

SECTION 6 OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

A. Introduction and Statement of Goals

The role that Open Space and Recreation play in any community is often underestimated and sometimes taken for granted. This is not the case in Radnor Township. For many years, Radnor Township has made open space and recreation a priority. The Township's outstanding park system and its many recreation programs evidence this. In addition, Radnor has long recognized the value in acquiring passive, undeveloped land that has ecological benefits for the Township's ecosystems. However, many challenges remain for the Township in both programming and facilities.

1. Goals and Objectives

In the comprehensive planning process, two goals have been established followed by a set of objectives needed in order to meet these goals.

Goals

Provide for the recreational needs of all Township residents through a balanced mix of active and passive recreational facilities and programs.

Protect and enhance the character of the Township through the acquisition and protection of open space.

Objectives

1. *Continue to improve the high quality of existing Township open space and recreational facilities.*
2. *Continue to acquire, protect, and preserve open space in the Township. Coordinate these efforts with protection and enhancement of natural resources. Assess various methods for acquiring land or interests in land for the purpose of conserving open space.*
3. *Document all open space in the Township, including all conservation easements in favor of the Township, the Radnor Conservancy or another nature conservancy or other public body, and any open space created as a result of the use of density modification in the development of residential tracts.*
4. *Continue to improve management of the use of Township recreational facilities in order to maximize the utilization and enjoyment of these facilities.*
5. *Continue to expand and/or modify Township recreational programming to fill gaps in services from existing recreation services providers.*

6. *Create non-motorized linkages between recreation and open space facilities and Township residences, businesses and schools and between the facilities themselves. Create linkages to regional trail systems.*
7. *Study need for and feasibility of developing an indoor recreational facility in Radnor Township.*
8. *Explore the issuance of a new bond issue to help attain Open Space and Recreation Objectives.*
9. *Continue to expand and improve communications to Township residents about recreational opportunities and programs offered by both the Township and other area recreational service providers.*

2. Open Space and Recreation as Community Infrastructure

A municipality's park and recreation department is often the most visible point of contact for residents. Residents often have questions (and occasionally concerns) about programs, facilities, upcoming events, maintenance and other aspects of the department's operations. Many residents' primary interaction with local government is often centered on the recreational activity of resident children in Township parks and through Township participation in recreational programming. For example, over the past few years, participation in Radnor Township's youth basketball league has grown from 200 children to over 1,300 participants.

Park and open space facilities are similarly many residents' most visible, daily reminder of the role of local government in their lives. Open space and parks are located in every Township ward, and their appearance, use, and perceived importance speak directly to each and every resident as to the efficiency of local government.

Parks and recreational programs are arguably the most utilized service or "product" provided by Radnor Township to its residents.

Radnor Township is fortunate to have a strong partner, the Radnor Township School District, in providing recreational facilities and programs. In addition to student utilization of school district facilities, they also provide recreational opportunities for the general Township population. Programming of school district facilities (both indoor and outdoor facilities) and maintenance of school district fields is done in cooperation between the Township and the school district (maintenance agreement).

However, even with close cooperation and joint maintenance agreements, there is a shortage of facilities for all types of recreational activity. In the case of active sports fields, use is so heavy that it is virtually impossible to allow fields to lie "fallow" to be rehabilitated, increasing the importance (and cost) of high quality maintenance, critical to both athletic field use and user safety.

Radnor Township is the home of many educational institutions, such as Villanova University, Cabrini College, Eastern University, Valley Forge Military Academy and others that contribute to the attractive Township character and contribute to the amount of open space and recreational fields in the Township. These institutions also have extensive recreational facilities –some of which are regularly used by Township residents – and present a resource for the Township through continuing cooperative efforts with these institutions.

Since completion of the last Radnor Township Comprehensive Plan in 1988, the importance of and interest in the natural systems in our communities has grown. Over the last decade in Pennsylvania, conservation activists, planners, government officials and others have converged around the issue of “sprawl,” or uncontrolled suburban growth. This convergence has led to changes to the Pennsylvania Municipalities Code (MPC) to encourage better and more comprehensive planning and cooperation among municipalities. Additional revisions to the MPC are being considered in the areas of water resource planning.

