hepford
- Sapovitz
- Elwyn indoor and outdoor field
- SHHS gym in winter and every WSSD school field in the district
- Smedley Park
- YSC

## Field and Facility Needs

The league does not have enough fields to practice especially during after rains or when daylight hours are limited. Improved maintenance is needed on township and school district fields. The league rents fields outside the area starting in October. Field turf management including irrigation is needed as well as lights. Baseball, lacrosse, and soccer compete for field in the spring. The league projects needing three additional full-size fields with lights and a turf field desired as well as an indoor facility.

Lacrosse – Haven Youth Lacrosse offers two levels of play. The Boys and Girls Instructional Team is open to boys and girls in grades K-3. It is designed to teach the basic skills to beginners and includes age-appropriate skills and drills as well as scrimmages for boys and girls.

The Competitive Travel Program - This is a competitive travel lacrosse program that offers boys and girls in grades 3 - 8 the opportunity to learn new skills and improve their level of play. Boys' teams compete against other regional township programs in the Southeastern Pennsylvania Youth Lacrosse Association (SEPYLA) league and girls' teams compete against other regional township programs in the Philadelphia Area Girls Lacrosse Association (PAGLA) league.

### **Senior Citizens Center and the Changing Needs and Interests of “Aging in Place”**

Swarthmore Borough does not have a traditional senior center, but offers some programming at The Dew Drop Inn and The Gathering Place. The Schoolhouse Center in Folsom offers extensive programming and services for older adults and their caregivers and is located within a short car ride from the Borough. (The Center also subsidizes Community Transit rides for seniors traveling to and from the Center.) The Schoolhouse Center has parties and travel excursions. They use volunteers to help deliver meals and provide other services and offer classes in woodcarving, water colors and other arts.

#### Aging in Place

The Borough of Swarthmore developed a plan for those who wish to age in place in the community<sup>7</sup>. The goal of the plan was to formulate recommendations for measures to improve the quality of life and reduce barriers faced by residents of Swarthmore who desire to remain in the Borough throughout their lives, resulting in a community enriched by the contributions of all ages.

According to the plan, the needs and values of those who wish to age-in-place often mirror those of all ages and include the love of living here, the desire to walk to various destinations, and the wish to reside in an active intergenerational community. While many resources are available to help residents successfully age in place, but information about those resources is

---

<sup>7</sup> Swarthmore Aging in Place Task Force. (2015) Swarthmore Aging in Place Task Force Report. Borough of Swarthmore. pp 1-3.

not centralized or easily accessible. There are far too many aging residents who are isolated, lonely, and could benefit from the recommendations of the plan.

### **Wallingford Swarthmore School District**

The School District offers after school activities including clubs and sports. The School District also facilitates the public use of school facilities during non-school hours. There are no programs offered during the summer months.

#### **WSCC – Wallingford Swarthmore Community Classes**

Wallingford Swarthmore Community Classes (WSCC) is a nonprofit corporation dedicated to providing low-cost adult education classes for residents of Wallingford-Swarthmore School District, Delaware County, and beyond.

Classes are not sponsored by the School District, but are organized and administered by a Board of Directors made up of volunteers. WSCC offers opportunities for short-term lifelong learning courses to adults of all ages in the community. Classes are available two times a year, spring and fall, in the daytime and the evening, at various community venues including Strath Haven High School, Swarthmore Borough Hall, Wallingford Presbyterian Church, and Hobbs' coffee shop. The cost of classes is relatively affordable, because the organization's goal is to have the tuition equal the expenses. WSCC is open to suggestions for new class ideas.

#### **Swarthmore Public Library: A Community Treasure Since 1929**

The Swarthmore Public Library provides a broad range of public services in addition to materials available for check-out, public computers, internet and wireless access, scan and fax service, and delivery to homebound residents. Annually, thousands of attendees at participate in the nearly 800 programs for children, families, and adults offered. About 72% of the community are members of the Library. A robust volunteer program helps to support these valuable community services. As part of Delaware County Libraries, patrons also have access to dozens of online resources including free e-books and audio books, foreign language instruction, virtual tutoring, and more.

### **Private Recreation Opportunities**

The Springhaven Club is a membership based club, offering golf, dining and family recreation. The club features an 18 hole golf course, clubhouse, restaurant and a pool. Established in 1896, Springhaven is one of the oldest golf courses in the country.

The Swarthmore Swim Club provides recreational swimming, lessons and activities for its members. The club has many programs and activities for swimmers of all ages, including free swim lessons for young children, water aerobics for all ages, a swim team with over 100 members, the 1000 Lap Club for any age swimmer who swims 1,000 laps during the summer season.

#### Swarthmore College

Swarthmore College offers the community a variety of ways to use the campus and college services for public recreation. A common theme of public outreach was the importance of the college campus as a delightful place to walk. College programs provide opportunities for the public to enjoy the arts and lifelong learning through activities such as lectures and seminars open.



Residents use Swarthmore College lands, including Crum Woods, as public open space.

#### Recreation Values

Community recreation values were determined from information gathered during the public involvement process. They include the following:

- Service for citizens of all ages,
- Partnerships with other public and private entities in community recreation service,
- Information about recreation opportunities that is timely and accessible.
- Strengthen relationships and sense of community
- Provide safe, accessible and welcoming spaces to all people

#### Recreation Opportunities Analysis

The residents of Nether Providence, Swarthmore, Rose Valley, and Rutledge have access to a variety of recreation opportunities close to home. These opportunities are diverse: access to safe places to walk, enjoy nature, and exercise; organized sports; children’s programs during school holidays;

community special events; volunteerism; and life-long learning. Community members can enjoy music, drama, dance, studio arts, nature, fitness, sports, and socializing close to home. A strong volunteer base supports recreation which contributes to a strong sense of community here. The four municipalities provide public recreation in different ways. At the most structured level, the Swarthmore Recreation Association provides year-round organized scheduled recreation programs for people of all ages. Nether Providence, Rose Valley and Rutledge have crafted offerings unique to their municipalities through volunteers for special events, nature based programs, and programs for children during the summer. All programs are available to residents of all four municipalities. The sports leagues figure prominently in public recreation and have a service area that includes residents of all the municipalities. Geographically the area is compact so programs are convenient and close to home. In the boroughs, recreation is a way of life because people have safe places to walk. In Nether Providence, parks are largely drive to destinations and resident expressed the desire for more safe places to walk and bicycle. Trail needs differ between the Boroughs and the Township.

