

VI. PARKS AND RECREATION

The planning for both passive and active recreation opportunities is an important component of any comprehensive planning effort. Recreation planning seeks to determine the level of demand for recreation facilities and programs, and where needed parks and recreation facilities should be located. Finally, certain widely-used procedures for the acquisition of parklands via dedication/fee-in-lieu thereof subdivision requirements are only legally defensible if they seek to implement legitimate and logical recreation goals and objectives. For these various reasons, the following recreation analysis is offered.

A. PARKS AND RECREATION ADMINISTRATION

Presently each of the individual participants (municipalities and school districts) acquire, develop and program their parks independent from one another. One of the most important goals of this Plan is to:

“Seek to provide public facilities and services on a regional basis to avoid duplication.”

There has never been a better time to undertake park and recreation planning on a regional basis. Various State-funded programs can help the Region design and operate a regional recreation agency fine-tuned to meet its specific needs. ***The Region should appoint a Regional Recreation Board (RRB) made up of at least one representative from each municipality and school district (plus alternates) who have an understanding of the Region’s recreation needs and resources. This RRB should then prepare and submit an application to the Pennsylvania Department of Natural Resources for a “Peer-to-Peer” project.*** In this study, an expert will visit with local park and recreation providers to gain a thorough understanding of their operations and activities. A maximum grant amount of \$7,500 is available for Peer-to-Peer projects. The community must provide at least a 10% local cash match. The total project cost cannot exceed \$8,250. At the end of the peer project, a recommendation will be tailored to best manage the Region’s recreation needs and resources. Often, another “circuit-rider grant” is suggested to help cover the costs of initializing a Regional paid park and recreation staff. This circuit-rider grant funds 100% of such expenses the first year, 75% the second, 50% the third, and 25% the fourth years. Additional information on this program can be found online at: <http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/recreation/grants/manual/forms/PEERgeninfoscope.doc>.

B. FACILITIES INVENTORY

The first step in a recreation analysis is an inventory of existing recreation facilities serving the Region's residents. The inventory on the following pages is a series of tables, which lists all identified recreation sites and their improvements within the Southern Berks County Region. This inventory indicates the site name, the site's ownership and maintenance responsibilities, the site type, and its total recreation acreage. Following this is a specific list of recreation improvements at each site. This list is broken out under several major subheadings, including playgrounds, fields and courts, picnic facilities, pools, trails, and support facilities. A final section at the bottom of the table allows for comments concerning a particular site, or the listing of any additional improvements. The Parks Map (Figure 10) utilizes the information from the inventory to illustrate the geographic distribution of all recreation sites within the Southern Berks County Region, including their types, and service radii for public-owned facilities.

FACILITIES INVENTORY

BACKGROUND	SITE NAME	French Creek State Park	Hopewell Village	State Game Lands No. 43
	OWNERSHIP AND MAINTENANCE	PA DCNR	Federal Government	State Government
	SITE TYPE	Regional	Regional	Regional
	SITE CONDITION	Excellent	Excellent	Undeveloped
	TOTAL ACREAGE (DEVELOPED)	7,474 ac.	178.3 ac.	97.3 ac.
PLAYGROUNDS	Swing Sets			
	Sliding Boards			
	Climbing Equipment			
	Merry Go-Rounds			
	Seesaws			
	Sand Boxes			
	Rocking Toys			
	Big Toys			
	Hopscotch			
	Four-Square			
FIELDS AND COURTS	Baseball/Softball Fields			
	Soccer/Hockey Fields			
	Football Fields			
	Basketball Courts (hoops)			
	Tennis Courts			
	Volleyball Courts			
	Bleachers			
	Track			
	Media Booth			
PICNIC	Pavilions			
	Total Picnic Tables (in pavilion)			
	Barbecue Pits and Grills			
	Benches			
TRAILS	Walking/Exercise Trails (length)	40 mi.		
	Biking Trails (length)			
	Fitness Trails (no. of stations)			
	Measured Path			
SUPPORT	Parking Spaces			
	Rest Rooms			
	Water Fountains			
	Snack Bar			
	Waste Receptacles			
	Bike Rack			
	Signs			
Other/Comments	* 201 camp sites * Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site * fishing, boating, swimming	* National Historic Site	* hunting/natural area	