In 2002, there is a greater and growing awareness in the general population about the issues of planning, best management practices for stormwater management, watershed-based planning and the interrelationship between how and where we live and these effects of that life style on our natural and built environment.

Open Space and Recreation have a direct relationship to the Environmental Resources component of the Comprehensive Plan. Stormwater management, urban area “greening” projects, riparian buffer reestablishment, reforestation projects, and environmental education all have direct impact on open space and recreation. Closely coordinating these efforts will have benefits for both, and more importantly, for the Township as a whole.

The visual enjoyment of the Township’s open space and recreational resources is an important yet often overlooked use of these facilities. The visual environment is an important and unique attribute that helps make Radnor “Radnor.” Many elements and proposed actions of the Environmental Resources component of the Comprehensive Plan have tremendous potential for further enhancing the charm and character of the Township.

The basic elements that comprise a community’s open space and recreation system constitute essential community infrastructure, nearly as important as roads, utilities, schools and the other components of a community. Some would contend that a community’s open space and recreation system is more important than the other mentioned elements. Through its well-maintained and well-used park system and extensive recreation programming, Radnor Township has exhibited that Open Space and Recreation is a community priority. The challenge that lies ahead will be to continue this commitment and to maintain and improve this important community infrastructure.

B. Existing Open Space Resources

1. Public Lands / Recreational Resources

Radnor Township owns and maintains 23 parks. These parks have a total acreage of 346.8 acres. Eleven of the parks provide active recreation with facilities that include athletic fields, tennis, basketball and volleyball courts, and playgrounds. An itemized listing of current Township facilities is shown on Table 6-1.

The Radnor Township School District owns six properties (five schools and one passive open space) that cover 184.4 acres (this acreage includes all school facilities, not only athletic fields). The school properties include athletic field and indoor gymnasium facilities that are important community assets used by the general Township population. A listing of school district facilities is also contained in Table 6-1. The combined acreage of Township and School District lands is 530.4 acres or approximately 6.6% of the Township.

Table 6-1. Radnor Township Recreational Resources

Parks	Acres	School District Facilities	
Chew Tract	10.00	Radnor High School	80.00
Clem Macrone Park	9.00	Radnor Middle School	10.30
Cowan Park	3.00	Ithan Elementary School	50.00
D'Antonio Parcel	2.30	Radnor Elementary School	11.80
Encke Park / Municipal Building	33.00	Wayne Elementary School	19.80
Fenimore Woods	11.00	Martha Brown's Woods	12.50
Fifth Ward Park	10.00	Emlen Tunnell *	5.00
Garrett Avenue	0.63	North Wayne Park *	4.60
Harford Park	31.00	Total	194.00
Ithan Valley Park	19.00	Township Total	538.68
James C. Dittmar Park	13.00	<i>* Leased to Township</i>	
John L. Cappelli Driving Range	3.70		
Leaming Parcel	TBD		
Levin Tract	6.50		
Odorisio Park	25.00		
Petrie Park	0.11		
Radnor Memorial Park	4.90		
Radnor Nature Park	3.00		
Saw Mill Park	4.30		
Skunk Hollow Park	93.00		
South Devon Park	9.00		
St. Davids Community Park	1.60		
Unkefer Park	0.25		
Warren Filipone Park	9.00		
The Willows	47.00		
Young Tract	5.39		
Total	344.68		

2. Standards for Community Park Land

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) is an organization that has developed community standards for the minimum amount of parkland that will meet community recreational needs. These standards are used nationally as a guide for communities in planning for open space acquisition and preservation.

NRPA standards recommend a community possess between 7.5 and 12.6 acres of parkland for every 1,000 residents. Radnor, with a year 2000 population of approximately 31,000, therefore, needs between 232.5 and 390.6 acres of parkland. The Township's 396.8 acres of parkland exceeds the upper limit of the recommended open space acreage.