### Strengths

The present configuration of the SRA, volunteer recreation providers and part-time seasonal programs in the four municipalities is working well. Recreation opportunities abound close to home. It is important for each municipality to continue to support the SRA and volunteer community recreation providers, and the special events they provide. The WSSD Community Classes and the Library provide lifelong learning for children and adult, which round out recreation opportunities.

The top recreation interests that emerged during the public participation process were walking, bicycling, experiencing nature, fitness and wellness, and organized sports. This applied across all age groups except for organized sports which are youth focused.

### Concerns

Three areas emerged with major concerns: services for senior adults, the needs of community sports organizations for more facilities, and the community's desire for a trail system.

1. Senior Adults – The Swarthmore Aging in Place Study revealed the isolation of those who are aging and wish to remain in the community. Recreation can help to address many of the issues identified with isolation and could be considered in the implementation of this study.
2. Sports Organizations – There are not enough sports fields to accommodate play at present much less the future growing participation. Gyms are also at a premium.
3. Trail System - Planning and developing safe places to walk and bicycle would meet the needs of many residents, primarily in Nether Providence. The Boroughs have been addressing walkable community ideas that reflect the specific interests their own constituents.

## Opportunities

The major opportunity that emerged during this project was the acquisition of Summit School. This facility will provide important opportunities via the addition of indoor and outdoor recreation facilities. The gymnasium and land for ball fields will help to fulfill the need for more places to play ball. A plan for how this facility could be used, the improvements needed and an operational plan for management, programming and financing is needed.

While recreation programming is operating well, as the area grows and/or changes consideration could be given to an expanded role for SRA via a formalized partnership with Nether Providence and perhaps Rose Valley and Rutledge. If any other municipality is considering formalizing recreation with staff or establishing a department, exploring a partnership with SRA may be a sound approach that could save money and time while providing enhanced public service.

## Recreation Opportunity Recommendations

1. **Continue to provide recreation services in the current manner.** Although the four municipalities joined forces to develop this Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan, there appears to be no desire for them to formalize a partnership in the provision of recreation services. If the demand for expanded services and need for more staffing occurs sometime in the future, a partnership for recreation programming could be considered.
2. **Develop a program and service plan for Summit School at Gouley Park.** Use this information to create an improvement plan for the building and the site.
3. **Ensure that all agreements for public use of facilities by community organizations comply with standard operating procedures.** This would include proper background checks, insurance liability requirements, and philosophies that strive to create healthy social environments for all involved.



Many of the existing parks feature natural areas which allow the residents to connect to nature.

4. **Focus recreation opportunities on experiences in the great outdoors.** Focus on creating opportunities for self-directed recreation rather than on organized, scheduled programs, through the provision of facilities and the promotion of information about where people can enjoy nature, safely walk and bicycle, and socialize with family and friends.
5. **Continue and expand the promotion of recreation opportunities.** This includes not only organized scheduled programs and events, but also the parks, recreation facilities and trails themselves. Use the websites, newsletters, and social media.
6. **Incorporate recreation into action planning for the work on Aging in Place.** Use recreation strategies to help reduce the isolation of those aging in place.

## Chapter 7 - Operations, Management and Financing

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the legal basis, organization structure, and analyses regarding how Nether Providence, Rose Valley, Rutledge and Swarthmore operate, maintain, and financially support parks, Recreation and Open Space. Since the operation and maintenance of parks is the largest expenditure of public parks and recreation systems, it is essential to plan for the ongoing care.

It is much easier to secure funding to acquire parkland and develop recreation facilities than it is to provide the staff and budget needed to maintain them. The information presented in this chapter shows that the four municipalities spend relatively little on parks, recreation and open space compared with other municipalities statewide. Yet, this community is notable for being among the very best places to live in the United States featuring a plethora of “bests” such as schools and school district, educational levels, income, property values, low crime, and distinctive quality of life.

Funding for operating and maintaining parks and recreation here is less than 25 percent of the average statewide per capita municipal investment in parks and recreation. Creative approaches to providing public parks and recreation have been developed in each of the four municipalities including the Swarthmore Recreation Association, involvement of fire companies in special events, and provision of recreation programs by volunteer boards, community organizations, and citizens. However, none of these has guaranteed funding from year to year. While volunteers are important, they are not free, frequently tenuous, and require management. Securing annual operating funds is a competition with other departments that are considered “essential”. The four jurisdictions have the distinction of serving nearly 22,000 people in less than seven square miles. Strong consideration should be given to developing a multi-municipal system for planning, operating, maintaining, programming and supporting parks and recreation rather than replicating these functions four times. Working together will maximize resources, eliminate duplication of effort, enhance public service, and position the community to attain an outstanding parks and recreation system.

### **Basis for Operating, Maintaining and Funding Parks, Recreation, and Open Space**

According to the Pennsylvania municipal codes, the duty of the elected officials is to secure the health, safety and welfare of the citizens. Municipal parks and recreation operations help to fulfill that duty being concerned with community welfare, improving quality of life, service to the public, enriched community life, wide use of leisure, and protection and conservation of the environment.

Recreation and parks systems are organized specifically to meet the objectives of those they serve. To be successful, parks and recreation organizations must emphasize quality, fiscal sustainability, and collaboration. The organizational work of municipalities in parks and recreation is to encourage and support the best efforts of others rather than to provide all services directly. The productive management of any recreation and parks organization is greatly dependent upon the ability of its leadership and those involved at various levels of service delivery to work with and through people to achieve organizational goals. Financing parks, recreation and open space has evolved into a combination of public and private support as government cannot provide all that the public desires on its own.

## Organizational Structure of the Township and Boroughs

Nether Providence is a Township of the Second Class while Rose Valley, Rutledge, and Swarthmore are Boroughs in Delaware County in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Together, they comprise the Wallingford Swarthmore School District.