FACILITIES INVENTORY

BACKGROUND	SITE NAME	Allegheny Aqueduct	Twin Valley School Campus	Daniel Boone School Campus
	OWNERSHIP AND MAINTENANCE	Berks County	Twin Valley School District	Daniel Boone School District
	SITE TYPE	Regional	Community	Community
	SITE CONDITION		Excellent	Excellent
	TOTAL ACREAGE (DEVELOPED)	42.1 ac.	75 ac.*	50 ac.*
PLAYGROUNDS	Swing Sets		16	
	Sliding Boards		5	
	Climbing Equipment		3	
	Merry Go-Rounds			
	Seesaws		4	
	Sand Boxes			
	Rocking Toys		4	
	Big Toys		3	
	Hopscotch		5	
	Four-Square		7	
FIELDS AND COURTS	Baseball/Softball Fields		7	3
	Soccer/Hockey Fields		5	2
	Football Fields		2	1
	Basketball Courts (hoops)		7	
	Tennis Courts		4 lighted	
	Volleyball Courts			
	Bleachers		✓	✓
	Track		✓	✓
	Media Booth		✓	✓
PICNIC	Pavilions			
	Total Picnic Tables (in pavilion)		3	
	Barbecue Pits and Grills			
	Benches		14	
TRAILS	Walking/Exercise Trails (length)		1	
	Biking Trails (length)			
	Fitness Trails (no. of stations)			
	Measured Path			
SUPPORT	Parking Spaces		613	
	Rest Rooms		2	
	Water Fountains			
	Snack Bar		1	
	Waste Receptacles		10	
	Bike Rack			
	Signs		4	
Other/Comments			* See Indoor Facilities.	* See Indoor Facilities.

*These figures derived from planimetric measurement of aerial photographs.

FACILITIES INVENTORY

BACKGROUND	SITE NAME	Union Township Recreation Area	Robeson Township Comm. Park	Rustic Picnic Area
	OWNERSHIP AND MAINTENANCE	Union Township	Robeson Township	Birdsboro Borough
	SITE TYPE	Community	Neighborhood	Community
	SITE CONDITION	Excellent and Undeveloped	Undeveloped	Good
	TOTAL ACREAGE (DEVELOPED)	162.6 ac.	8.3 ac.*	4.8 ac.
PLAYGROUNDS	Swing Sets			16
	Sliding Boards			3
	Climbing Equipment			5
	Merry Go-Rounds			
	Seesaws			
	Sand Boxes			
	Rocking Toys			
	Big Toys	1		3
	Hopscotch			
	Four-Square			
FIELDS AND COURTS	Baseball/Softball Fields	3		
	Soccer/Hockey Fields			
	Football Fields			
	Basketball Courts (hoops)			1
	Tennis Courts			
	Volleyball Courts			2
	Bleachers	✓		
	Track			
	Media Booth	✓		
	Scoreboard	✓		
PICNIC	Pavilions			4
	Total Picnic Tables (in pavilion)			50 (40)
	Barbecue Pits and Grills			4 and 2 fireplaces
	Benches			
TRAILS	Walking/Exercise Trails (length)			✓
	Biking Trails (length)			
	Fitness Trails (no. of stations)			
	Measured Path			
SUPPORT	Parking Spaces			
	Rest Rooms	2		4
	Water Fountains			4
	Snack Bar	1		
	Waste Receptacles			8
	Bike Rack			
Signs				
Other/Comments	* batting cage * dugouts * storage shed			* wooden train

*These figures derived from planimetric measurement of aerial photographs.