School district lands should also be considered in this compilation. When actual school district athletic field and open space lands (approximately 45 acres out of the total of 184 acres) are added to Township-owned parks, total acreage for open space grows to a total of 442 acres, adding to the total parkland acreage, in excess of NRPA standards.

The NRPA also recommends a division of parkland in any community between neighborhood and community park facilities. NRPA recommends that approximately 75% of a community's parkland should be contained in "neighborhood" parks and 25% of a municipality's parkland be contained in "community" parks.

A neighborhood park is generally defined to be 5 to 20 acres and meant to serve an area within a one-quarter mile walk or less from the park. Radnor Township has 13 neighborhood parks that total 148.8 acres (37.5% of its parkland total).

A community park is generally 20 acres or larger and serves an area approximately one-half mile walk or 15 minute motor vehicle drive from the park. Radnor Township has six parks that are conform to the size definition of a community park. These six parks total 248 acres or approximately 62.5% of the Township's parklands.

While the division of community parks vs. neighborhood parks is roughly opposite NRPA recommendations, school district facilities should also be considered in this analysis. Of the approximately 45 acres of actual school district open space, 28 of these acres are small sites, fitting within the neighborhood park category. This increases the percentage of Township "neighborhood" parklands to approximately 45%.

The 1991 Radnor Township Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan identified this apparent deficit in neighborhood sized park facilities. Recent Township purchases, such as the Levin Tract, Dittmar Park, St. Davids Park and Petrie Park have responded to easing this apparent shortfall in neighborhood park acreage. This trend should continue.

Of greater importance is actual travel distance and time to and from community recreation sites and homes and businesses. While any park site within the Township is accessible via a fifteen-minute automobile trip, non-motorized access to and from park sites is more difficult and remains a major open space and transportation challenge in the Township.

3. Trails and Open Space Linkages

Construction of the first phase of the P&W Multi Use Trail in the Township is scheduled to begin in Fall 2003. The trail, which will be built with federal and state funds and maintained by the Township, will extend from Old Sugartown Road to Radnor-Chester Road. This PennDOT owned and publicly accessible off-road trail will be 2.2 miles in length and will connect directly to two existing Township-owned parks (Levin Tract and Encke Park). The trail will have a significant impact on the very notion of parks and open space use in Radnor Township.

The P&W Multi Use Trail will not only be a transportation route, it will be a recreational facility in itself. It will also have the potential to begin to reduce the number of short vehicle trips in the Township. This reduction may occur in terms of residents using the trail to access the above mentioned park sites, and/or it may eliminate the need for nearby residents to get into their automobiles to drive to a park facility to walk or jog.

The 1991 Radnor Township Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan recommended that an extensive network of Pedestrian – Bicycle Trails and routes be established in the Township. Over the last decade, only one of these proposed pedestrian–bicycle routes – the P&W Multi Use Trail – has moved ahead.

Certainly, there are obstacles – physical, educational and financial – to the establishment of pedestrian and bicycle routes in Radnor Township. However, as Radnor Township develops the last of its old farmlands and underdeveloped lands, non-motorized connections to and linkages between existing park and open space lands become the last and most important open space and recreation challenge and opportunity in the Township. These linkages, as proposed in the 1991 plan, and others that may present themselves in the future, have direct relevance and applicability to Township efforts in Environmental Resource Protection and Transportation Management and Planning.

4. Privately (Temporarily) Protected Lands

Privately Protected Lands can be defined as lands that are currently in open space or conservation use and will continue to be used in this manner for the foreseeable future. However, these lands for the most part do not have permanent open space easements nor is there a definite commitment to keep these lands in open space, conservation or recreational use. These lands, taken as a whole, comprise a significant portion of Township lands (1051 acres or 12.6 % of the Township). Many of these lands are in high visibility locations and positively contribute to the special visual character of Radnor Township. Many of these lands, most notably the educational institutions and golf courses, also make significant contributions to recreational opportunities in the Township.