### Enabling Legislation for Parks and Recreation and Intergovernmental Cooperation

The organization and management of parks and recreation in Nether Providence, Swarthmore, Rose Valley and Rutledge functions within the framework of the enabling legislation for townships of the first class and boroughs set forth by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The Pennsylvania Municipal Code provides for the establishment of the parks, recreation centers, shade trees and forests<sup>1</sup> in Townships of the First Class and Boroughs<sup>2</sup>. This legislation enables Nether Providence, Swarthmore, Rose Valley and Rutledge to acquire land, construct, improve, maintain, care for, regulate and govern the public parks and recreation system. Any township or borough may join with one or more political subdivisions to acquire, create, equip, improve, regulate, maintain and operate any recreation place in accordance with relating the Commonwealth's statutes on intergovernmental cooperation. The law authorizing intergovernmental cooperation is codified in Title 53 of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, Sections 2301-2315. Title 53 authorizes two or more "local governments" to "jointly cooperate in the exercise or in the performance of their respective governmental functions, powers or responsibilities."<sup>3</sup>

### Parks and Recreation Responsibilities

The Pennsylvania Codes enables Nether Providence, Rose Valley, Rutledge, and Swarthmore, to vest the authority to operate, manage and program parks and recreation facilities in a park or recreation board including the following responsibilities:

- Acquire and designate land and buildings for parks and recreation;
- Develop land and buildings for recreation;
- Supervise, maintain and regulate parks;
- Regulate the use of public parks and recreation facilities;
- Jointly purchase, develop, equip, and maintain public parks and recreation facilities in partnership with other townships, the county or the school district;



**Park maintenance is an important and costly responsibility of each municipality.**

<sup>1</sup> First Class Township Code Act of June 24, 1931 (P.L. 1206, No.331). Reenacted and amended May 27, 1949 (P.L. 19955, No. 569). As Amended Harrisburg, PA. Article XXX. Sections3001 – 3048. Parks, Recreation Centers, Shade Trees and Forests.

<sup>2</sup> The Borough Code, as re-enacted and amended May 17, 2012, P.L. 262, No. 43. Section XXVII.

- Acquire and manage lands for forests;
- Equip, operate and maintain the parks, recreation areas and facilities, *and*
- Employ play leaders, recreation directors, supervisors, superintendents, or other officers or employees.

#### Pennsylvania Municipal Code Regarding Recreation Boards

The board of elected officials may by ordinance create a recreation board to supervise, regulate, equip, and maintain municipally funded recreation programs and facilities. A recreation board has only those powers specifically delegated to it by the respective board of elected officials. Recreation boards, when established, shall consist of five to nine persons. The members shall be appointed by the board of elected officials. Members serve without pay but may be reimbursed for expenses incurred in performing their duties. The recreation board may adopt rules and regulations for the conduct of all business within its jurisdiction and exercise powers and functions concerning parks and recreation facilities as may be delegated to it by the Board of Supervisors or Borough Council. The recreation board is to submit an annual report to the municipality, including an analysis of the adequacy and effectiveness of community recreation areas, facilities and leadership.

#### **Parks and Recreation Organization and Management**

The four municipalities operate independently in terms of parks and recreation. They join formally as desired such as in the case of developing this joint Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan. Their community recreation opportunities merge together informally as the residents take part in sports and recreation programs, events and activities that cross municipal boundaries.

#### Setting Policy

The Nether Providence Township Board of Supervisors and the Borough Councils of Rose Valley, Rutledge, and Swarthmore set forth policy regarding all public parks and recreation functions including parks, land, recreation facilities, rules and regulations, fees and charges, planning, goal setting, and administration in accordance with Pennsylvania municipal codes.

#### Boards Related to Parks and Recreation

Nether Providence Township has a Park Commission. The Park Commission is responsible for keeping the township's parks in a safe and sanitary condition and for overseeing the maintenance, repair, and replacement of property and equipment in those parks. Seven members appointed by the Board of Commissioners serve on the Commission for five-year terms without compensation. The Commission also has several ad hoc members. The Park Commission meets on an as-needed basis. Meetings are open to the public.

Rutledge Borough has the Rutledge Activities Committee organizes annual events, including the Christmas Tree Lighting, Luminary Lighting, and the 4th of July Parade and accompanying games and

activities. The Activities Committee is open to all, and provides a great opportunity to connect with neighbors and friends.

Rose Valley has an Environmental Advisory Council that offers nature based programs and environmental education. Members of this all-volunteer board are appointed by Borough Council to advise on issues & policies & work for a better environment.

Swarthmore Borough has an Environmental Advisory Council (EAC) that advises Borough Council and educates the citizens of the Borough on matters that affect the quality of the environment in the Borough, including those relating to the protection, conservation, management, promotion, and use of natural resources, including air, land and water resources, and issues relating to the effects of man-made and planted materials on the environment. The EAC partners with other local organizations to achieve these goals.

Additionally, The Swarthmore Environmental Advisory Council serves as the official steward of Little Crum Creek Park. Volunteers are organized to provide help with weeding and mulching trees, removing invasive species, cleaning the streams in the park, and planting shrubs and trees. Grants are obtained to provide funds for plantings.

### **SRA Board of Directors**

The SRA has a Board of Directors consisting of twelve members, divided into classes of four members each that are aligned with the number of years in the term so that members rotate. According to the by-laws, residents of Swarthmore and Rutledge have preference. Each class of Directors is elected for a term of three years and serves until their successors are elected. Nominations for candidates for Director are solicited from the general Membership of SRA via a request for such announcements on the Association's website, email and publication in *The Swarthmorean* during the months of March and/or April. SRA seeks to encourage the nomination of Members who have participated in and have familiarity with a diverse range of SRA activities and the SRA Board has the discretion to identify other qualified nominees for inclusion. All nominations shall be made in writing to the President of the Association by April 5 and the list of nominees is posted on the Association's website. The Board approves a final slate of two men and two women as candidates at its regularly scheduled meeting in May.