FACILITIES INVENTORY

BACKGROUND	SITE NAME	Birdsboro Elementary School	Birdsboro Park	Caernarvon Township Park
	OWNERSHIP AND MAINTENANCE	Daniel Boone School District	Birdsboro Borough	Caernarvon Township
	SITE TYPE	Neighborhood	Neighborhood	Neighborhood
	SITE CONDITION	Excellent	Excellent	Good
	TOTAL ACREAGE (DEVELOPED)	4.6 ac.*	0.14 ac.	5.4 ac.
PLAYGROUNDS	Swing Sets		6	
	Sliding Boards			
	Climbing Equipment	10	1	
	Merry Go-Rounds		1	
	Seesaws			
	Sand Boxes			
	Rocking Toys			
	Big Toys		1	
	Hopscotch	5		
	Four-Square			
FIELDS AND COURTS	Baseball/Softball Fields	32		1 lighted
	Soccer/Hockey Fields			
	Football Fields			
	Basketball Courts (hoops)	1 lighted		
	Tennis Courts			
	Volleyball Courts			
	Bleachers			✓
	Track			
	Media Booth			✓
	Scoreboard			✓
PICNIC	Pavilions		1	
	Total Picnic Tables (in pavilion)			
	Barbecue Pits and Grills			
	Benches	10	2	
TRAILS	Walking/Exercise Trails (length)			
	Biking Trails (length)			
	Fitness Trails (no. of stations)			
	Measured Path			
SUPPORT	Parking Spaces			unimproved
	Rest Rooms			2 + 2 portable
	Water Fountains			
	Snack Bar			✓
	Waste Receptacles			
	Bike Rack			
	Signs		1	
Other/Comments	* See Indoor Facilities.	* creekside	* lighted fairgrounds * dugouts * storage shed	

*These figures derived from planimetric measurement of aerial photographs.

FACILITIES INVENTORY

BACKGROUND	SITE NAME	Geigertown Fire Company	Gibraltar Athletic Field	Kulptown Fire Company
	OWNERSHIP AND MAINTENANCE	Fire Company	Robeson Township	Fire Company
	SITE TYPE	Neighborhood	Neighborhood	Neighborhood
	SITE CONDITION	Good	Good	Good
	TOTAL ACREAGE (DEVELOPED)	2.9 ac.	9.1 ac.	2.6 ac.
PLAYGROUNDS	Swing Sets		4	
	Sliding Boards		5	
	Climbing Equipment		3	
	Merry Go-Rounds			
	Seesaws		1	
	Dodge Ball			
	Rocking Toys			
	Big Toys		1	
	Kickball		2	
	Four-Square			
FIELDS AND COURTS	Baseball/Softball Fields	1	1	
	Soccer/Hockey Fields		1	
	Football Fields			
	Basketball Courts (hoops)		1 lighted	
	Tennis Courts			
	Volleyball Courts			
	Bleachers	✓	✓	
	Track			
	Media Booth			
	Scoreboard			
PICNIC	Pavilions			1
	Total Picnic Tables (in pavilion)			(20)
	Barbecue Pits and Grills			1
	Benches			
TRAILS	Walking/Exercise Trails (length)			
	Biking Trails (length)			
	Fitness Trails (no. of stations)			
	Measured Path			
SUPPORT	Parking Spaces		10+	@ Fire Hall
	Rest Rooms		2	
	Water Fountains			
	Snack Bar		✓	
	Waste Receptacles	2	2	6
	Bike Rack		1	
	Signs		1	
Other/Comments	* dugouts * storage shed	* dugouts * storage shed		

FACILITIES INVENTORY

BACKGROUND	SITE NAME	Lincoln Playground	Maple Grove Park	Morgantown Athletic Assn.
	OWNERSHIP AND MAINTENANCE	Birdsboro Borough	Union Township	Athletic Association
	SITE TYPE	Neighborhood	Neighborhood	Neighborhood
	SITE CONDITION	Poor	Natural	Excellent
	TOTAL ACREAGE (DEVELOPED)	0.4 ac.	1.4 ac.	2.6 ac.
PLAYGROUNDS	Swing Sets	7		
	Sliding Boards			
	Climbing Equipment	1		
	Merry Go-Rounds			
	Seesaws	1		
	Sand Boxes			
	Rocking Toys	1		
	Big Toys			
	Hopscotch			
Four-Square				
FIELDS AND COURTS	Baseball/Softball Fields			1
	Soccer/Hockey Fields			
	Football Fields			practice with 1 goal post
	Basketball Courts (hoops)			
	Tennis Courts			
	Volleyball Courts			
	Bleachers			✓
	Track			
	Media Booth			
	Scoreboard			
PICNIC	Pavilions			
	Total Picnic Tables (in pavilion)			
	Barbecue Pits and Grills			
	Benches	1		
TRAILS	Walking/Exercise Trails (length)			
	Biking Trails (length)			
	Fitness Trails (no. of stations)			
	Measured Path			
SUPPORT	Parking Spaces			
	Rest Rooms			
	Water Fountains			
	Snack Bar			
	Waste Receptacles			
	Bike Rack			
Signs				
Other/Comments			* wetlands basin	* dugouts * batting cage * storage sheds