These lands include the following sites:

- Villanova University
- Cabrini College
- Valley Forge Military Academy and College
- Eastern University

- Archbishop Carroll High School
- Notre Dame Academy
- Radnor Valley Country Club
- Overbrook Golf Club
- Chanticleer Gardens
- St. Edmunds Home
- Presbyterian Children’s Village
- American College

5. Existing Recreation Programs

The Township provides many recreation programs. Most of these programs are self-supporting; with a portion of overall cost being subsidized by Township tax dollars. Radnor Township School District makes many of its facilities available for these programs as per the Township/Radnor School District Maintenance Agreement.

The Radnor Township Department of Parks and Recreation served more than 20,000 people in 2002 - 6,500 residents in 2002 Summer programs alone; over 4,000 people participated in other programs; and 1,100 people attended the 2002 summer concert series at The Willows and at other Township parks.

In addition, an estimated 16,000 people use Township picnic facilities each year, 1200 children participated in the biddy basketball program, 950 children played in softball and baseball leagues, and 1,200 boys and girls played organized soccer.

Summer Recreational Programs

The Summer recreation programs service over about 6,500 Township residents each year. These programs include:

- Radnor Day Camp (also serving children with special needs), Radnor Tot Lot, and playground programs
- Tennis program
- Creative theater
- Nature program/Environment camp
- Summer basketball
- Mini Hawk and Multisport Camp
- Lacrosse, baseball, softball, field hockey, roller hockey and golf clinics
- Cheerleading, Baton Twirling and Dance classes
- Fishing Derby
- Cultural Music series at the Willows and other parks
- Coed- strength and conditioning camp
- The Roving Nature Center program
- Summer pool program (operated by Radnor School District)
- Judo and adult self-defense classes
- Soccer camp
- Lacrosse camp

- Volleyball program
- Piano Lessons

Other Programs

Other programs either sponsored by the department or those in which the Township participates include:

- Men's and women's pick-up basketball
- Wrestling, judo, and biddy basketball (for 1,300 boys and girls) programs
- Orienteering clinics
- Stretch and grow
- Golf clinic
- Memorial Day and 4th of July parades
- Lacrosse program for girls and boys
- Wayne Senior Center Holiday Parties/Luncheon
- Holiday at the Willows (for over 400 children and adults)
- Ski program (with 7 ski trips to the Poconos, serving 450 children)
- Roller skating program
- Annual 5-mile run (which attracted over 700 runners and raised \$20,000 for the American Lung Association)
- Annual Arbor Day (which attracted over 200 children and adults)
- Earth Day clean-up and celebration
- National Trail Days Program
- Bus trip to the Philadelphia Flower Show
- Volleyball program
- Soccer (for 1,200 boys and girls)
- Softball and baseball leagues (for over 850 children)
- Bird watching
- Environmental Park Clean-Up Days
- Excursions to 76ers games in Philadelphia, Hockey games in Washington D.C. and New York City, On-Your-Own trips to Washington D.C., Baltimore and Annapolis, Md., Radio City Music Hall, U.S. Open Tennis Tournament, Orioles and Phillies Baseball Games
- Park clean-ups
- Science workshops
- Arts and crafts workshops
- Dance programs

6. Radnor Township Parks and Recreation Survey

In 2001, the Township Parks and Recreation Department conducted a mail survey on recreational services and facilities provided by the Township. Seven hundred surveys were mailed randomly to Township residences – 100 in each of the Township's seven wards. One hundred and sixty-two completed surveys were returned for a response rate of 23%.

Several results from the survey are noteworthy and relevant to the Open Space and Recreation component of the Comprehensive Plan.¹

- 79% of respondents reported that they had utilized Township Park and Recreation Department services.
- 28% of respondents use the Township walking and exercise paths.
- When asked what emphasis should be placed on the following actions, respondents responded as follows:
 - 38%: Acquiring new land for undeveloped conservation and green space areas
 - 14%: Acquiring new land for passive park activities
 - 14%: Constructing a multi-purpose indoor recreation center
 - 10.5%: Developing new facilities on existing park land
 - 9.8%: Maintaining existing facilities with no growth
 - 7.4%: Improvement and replacing the existing facilities with Township parks
 - 5.5%: Acquiring new land for active park development
- 86% of respondents responded “yes” to the question, “Would you support the Township to develop bicycle / walking trails in the community.”