### **Administration**

Nether Providence, Rose Valley and Swarthmore have municipal managers. Nether Providence also has an assistant township manager. Rutledge has a borough secretary. The municipal managers or assistant township manager implement parks and recreation policy established by the boards of their respective elected officials, oversee daily parks and recreation operations such as park maintenance, coordinate volunteer efforts, provide financial management and offer advice to the board of elected regarding parks and recreation.

## Park Maintenance and Public Works

The Public Works Department or road crews perform park maintenance functions. The crews perform routine maintenance as well as emergency repairs. When needed, the crews can also help with parks and recreation capital improvements. Each of the four municipalities has its own public works department with four departments serving the seven-square mile area.

## WSSD – Wallingford Swarthmore School District

The district includes Swarthmore, Nether Providence, Rose Valley and Rutledge with about 3,600 students enrolled. The service area for this Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan is contiguous with that of the WSSD covering seven square miles. The school district has one high school, Strath Haven High School, one middle school, Strath Haven Middle School, and three elementary schools, Nether Providence Elementary School, Wallingford Elementary School, and Swarthmore-Rutledge Elementary School. Wallingford-Swarthmore schools are highly regarded, and the district is one of the best in suburban Philadelphia. The high school ranks seventh in Pennsylvania according to U.S. News and World report. School district facilities are available for public use. The School District is recognized as the organizing feature of this community and central to parks and recreation.

## Providers of Public Recreation Opportunities

As described in the Recreation Opportunities chapter of this plan, there are numerous independent loosely integrated providers of parks and recreation opportunities for the community. From a management perspective, the main function of the governmental entities is to provide facilities and support for other providers.

Swarthmore Borough invests in the Swarthmore Recreation Association with an annual appropriation of \$25,000. SRA is a private non-profit organization (501-C-3) under the codes of the Internal Revenue Service. Providers such as athletic leagues use public lands and recreation facilities for their sports. Volunteers such as the EACs and the Fire Companies provide important community environmental programs and special events.

**Swarthmore Recreation Association is dedicated to providing quality, inclusive recreational programs for all ages and abilities. Recreation creates a stronger, connected community and a love of healthy activity. Programs grow from the people we serve.**

The public uses Swarthmore College for recreation such as walking, sports, family play, and socializing. Ware Pool is used for children's aquatics programs. There is no formal agreement with the college about the use of its facilities by the community. Providers operate independently.

## Funding

Swarthmore, Nether Providence, Rose Valley and Rutledge all support parks and recreation financially as shown Table 1 Budget. As small communities with limited budgets and staff, the municipalities have adopted creative and collaborative ways to support parks, recreation and open space.

Volunteerism is important here. The rate of a volunteer hour was \$23.04 in 2015 in Pennsylvania, the most current year available<sup>3</sup> so the value of volunteers in Nether Providence, Swarthmore, Rose Valley and Rutledge is significant. Notable examples of creative and determined pursuit of support for public recreation abound from community sports to the Fire Companies providing important events that contribute to building the strong sense of community here. People in this community are so willing to pitch in to help with everything from environmental education and youth sports to staging community festivals. The municipal governments support projects and maintenance by providing labor and equipment through their public works departments.

Funding for parks and recreation falls into two major categories: capital funding and operational funding. Capital funding is generally regarded as expenditures more than \$10,000 for improvements that last more than five to seven years.

Table 2. 2017 Parks and Recreation Budget Nether Providence, Swarthmore, Rose Valley and Rutledge							
Municipality	Population	Parks Budget	Recreation Budget	Total	Per Capita	% of Operating Budget	
						Municipal Budget	% for Parks & Recreation
Swarthmore	6,198	38,985	25,000	64,985	\$10,48	5,099,676	1.27%
Nether Providence*	13,808	7,300	58,409	65,709	\$5.76	7,313,130	0.8%
Rose Valley	784	12,000	0	12,000	\$13.02	350,969	3.4%
Rutledge	921						
TOTAL	21,711						

<sup>3</sup> [www.thenonproffitimes.com/news-articles/volunteer-value-hits-23-07-an-hour/](http://www.thenonproffitimes.com/news-articles/volunteer-value-hits-23-07-an-hour/) December 29, 2016.

## Operating Funds

Operational funding is for the day-to-day maintenance and operation of the public parks and recreation system. This includes park maintenance, programs and services, advertising, staffing, utilities, equipment, supplies, and materials. **Table 1** presents the operating budgets for Nether Providence, Swarthmore, Rose Valley and Rutledge.

\*Does not include salaries and wages for park maintenance provided by the Highway Department

## Revenues

Nether Providence and the SRA generate revenue from fees and charges. Nether Providence generates about \$50,000 annually. The SRA has generated from \$258,000 to \$285,000 annually in recent years through fees and charges. These revenues offset the cost of providing programs such as summer camps and sports.

## Capital Funding

Capital improvements for the parks are undertaken on an annual basis. While no long-range capital improvement program is in place, one of the main goals for this parks, recreation and open space plan is to determine capital improvement needs as well as establishing the basis for future funding actions such as a bond issue or loan for open space and park, recreation and trail improvements.

Nether Providence received a bequest of \$750,000 from the Gouley family for parks. About \$600,000 was used to purchase Summit School. \$150,000 was used for other capital improvements in the parks.

## Analysis of Funding

Budgeting for parks, recreation, and open space is a major consideration. Long term, 75 percent of the lifetime cost of a park is in maintenance and operations. There is a tendency for municipalities to add or improve parks and recreation facilities without commensurate budget for taking care of the additional responsibilities. This is especially true when the staff is dedicated to their work and does an effective job in maintenance resulting in doing more with less, which at some point results in deferred maintenance and deteriorating. Nether Providence provides park maintenance through the Highway Department but does not track the labor or equipment for this responsibility. Therefore, the budget appears to be artificially lower than the actual investment by the Township through park maintenance. The recreation fees generate nearly \$50,000 annually which would offset nearly the entire recreation budget.

The following methods suggest ways of thinking about budgeting for parks and recreation to gain perspective for the long-term sustainability and improvement of the parks and recreation system envisioned in this plan.