FACILITIES INVENTORY

BACKGROUND	SITE NAME	Optimist Field	Robeson Elementary School	Tennis and Basketball Courts
	OWNERSHIP AND MAINTENANCE	Birdsboro Borough	Twin Valley School District	Caernarvon Township
	SITE TYPE	Neighborhood	Neighborhood	Neighborhood
	SITE CONDITION	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent
	TOTAL ACREAGE (DEVELOPED)	3.2 ac.	10 ac.*	0.3 ac.
PLAYGROUNDS	Swing Sets		13	
	Sliding Boards		5	
	Climbing Equipment		5	
	Merry Go-Rounds			
	Seesaws			
	Dodge Ball		3	
	Rocking Toys			
	Big Toys		1	
	Hopscotch		1	
	Four-Square		2	
FIELDS AND COURTS	Baseball/Softball Fields	1	1	
	Soccer/Hockey Fields		1	
	Football Fields			
	Basketball Courts (hoops)		(3)	2 lighted
	Tennis Courts			2 lighted
	Volleyball Courts			
	Bleachers	✓	✓	
	Track			
	Media Booth	✓		
	Scoreboard	✓		
PICNIC	Pavilions			
	Total Picnic Tables (in pavilion)			
	Barbecue Pits and Grills			
	Benches			1
TRAILS	Walking/Exercise Trails (length)			
	Biking Trails (length)			
	Fitness Trails (no. of stations)			
	Measured Path			
SUPPORT	Parking Spaces			24
	Rest Rooms			
	Water Fountains			
	Snack Bar	✓		
	Waste Receptacles			4
	Bike Rack			
	Signs			1
Other/Comments	* batting cage * dugouts * storage sheds * open play area	* team benches * See Indoor Facilities.	* occupy same space	

*These figures derived from planimetric measurement of aerial photographs.

FACILITIES INVENTORY

BACKGROUND	SITE NAME	Texas Baseball Field	Vest Pocket Park	Lenape Park
	OWNERSHIP AND MAINTENANCE	Birdsboro Borough	Birdsboro Borough	Caernarvon Twp.
	SITE TYPE	Neighborhood	Neighborhood	Neighborhood
	SITE CONDITION	Excellent	Good	Under construction
	TOTAL ACREAGE (DEVELOPED)	5.0	1.1	
PLAYGROUNDS	Swing Sets		9	planned
	Sliding Boards		1	planned
	Climbing Equipment		4	planned
	Merry Go-Rounds			
	Seesaws		5	planned
	Sand Boxes			
	Rocking Toys		2	planned
	Big Toys			planned
	Hopscotch			
	Four-Square			
FIELDS AND COURTS	Baseball/Softball Fields	1 lighted		
	Soccer/Hockey Fields			2
	Football Fields			
	Basketball Courts (hoops)			
	Tennis Courts		2 lighted	
	Volleyball Courts			
	Bleachers	✓		
	Track			
	Media Booth	✓		
	Scoreboard			
PICNIC	Pavilions			
	Total Picnic Tables (in pavilion)		1	
	Barbecue Pits and Grills			
	Benches		6	
TRAILS	Walking/Exercise Trails (length)			1 mile
	Biking Trails (length)			
	Fitness Trails (no. of stations)			5
	Measured Path			
SUPPORT	Parking Spaces			20+
	Rest Rooms			
	Water Fountains			
	Snack Bar			
	Waste Receptacles			
	Bike Rack			
	Signs			
Other/Comments	* batting cage * dugouts * storage shed	* ½ tennis wall		