C. Recreation and Open Space Focus Group²

As a part of the Comprehensive Plan Planning Process, a Focus Group on Recreation and Open Space was convened to identify the major issues and challenges. The major issues and challenges identified were as follows:

- Development of a Township-wide trail/greenway system to provide non-motorized linkages between parks, schools and other Township destinations. Include consideration of more sidewalks.
- Development of an indoor Township recreation facility.
- Additional sports fields also seem to be needed. Regardless, if additional fields can be acquired or developed, maximize the use of existing Township recreational facilities. For example, consider adding lights at athletic fields to increase the hours of potential use so long as such lighting is not unreasonably disturbing to the adjacent property owners; or consider scheduling play field use in “off-peak” times.
- Consider another open space bond issue to supplement the Park Improvements and Open Space Fund.
- Develop a better inventory of remaining Township vacant/underutilized parcels.
- Combine open space conservation with natural resource protection.

¹ See Appendix C for complete survey results, available in hard copy at the Radnor Township Building.

² See Appendix C (available at the Township Building) for Recreation and Open Space Focus Group participants.

In general, there was the sense in the group that needs for both active and passive recreation as well as for untouched open spaces were critical and of the highest priority. Unfortunately, there is also recognition that there are few undeveloped parcels of any size remaining in the Township.

D. Recommended Actions

Goals

Provide for the recreational needs of all Township residents through a balanced mix of active and passive recreational facilities and programs.

Protect and enhance the character of the Township through the acquisition and protection of open space.

Objectives

1. *Continue to improve the high quality maintenance of existing Township open space and recreational facilities.*
2. *Continue to acquire, protect, and preserve open space in the Township. Coordinate these efforts with protection and enhancement of natural resources. Assess various methods for acquiring land or interests in land for the purpose of conserving open space.*
3. *Document all open space in the Township, including all conservation easements in favor of the Township, the Radnor Conservancy or another nature conservancy or other public body, and any open space created as a result of the use of density modification in the development of residential tracts.*
4. *Continue to improve management of Township recreational facilities in order to maximize the utilization and enjoyment of these facilities.*
5. *Continue to expand and/or modify Township recreational programming to fill gaps in services from existing recreation services providers.*
6. *Create non-motorized linkages between recreation and open space facilities and Township residences, businesses and schools and between the facilities themselves. Create linkages to regional trail systems.*
7. *Study need for and feasibility of developing an indoor recreational facility in Radnor Township.*
8. *Explore the issuance of a new bond issue to help attain Open Space and Recreation Objectives.*
9. *Continue to expand and improve communications to Township residents about recreational opportunities and programs offered by both the Township and other area recreational service providers.*

Recommended Actions

- 1. Promote the acquisition of open space; inventory and identify key vacant and underutilized parcels (or portions of parcels) for acquisition as Township open space.**
 - **Develop strategies for acquisition and/or protection of these parcels. Consider outright transfer or restricted transfer. Proactively initiate informal discussions with property owners of key parcels concerning protection of these important lands. Explore funding options for the acquisition of open space, including grants and government funding opportunities.**
 - **Evaluate without delay the feasibility and desirability of establishing a second municipal bond fund, patterned after Radnor’s successful initial bond fund, intended to support additional open space acquisition by the Township.**
 - **Continue to earmark an allocated portion of the Township transfer tax for the purchase or open space and other park improvements.**
 - **Develop strategies such as conservation easements for permanent protection of open space lands now only temporarily protected. Proactively seek out these arrangements. Consider the formation of a conservation conservancy.**
 - **Develop a plan to inventory all open space in Radnor Township in order to identify potential future purchases of land for conservation purposes.**
 - **Develop an information packet for landowners regarding conservational alternatives and benefits. Develop and implement a campaign to educate residents about conservational alternatives and the need for land conservation. Work with the Radnor Conservancy and other land conservancies to pursue landowners potentially interested in conservation alternatives.**