1. Use the municipal budget as a benchmark. The municipal operating budget serves as a guideline. The average municipal investment in parks and recreation is three (3%) percent of the municipal

operating budget. The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural resources recommends five percent.

2. Use state comparisons regarding municipal funding for parks and recreation. The statewide average municipal investment for parks and recreation is about \$36 per capita. The average per capita municipal investment for operating parks and recreation is:
  - Nether Providence Township: \$5.76
  - Swarthmore Borough: \$10.48
  - Rose Valley Borough: \$13.02
  - Rutledge Borough
  - Combined Per Capita: \$
3. Management Impact Statement. Figure 1 presents how to use the Management Impact Statement as a tool for planning, decision-making and resource allocation. This method would provide the most accurate budgeting figures that would be attached to specific goals and objectives.
4. Since municipal government cannot afford to provide all the facilities and services they would like to offer the public, a mix of public and private funding is required. The community of Swarthmore, Nether Providence, Rose Valley and Rutledge already has a good start on this with the creative approach to public recreation via SRA, the seasonal recreation offered by Nether Providence and the volunteerism in the Boroughs of Rose Valley and Rutledge that provides critical public recreation services that government could not alone afford to provide. The mix of public and private resources will become the foundation for our recommendations and action plan.

## **Organization, Management, and Financing Analysis**

In this time of pressure from taxpayers combined with increasing demands for services and facilities, decision-makers, staff and citizens alike expect efficient and effective operating systems. The following analysis includes the strengths challenges and opportunities regarding parks and recreation organization, management, and financing.

### Organizational and Management

#### *Strengths*

- **Accomplishments** – Swarthmore, Nether Providence, Rose Valley and Rutledge have a long and successful track record of working together on an informal basis. The element of trust is apparent among the elected officials and managers of these four jurisdictions. They have joined forces in developing this Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan. As small boroughs, Swarthmore, Rose Valley, and Rutledge have found ways to provide public recreation within their capacity and with ingenuity, Nether Providence as a growing township has been using volunteers to provide programs and facilitate use of township recreation facilities. Volunteerism is particularly notable in this community.

- **A model for public recreation: the Swarthmore Recreation Association** – Nearly 80 years old, the SRA serves as a model of a public private partnership in community recreation. SRA leverages more than \$10 for every dollar invested by the Borough annually through fees and charges.
- **Community Support** – The municipalities are fortunate in having a strong cadre of volunteers in important areas of overall parks and recreation including open space conservation, active healthy living via sports and activities, and community building through special events.

## Challenges

- **Independent Operations** – The four municipalities serve 21,711 citizens in a seven-square mile service area. The population and geographic area are smaller than many municipalities. Each of these jurisdictions has independent organizations and management systems. While this configuration of municipalities is common among Pennsylvania’s 67 counties, 2562 municipalities and 500 school districts, the trend is toward multi-municipal cooperation. Parks, recreation, open space and trails are ideal candidates for intergovernmental cooperation. The benefits of intergovernmental cooperation include cost savings, reduction in the duplication of services, joint purchasing of materials, equipment and supplies, and most importantly more efficient, effective and expanded public services. Municipalities together can provide public services that no one community on its own can afford independently. Park maintenance, recreation programs, trail development and operation all lend themselves to intergovernmental agreements. There are more than 25 multi-municipal parks and recreation commissions operating successfully in Pennsylvania.
- **Major new facilities are coming online.** This includes Summit School and Furness Park. This plan recommends adding parkland, ball fields, recreation facilities and trails. Planning for the future management, maintenance, funding and programming of these facilities is important to determine the resources needed for their successful operation. Facilities such as the Summit School would easily benefit the entire community and sharing in the planning, costs and benefits to all jurisdictions should be considered and pursued.
- **Park Maintenance** – While the parks look clean, park maintenance is done on a basic level of oriented to mowing, litter pick up and trash removal. Tasks such as turf management, ball field management, and natural resource management are generally beyond the capacity of the work crews operating under the auspices



**Tree work is an important but often overlooked element of park maintenance.**

of Public Works. There is no workload cost tracking system for park maintenance. Management excellence is improved when costs are tracked by task and facility. Maintenance costs also serve as the foundation for setting fees and charges, allocating resources, staffing, and the planning of new facilities.

- **Park planning is undertaken informally and in reaction to pressing needs.** Undertaking park planning in an organized manner with public involvement and professional expertise will ensure successful parks and recreation facilities that will be sustainable over time

#### *Opportunities*

- **Joint Parks, Recreation and Open Space Commission/Committee/Board** – The four municipalities now have independent boards or committees serving parks and recreation. SRA also has an advisory board. Because of the compact size of the area and its population, a joint parks and recreation board could facilitate and better support parks, recreation, open space and trails community wide. Having a unified committee for parks, recreation and open space could help achieve a sound balance between active recreation and conservation, information and access to information about grants, best management practices and joint projects, programming, promotions, enhanced public service, increased use of park, and cost savings. Including the WSSD and Swarthmore College on this board could help expand the use of school facilities for public recreational use and environmental education and conservation.
- **Park Maintenance Collaboration** – Public Works departments maintain the parks. If the four jurisdictions could join forces on park maintenance, they could broaden their skill set and expertise in all aspects of park care including turf management, sport field maintenance, natural resource management and stewardship could be shared functions. In support of this, the Nether Providence, Swarthmore, Rose Valley, and Rutledge Comprehensive Plan recommends a merger of the Public Works Departments.

#### Financing

##### *Strengths*

- **Continued Investment and Community Support** – The elected officials in the municipalities support parks and recreation as evident in their annual appropriations. They have further committed financial support to determine how to enhance services over the next ten years by undertaking this Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan. The commitment to purchase Summit School, improve Furness Park, and improve existing facilities is further evidence of this support.
- **Public recreation is provided with very little public money.** This is both an asset and a challenge. While limited budgets have resulted in creative approaches to public recreation and parks, citizens desire quality parks and recreation facilities and services.