INDOOR FACILITIES INVENTORY

SITE NAME	Twin Valley Elementary School	Robeson Elementary School	Honey Brook Elementary School
SITE TYPE	School	School	School
Gymnasium		✓	✓
Full Basketball Court		✓	✓
Swimming Pool			
Diving Pool			
Locker Rooms			
Weight Room			
Wrestling Room			
Multipurpose Room	✓		
Auditorium (no. of seats)	✓		✓
Music Room		✓	
Gymnastics Room (equipment)			
Library	✓	✓	✓
Meeting Room	✓		✓
Indoor Track			
Dark Room			
Planetarium			
Computer Lab	✓	✓	✓
Industrial Arts		✓	
Large Group Instruction		110 seats	110 seats
Other/Comments			

INDOOR FACILITIES INVENTORY

SITE NAME	Birdsboro Elementary School	Middle School	High School
SITE TYPE	School	School	School
Gymnasium		2	2
Full Basketball Court	✓	✓	2
Swimming Pool			
Diving Pool			
Locker Rooms	✓	2	2
Weight Room			✓
Wrestling Room			
Multipurpose Room	✓	✓	
Auditorium (no. of seats)			✓ (1,070)
Music Room	✓	1	2
Gymnastics Room (equipment)			
Library	✓	✓	✓
Meeting Room	✓		
Indoor Track			
Dark Room			2
Planetarium			
Computer Lab	✓	2	2
Industrial Arts		1	4
Large Group Instruction		✓ (110 seats)	✓ (110 seats)
Other/Comments			



Birdsboro Elementary School



Birdsboro Park



Birdsboro Vest Pocket Park



Daniel Boone Fields



Geigertown Fire Co. Baseball Field



Gibraltar Field



Kulptown Fire Co. Picnic Grove



Lincoln Playground



Maple Grove Park



Morgantown Athletic Association



Morgantown Park



Morgantown Tennis



Optimist Field



Robeson Elementary School



Robeson Township Park



Rustic Picnic Area



Texas Ballfield



Thun Trail



Twin Valley Fields



Union Township Park

C. SPATIAL PARK ANALYSIS

With a complete inventory of parks, it becomes possible to analyze the level of park service available within the Region. Within this analysis, every publicly-owned park and/or recreation facility (township, borough, and school district) is identified. Then, its size and service area is evaluated in relation to its intended service population. Conversely, this analysis also identifies those areas of the Region that lack close, convenient, and safe access to public parkland. Typically, these evaluations are based upon prescribed standards for park size per 1,000 persons being served and also for pre-determined service radii. The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) generally assigns such standards for various park types. It is these standards that will be applied to evaluate the allocation and spatial distribution of Region's park system.

First, **regional parks** generally contain 200± acres and are typically located within a one-hour driving time from the population being served. These parks are generally located throughout a large metropolitan region, and can accommodate a wide variety of recreational activities. Often, these parks are owned and operated by the State and Federal government, and in the case of Pennsylvania, many State Game Lands are included in this category. Regional parks usually have a natural orientation with hiking, camping, and picnicking facilities. Other “activity-oriented” facilities, as well as significant historic or archaeological resources, might also be included.

Within Berks County, several public organizations and private enterprises are involved with the provision of regional recreation facilities. Within the Region, three regional parks are located within Union Township. The table on the following page lists regional parks within Berks County, their ownership, acreage, and activities offered. **Facilities located within the Southern Berks Region are highlighted.**

Because the size and cost usually associated with regional parks transcend the responsibilities of local government, this Plan does not recommend any specific actions associated with the acquisition and development of more regional parks. Instead, this Plan will focus upon the remaining park types within the Region beginning with community parks. However, the Berks County Open Space and Recreation Plan (January 1994) designates a number of regional facilities as priorities within the County-wide system of parks. More discussion of these facilities will follow in the linear parks section of this Chapter.