- 2. Develop plans and recommendations for a pedestrian and bicycle trail network which will provide linkages between parks, neighborhoods, and public facilities as well as create a recreational resource for all users.**
 - **Using the 1991 Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan as a starting point, create a master plan for implementing a combination on-road and off-road non-motorized trail and greenway system for pedestrians and bicyclists. Create a funding strategy that will promote construction of this transportation system.**

- **Plan for and fund the construction of new sidewalks in neighborhoods lacking these important infrastructure elements.**
- **Seek to acquire easements across privately-held lands in order to connect public open spaces.**
- **Embark on a comprehensive educational campaign regarding the community benefits of such a trail/greenway system to overcome misconceptions and fears regarding trails and greenways. Sponsor recreational events and trips to existing trail/greenways in the region.**
- **Dovetail greenway/trail development efforts with stormwater management and riparian buffer reestablishment in the Township.**
- **Collaborate with adjacent municipalities to coordinate and cooperate on trail and greenway efforts.**
- **Create a Township-wide trail marking or “wayfinding” system for trail and pedestrian transportation facilities.**
- **Create ADA-accessible paths in existing parks as linkages to trail system.**
- **Consider extending the Radnor Multi-Purpose Trail from its terminus at Radnor-Chester Road to Martha Brown’s Woods.**

3. Determine the need for and feasibility of a Township indoor recreation facility.

- **Conduct a market feasibility study for such a facility. Examine existing gaps in the recreation provider market. Examine other similar area facilities. Establish a program for this facility and determine projected use and costs if the decision is made to construct an indoor recreational facility.**
- **If possible, locate the Township indoor recreation facility in a location served by mass transit and/or near the Radnor Multi-Purpose Trail.**
- **Consider combining the indoor recreation facility with parking, retail or other types of development. Consider the local economic affect of visitation to and from this facility.**
- **Consider inclusion of facilities specifically designed to serve both teens and seniors.**

- 4. Create greenway linkages and new open space opportunities throughout the Township in conjunction with improved stormwater management measures and the reestablishment of former riparian buffers and forested areas.**
 - **Some greenway linkages should provide for trail access. Others that do not should function as wildlife corridors and visual amenities as well as meeting functional stormwater best management functions.**
 - **Provide Township technical and funding assistance to property owners who establish and maintain these greenway linkages in exchange for permanent conservation easements on these areas.**
 - **Promote reforestation of turf covered corporate, private, or other sites as the establishment of “water gardens” – areas that capture and return precious groundwater to local water tables. Assist private property owners to fund these efforts in return for public passive open space access or easements on the reforested areas.**

- 5. Update the 1991 Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan in order to meet identified open space and recreation needs.**
 - **Consider a Joint Municipal Open Space and Recreation Plan with one or more of the seven adjacent municipalities. The goals of this collaborative effort will be to identify opportunities for sharing facilities, services, or programs that may result in cost savings and/or more efficient facility utilization.**
 - **Examine Radnor Township and School District active sports fields to determine if there are opportunities for facility improvements that will result in greater and more efficient facility utilization.**
 - **Continue a comprehensive 5-year maintenance plan for all Township parks. Examine methods for improved maintenance, cost savings, and increased efficiency in the maintenance of all parks.**

- 6. Improve communications about Township and School District recreation and open space facilities and programs to Township residents and the general public.**
 - **Update the Township website on a more frequent basis. Seek to establish additional links to the Township web pages from related sites.**

- 7. Support the Radnor Township Conservancy, generally and specifically, in all ways, which are feasible for the Township.**

- **Plan and establish a specific public relations and educational campaign to inform the general public about the benefits of greenway and trails networks. Plan this program over a two to three year period.**
- **Develop a public relations campaign on Township success stories in recreation and open space and environmental resources planning.**
- **Initiate regular, scheduled meetings and information sharing with adjacent municipalities regarding open space and recreation. Sharing resources, ideas, and concerns may lead to new solutions or efficiencies.**
- **Consider retaining outside professional assistance to seek funding at the state and federal levels for Township environmental resources and recreation improvements and programs.**