## *Challenges*

- **Operating Budgets** – The municipal operating budgets for parks and recreation are below statewide municipal averages and PA DCNR recommendations although this community is highly regarded as one of the best and most desirable places in which to live in the Commonwealth. The statewide average municipal investment per capita is \$36 while this community ranges from \$5.76 - \$13.02. As a percentage of the municipal operating budget, this community ranges from 0.8 to 3.4 percent. Three percent is average while PA DCNR recommends five percent.
- **Capital Improvement Plans are needed.** Capital Improvement planning appears to be done on an annual basis for parks and recreation. Having a five to seven year CIP in place helps to phase in improvements holistically and systematically while securing grant funding strategically.

## *Opportunities*

- **More Joint Services** – Working together more in areas such as joint maintenance, purchasing, park planning and improvements could help to reduce costs, improve the quality of facilities and expand public services. At less cost than any one municipality could do on its own. As Nether Providence grows, exploration of an expansion of the SRA to include a formalized partnership could help both SRA and Nether Providence. Grant funding is also available to support multi-municipal parks and recreation systems.
- **Plan for Budgets Commensurate with Improvements** – As parks, recreation facilities, open space and trails are enhanced, improved or expanded over the next 10 years, the municipalities could plan for maintenance and programming when undertaking a park master plan, major park improvement, or public request for an additional facility or program.

## **Recommendations**

It is important to underscore the fact that parks, recreation and open space appear to work well. The trust and intergovernmental relationships are valuable and need to be retained. The following recommendations present ways to enhance the operation and support of parks, recreation and open space. Change is inevitable and major changes occurred as this plan was being developed such as the acquisition of Summit School at Gouley Park. Other recommendation such as land acquisition and protection and the development of more facilities will result in change that merits consideration of how to optimize organization, operations, management, and financing in the future.

1. **Form a Parks, Recreation and Open Space Consortium/Board/Committee for Nether Providence, Swarthmore, Rose Valley and Rutledge and explore a more formal multi-municipal approach to managing parks and recreation collaboratively.** If the municipalities wish to retain their own boards, consider phasing in the multi-municipal board on a small-scale meeting at least semi-annually. A unified board could have sub-committees that would serve municipal wishes such as sub-committees for each jurisdiction, programs, open space, sports, and the environment. The SRA

Board should remain in place. If SRA changes in any way such as an expansion with Nether Providence, then modifications in the Board should be considered.

One of the main goals of this unified consortium should be to implement this parks, recreation and open space plan. As such, the consortium should meet to assess accomplishments and determine the action plan for the next fiscal year along with budget recommendations.

Use this Board to explore the potential for forming a multi-municipal parks and recreation organization. Consider seeking a Peer Grant from PA DCNR to explore the potential to establish such an organization. The grant would be for \$10,000 and require only a \$1,000 match in total. Should the result of the study find that the four municipalities would like to join forces on a multi-municipal parks and recreation organization, then consider applying for a Circuit Rider grant that would provide a four year grant that would essentially provide half the cost of a parks and recreation professional to set up and manage the organization over four years with the purpose of establishing a sustainable organization by year five through a system of public and private support.

2. **Implement the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan** – Having an adopted parks and recreation plan in place will foster efficient and effective ways of operating since a common mission, goals and recommendations will be in place. Capitalize on the adoption of this plan by implementing the action plan through the designation of roles and responsibilities for actions that include a mix of municipal resources and partnerships with organizations in the public and private sectors.
3. **Add Park Planning as a Function** - Develop a strategy for park planning that is holistic, prioritized, has broad public support, includes public involvement, professional park planning services, and the development of a capital improvement program. Currently park planning is undertaken in response to pressing needs. It is important to stress the need to design great public spaces with experts who understand the use of public space from a human perspective beyond solely engineering and determining how many facilities can fit onto a site. Nether Providence, Swarthmore, Rose Valley and Rutledge are exceptional communities that warrant exceptionally wonderful public spaces where the citizens want to spend their time.
4. **Formalize Maintenance and Management** – A formalized park maintenance management system should be developed and implemented. Long term, the parks and recreation system would be easier to manage if it were computerized. Five distinct areas of maintenance could be addressed in the maintenance management system: parks, recreation facilities, natural resources, trails, and indoor facilities with Summit School’s arrival. By organizing maintenance into these areas, decision-making regarding staffing, financing, training, setting priorities and partnerships could be enhanced.
5. **Manage Natural Resources and Develop a Culture of Stewardship** - Continue to integrate natural resource management with overall community planning. Provide training to workers involved with park maintenance. Working with a local and trust or conservancy or the Conservation District could help in establishing a plan to manage the natural resources.

**6. Support parks, recreation, open space and trails through a mix of public and private support.**

Phase in additional public support to reach at least statewide averages as the parks, recreation, and open space is improved over the next ten years. Set a goal of using fees and charges to help offset programs and services while directing public funding toward land, facilities, and park maintenance. Providing recreation opportunities for people with financial needs is important especially for children and families. This can be accomplished through special support programs such as provided by SRA.



## Chapter 8 - Implementation Strategy

This multi-municipal plan presents a strategy for the community that enables the municipalities to collaborate to their advantage as well as to move ahead as unique entities in improving their own parks, recreation facilities, and programs. The plan includes recommendations ranging from the creation of regional trails with additional partners, to site specific land stewardship. Throughout the narrative, most of the recommendations are highlighted as part of bulleted or numbered lists, in each chapter. Here, the key recommendations are collected and organized by the year they should be implemented, with additional information about responsible parties and potential partners and funding sources.

The Implementation Strategy charts do not include the recommendations specific to each park, found in Chapter 5, Parks and Recreation Facilities Analysis. Those recommendations are best organized by park, as they are in Chapter 5. Recommendations relating to the park system overall are included.

Every incremental success, no matter how small, will advance the community's vision for the future. The intent of this implementation strategy is to chart a course of action that is pragmatic and achievable and that also allows for larger scale initiatives should the opportunities emerge.