Facility	Acres	Activities
Federal Facilities		
Blue Marsh	6,194.0	boating, bike trail, camping, fishing, hunting, hiking, picnic, swimming, Old Dry Road Farm Complex
Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site	600.0	horseback riding, hiking, nature study, picnic, museum
Federal Total	6,794.0	
State Facilities		
Daniel Boone Homestead	579.0	museum, picnic
Conrad Weiser Park	26.0	museum, ice skating, picnic
Felix Access Area (DEP)	7.5	boating, fishing
French Creek State Park	5,644.0	boating, bike trail, camping, fishing, hunting, horseback riding, hiking, picnic, swimming
Kaercher Creek Dam	185.0	boating, fishing, hiking, ice skating, outdoor concerts, nature study, picnic, tot lot/playground, handicapped recreation facilities available
Kernsville Recreation Area (DEP)	44.0	boating, camping, fishing
Nolde Forest Environmental Education Center	666.0	hiking, nature study, Environmental Education Center
Schuylkill Canal – Five Locks	12.4	boating, fishing
State Game Lands #43, #52, #80, #106, #110, #182, #274, #280	19,285.0	hunting, hiking
Weiser State Forest	1,100.0	hunting
State Total	27,548.9	

Facility	Acres	Activities
County Facilities		
Camp Joy	22.0	camping, field sports (baseball, softball, soccer, etc.), outdoor concerts, picnic, swimming, tot lot/playground
Tulpehocken Creek Valley Park	375.0	
Berks Leisure Area		picnic, handicapped recreation facilities available
Gring's Mill Recreation Area		fishing, field sports (baseball, softball, soccer, etc.), ice skating, nature study, outdoor concerts, tennis, volleyball, handicapped recreation facilities available
Gruber Wagon Works and Red Bridge Picnic Area		museum, fishing
Stonecliffe Recreation Area		fishing, picnic
Union Canal and Tow Path		basketball, bike trail, fishing, field sports (baseball, softball, soccer, etc.), ice skating, tennis, tot lot/playground, volleyball, handicapped recreation facilities available
Heritage Center		bike trail, fishing, hiking
Youth Recreation Facility and Educational Farm	115.0	museum, picnic, handicapped recreation facilities available
Allegheeny Aqueduct/Schuylkill Canal	35.0	field sports (baseball, softball, soccer, etc.), picnic, educational farm
County Total	547.0	fishing, historic aqueduct

Community parks usually contain 20± acres and are intended to serve a population within a 2-mile service radius. They should be sized at the rate of 5 to 8 acres for 1,000 persons served. These parks generally involve a fairly high level of improvement with multiple sets of athletic fields and courts. Sometimes swimming pools and indoor recreation centers are situated on these community-wide parks. Larger school sites (usually middle and high schools) have the facilities to qualify as community-based parks, and represent valuable recreation resources that can significantly enhance the level of recreation services offered to a given area. Finally, sometimes smaller specialized facilities (e.g., Birdsboro's Rustic Picnic Area) qualify as community parks due to their use by a larger service area than that of a neighborhood park. The table below lists all publicly-owned community parks.

COMMUNITY PARKS WITHIN THE SOUTHERN BERKS REGION		
Park Name	Municipality	Acreage
Twin Valley School Campus	Caernarvon Township	75 acres
Daniel Boone School Campus	Union Township	50 acres
Robeson Township Community Park	Robeson Township	8.3 acres
Union Township Recreation Area	Union Township	162.6 acres
Total Community Park Acreage within the Region		295.9 acres

The Parks Map (Figure 10) illustrates the locations and configurations of all community parks within the Region. Additionally, a two-mile service radius was drawn around the perimeter of each park to determine its respective service areas. The areas shaded in light blue illustrate those portions of the Region located within the existing two-mile service boundaries. These areas generally serve the more densely populated areas of the Region around Birdsboro, Morgantown, and Gibraltar. Developing areas along the PA Route 10 and I-176 corridors are not within the recommended service areas for existing community parks. ***The Region may need to add another community park along its western***

boundary if future residential growth areas are planned straddling these important road corridors.

Next, local officials need to know how much additional community parkland is needed to meet future demand. Based upon the NRPA guideline of 5 to 8 acres of community parkland for each 1,000 residents and the population projections provided in Chapter __ of this Plan, the table below illustrates the community parkland area needed to adequately serve the Region now and in the future:

EXISTING AND PROJECTED COMMUNITY PARKLAND NEEDED WITHIN THE REGION					
Year	Population	NRPA-Recommended Acres		Existing Acres	Projected Surplus
		5 ac. per 1000 persons	8 ac. per 1000 persons		
2000	17,698	88.5	141.6	295.9	+207.4 to +154.3
2010	19,981	100	159.8	295.9	+195.9 to +136
2020	22,264	111.3	178.1	295.9	+184.6 to +117.8