### Key to Lead Parties, Assistance and Potential Partners/Funders:

BOC- Board of Commissioners

BC – Borough Council

PC - Planning Commission

PRC – Parks and Recreation Commission

EAC – Environmental Advisory Council

MMEAC – Multi-Municipal Environmental  
Advisory Council

NPSC – Nether Providence Sidewalk Committee

HC - Historical Commission

DEP – Pennsylvania Department of  
Environmental Protection

DCNR - Pennsylvania Department of  
Conservation and Natural Resources

DPCD – Delaware County Planning Department

DCPR – Delaware County Parks and Recreation

DVRPC – Delaware Valley Regional Planning  
Commission

WPF – William Penn Foundation

WSSD – Wallingford Swarthmore School District

## ONGOING TASKS

Item	Strategy	Lead Municipality /Party	Assistance	Potential partners/funding
<b>Goal 1</b>	<b>Protect the remaining open space, natural, cultural and historical resources.</b>			
A.	Protect the remaining natural resources by preserving properties which contain woodlands, wetlands, stream corridors and other important resources.	All	Staff, Consultants, BOC, BC's	Land Trust, DCNR, Delaware County
B.	Acquire properties which are underdeveloped, are occupied by obsolete uses or unexpectedly become vacant.	All	Staff, Consultants, BOC, BC's	Land Trust, DCNR, Delaware County
C.	Protect lands where preservation or acquisition can advance the goals of this plan, the Multi- Municipal Comprehensive Plan, Delaware County Parks and Recreation Plan and other relevant planning documents.	All	Staff, Consultants, BOC, BC's	Land Trust, DCNR, Delaware County
D.	Consider adoption of Growing Greener: Conservation by Design ordinances to manage development of remaining medium to large parcels.	Nether Providence	Staff, Consultants, PC, BOC, Solicitor	
E.	Add parkland where possible through the acquisition of parcels adjacent to existing parks and open spaces, underdeveloped properties and undeveloped, forested parcels.	All	BOC, BC, Managers, PRC	DCNR, Delaware County

<b>Goal 2</b>	<b>Improve and expand the existing parks and recreation facilities to be community destinations where residents can have fun, experience nature, socialize, and lead active healthy lifestyles.</b>			
A.	Expand greenways, trails and recreational opportunities by preserving properties which are contiguous to other parks, preserved natural areas, historical features and recreational facilities.	All	Staff, Consultants, BOC, BC's	Land Trust, DCNR, Delaware County
B.	Incorporate stormwater management projects within new and existing parks and trail corridors.	All	Staff, Consultants, PRC	DEP, DCNR
<b>Goal 3</b>	<b>Connect the four municipalities through a system of trails, sidewalks, and paths.</b>			
A.	Continue advancing the goals of the MMCP, by improving pedestrian access to schools and train stations. Also provide better connections to parks, open spaces and other community destinations.	All	Staff, Consultants, PRC, MMEAC	Developers, DCPD, DCNR, DVRPC
B.	Position the Leiper-Smedley Trail to become a regionally important trail which better serves the community.	Nether Providence	Staff, Consultants, BOC, PRC, NPSC	DCPR, DCPD, PennDOT, Swarthmore College, Ridley Twp, Springfield Twp
C.	Continue implementation of the Nether Providence Sidewalk Committee recommendations and the Swarthmore Borough Sidewalk Improvements Plan.	Nether Providence, Swarthmore	Staff, Consultants, NPSC	Rose Valley, Rutledge, DVRPC, DCNR, Swarthmore College
D.	Improve the user experience on existing trails and sidewalks, through signage, crosswalks and other improvements.	All	Staff, Consultants	NPSC, PennDOT, Private landowners, Land Trust

<b>Goal 4</b>	<b>Facilitate recreation opportunities to help the citizens engage in active, healthy living.</b>			
A.	Continue to provide recreation services in the current manner, through an informal affiliation.	All		
B.	Focus recreation opportunities on outdoor experiences.	All	Staff, PRC's	Residents, Volunteers
C.	Incorporate recreation into action planning for the work on Aging in Place	All	Staff, Consultants	Residents, Public Agencies, Private Facilities
<b>Goal 5</b>	<b>Provide operational excellence and financial sustainability that will garner widespread public support for parks, recreation, open space and trails.</b>			
A.	Continue and expand the promotion of recreation opportunities and events, as well as the parks, facilities and trails themselves.	All	Staff, PRC's, EAC's, MMEAC	Residents, Volunteers
B.	Develop a holistic, prioritized strategy for park planning, including professional consultants, public involvement and a capital improvement plan.	All	Staff, PRC's	

<b>YEAR 1</b>				
<b>Item</b>	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Lead Municipality /Party</b>	<b>Assistance</b>	<b>Potential partners/funding</b>
<b>Goal 1</b>	<b>Protect the remaining open space, natural, cultural and historical resources.</b>			
A.	Undertake hazard tree assessments in all parks on an annual or semi-annual basis.	All	Staff, Consulting arborist/forester	
<b>Goal 2</b>	<b>Improve and expand the existing parks and recreation facilities to be community destinations where residents can have fun, experience nature, socialize, and lead active healthy lifestyles.</b>			
A.	Develop a program and service plan for Summit School at Gouley Park to inform an improvement plan for the	Nether Providence	Staff, Consultants, BOC, PRC	Swarthmore, Rose Valley, Rutledge, Media Borough

	building and site.			
B.	Continue to improve Furness Park through a combination of volunteer efforts and professional services, including master planning, stewardship planning, trail building and provision of other amenities.	Nether Providence	Twp Manager, BOC, PRC	DCNR
C.	Convey a strong vision and purpose in each park, established through good design with a focus on how people enjoy using public spaces.	All	BOC, BC, Managers, PRC	
<b>Goal 3</b>	<b>Connect the four municipalities through a system of trails, sidewalks, and paths.</b>			
A.	Improve connections to the Leiper-Smedley Trail, enabling residents in surrounding neighborhoods to access the trail more easily.	Nether Providence	Staff, Consultants, PC, PRC, NPSC	PennDOT, DVRPC, DCNR
B.	Support and participate in Delaware County's process for creating the Media-Smedley connector trail.	Nether Providence	Staff	PRC, NPSC
C.	Improve connections to the existing trail and sidewalk system.	All	Staff, consultants, PC, PRC, NPSC	PECO, PennDOT, DVRPC, DCNR
<b>Goal 4</b>	<b>Facilitate recreation opportunities to help the citizens engage in active, healthy living.</b>			
A.	Evaluate the parks for compliance with the Consumer Product Safety Commission criteria and the Americans with Disabilities Act regulations.	All	Staff, Consultants	DCNR
<b>Goal 5</b>	<b>Provide operational excellence and financial sustainability that will garner widespread public support for parks, recreation, open space and trails.</b>			
A.	Form a parks, recreation and open space consortium of the four communities and explore	All	Staff, PRC's, EAC, MMEAC	Public Works, Volunteers

	a more formal approach to multi-municipal parks and recreation planning and management.			
B.	Establish criteria for evaluating open space, based on parcel size, location, connectivity, availability and natural features.	All	PRC, PC, EAC, MMEAC, Solicitor	
C.	Ensure that all agreements for public use of facilities by community organizations comply with standard operating procedures.	All	PRC's, Staff, Solicitor	

<b>YEARS 2 - 5</b>				
<b>Item</b>	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Lead Municipality /Party</b>	<b>Assistance</b>	<b>Potential partners/funding</b>
<b>Goal 1</b>	<b>Protect the remaining open space, natural, cultural and historical resources.</b>			
A.	Prepare stewardship and maintenance plans for parks featuring natural resources.	Nether Providence, Rose Valley	Staff, Consultants	DCNR
<b>Goal 2</b>	<b>Improve and expand the existing parks and recreation facilities to be community destinations where residents can have fun, experience nature, socialize, and lead active healthy lifestyles.</b>			
A.	Improve access to the existing parks through installation of sidewalks and paths along frontages and leading into the parks.	All	Staff, Consultants, NPSC, PRC	DVRPC, PennDOT
B.	Transform the Summit School at Gouley Park into an important community asset providing year round recreation for people of all ages and a broad range of interests.	Nether Providence	Twp Manager, BOC, PRC	DCNR
C.	Create a unified signage system for community parks, trails and open spaces.	All	Staff, consultants, PRC's, EAC's, MMEAC	PECO Green Region, DCNR

<b>Goal 3</b>	<b>Connect the four municipalities through a system of trails, sidewalks, and paths.</b>			
A.	Extend the Leiper-Smedley Trail north through the park, to Springfield Township, connecting to Beatty Road.	Nether Providence	DCPD, DCPR, Springfield Twp, PennDOT	DCNR, DVRPC
B.	Implement footpaths along Rose Valley, Possum Hollow, Woodward and Manchester Roads, coupled with stormwater management improvements.	Rose Valley	Nether Providence, PennDOT	DCNR, DVRPC
<b>Goal 4</b>	<b>Facilitate recreation opportunities to help the citizens engage in active, healthy living.</b>			
A.	Enter a formal agreement including the four municipalities and the school district, to share spaces such as Henderson Field and the Rutgers Avenue Fields.	All & WSSD	Managers, BOC, BC's,	Enter a formal agreement including the four municipalities and the school district, to share spaces such as Henderson Field and the Rutgers Avenue Fields.
<b>Goal 5</b>	<b>Provide operational excellence and financial sustainability that will garner widespread public support for parks, recreation, open space and trails.</b>			
A.	Establish policies for the naming of parks, acceptance of gifts and creation of memorials.	All	Staff, PRC's, EAC's, MMEAC, Solicitors	
B.	Institute a modernized park maintenance and management program.	All	Staff, PRC's, EAC's	Public Works

<b>YEARS 5 - 10</b>				
<b>Item</b>	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Lead Municipality /Party</b>	<b>Assistance</b>	<b>Potential partners/funding</b>
<b>Goal 1</b>	<b>Protect the remaining open space, natural, cultural and historical resources.</b>			
A.	Manage natural resources and develop a culture of stewardship.	All	Staff, EAC's, MMEAC	Land Trust, Conservation District, Environmental Orgs, Volunteers

<b>Goal 2</b>	<b>Improve and expand the existing parks and recreation facilities to be community destinations where residents can have fun, experience nature, socialize, and lead active healthy lifestyles.</b>			
<b>Goal 3</b>	<b>Connect the four municipalities through a system of trails, sidewalks, and paths.</b>			
A.	Extend the Leiper-Smedley Trail south through Leiper Park, Swarthmore College land to Ridley Township.	Nether Providence	Staff, Consultants, PRC, NPSC	Swarthmore College, PennDOT, DVRPC, DCNR, Ridley Twp.
B.	Realign the Leiper-Smedley Trail to cross under Baltimore Pike.	Nether Providence	Staff, Consultants, PRC, NPSC	PennDOT, DCPR, DCPD, DCNR, DVRPC
C.	Improve trailheads, amenities and parking along the Leiper-Smedley Trail.	Nether Providence	Staff, Consultants, PRC, NPSC	DCPD, DCPR, PennDOT, DCNR, DVRPC
D.	Create a trail connecting the Leiper-Smedley Trail to Rose Valley Borough.	Nether Providence, Rose Valley	Staff, Consultants, PRC's, MMEAC	DCNR, DVRPC, PennDOT, DCPD, DCPR
<b>Goal 4</b>	<b>Facilitate recreation opportunities to help the citizens engage in active, healthy living.</b>			
A.	Continue to plan for improvements and incorporate public input.	All	Staff, Consultants, BOC, BC's, PC, EAC, PRC, MMEAC	DCNR, Residents
<b>Goal 5</b>	<b>Provide operational excellence and financial sustainability that will garner widespread public support for parks, recreation, open space and trails.</b>			
A.	Support parks, recreation, open space and trails through a mix of public and private support, including fees and charges for programs and services, with public funding used for land, facilities and park maintenance.	Staff		



Little Crum Creek Park  
Swarthmore, PA



*main office*

1031 Palmers Mill Road, Media, PA 19063  
610-353-5587 | [info@natlands.org](mailto:info@natlands.org)

**[natlands.org](http://natlands.org)**