From the preceding table, it is obvious that the Region enjoys a wealth of community parklands well in excess of the NRPA-recommended minimum standards. Nonetheless, acreage is only part of the park, the other being improvements. Even though the Region/School Districts have been successful in acquiring community parkland, they should continue efforts to make improvements to these parks as new revenues are collected. ***In particular, the Robeson Township Community Park is undeveloped and should be fitted with a full complement of athletic fields and courts.*** In addition, the Union Township Recreation Area is only partially developed; much undeveloped area exists for future expansion. ***Union Township recently received a grant to prepare a master plan for its park; this master plan should incorporate a more diverse set of facilities than that currently available so that varying age and activity preferences can be served. These and the two public school district campuses should receive future facility improvements with revenues collected from the mandatory dedication revenues presented later. The following lists a “typical” community park schedule of improvements and their respective costs for reference purposes:***

“TYPICAL” RECOMMENDED COMMUNITY PARK IMPROVEMENTS	ESTIMATED COST
30-acre community park	\$1,236,000
master site plan	\$35,000
2 6-table picnic pavilions/tables/BBQ grills/waste receptacles	\$16,200
2 lighted competition multi-purpose (soccer/baseball) athletic fields	\$196,000
1 modular playground with safety surfaces	\$30,000
a looping trail with 10-foot wide asphalt surface (about 1 mi.)	\$176,800
a 50-space parking lot	\$47,850
2 bike racks	\$1,000
2 lighted basketball courts	\$102,400
2 lighted tennis courts	\$82,100
2 lighted sand volleyball courts	\$42,400
park and trail signs and maps	\$10,000
rest rooms and drinking fountains	\$46,800
landscaping and shade trees	\$30,000
contingency, bonding, and design costs (20% of improvement costs)	\$156,310
Total Improvement Costs	\$2,208,860

Neighborhood parks are the third park type advocated by recreation experts. These parks are generally between 1 and 20 acres in size and meant to serve a population of 2,000 to 10,000. The recommended service area for these parks is a one-quarter to one-half mile radius. As implied by the name, these parks are intended to provide close-to-home areas for limited athletic activities, playgrounds, and passive pursuits. The NRPA recommends that one to two acres of publicly-owned land be devoted to neighborhood parks for each 1,000 residents. The following tabulates all publicly-owned neighborhood parks by municipality within the Southern Berks Region:

NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS WITHIN THE SOUTHERN BERKS REGION	
Park Name	Acreage
<i>Birdsboro Borough</i>	14.4
Birdsboro Elementary School	4.6
Birdsboro Park	0.14
Lincoln Playground	0.4
Optimist Field	3.2
Texas Baseball Field	5.0
Vest Pocket Park	1.1
<i>Caernarvon Township</i>	8.3
Caernarvon Township Park	5.4
Morgantown Athletic Association	2.6
Tennis and Basketball Courts	0.3
<i>Robeson Township</i>	22.0
Geigertown Fire Company	2.9
Gibraltar Athletic Field	9.1
Robeson Township Elementary School	10.0
<i>Union Township</i>	4.0
Kulptown Fire Company	2.6
Maple Grove Park	1.4
<i>Southern Berks County Region</i>	48.7

The Parks Map identifies the locations and configurations of all publicly-owned neighborhood parks in the Region. Like community parks, a service radius was drawn around the perimeter of each neighborhood park to determine its service area. The NRPA recommends a maximum one-half mile service radius. In addition, the same one-half mile service radius was mapped around existing community parks as these facilities too can serve neighborhood park needs of nearby residents. The neighborhood park service areas are shaded in light green on the Parks Map (Figure 10).

This analysis reveals that while many of the existing neighborhoods have adequate convenient access to nearby neighborhood parks, some don't. The overall planning goals for this Plan suggest that areas planned for future growth should have access to a full range of public facilities and services. Therefore, future planned growth areas and existing neighborhoods should each have sufficient access to a

neighborhood park. Once planned residential growth areas are known, more specific recommendations for needed neighborhood parks will be provided.

Like for community parks, local officials need to know how much additional neighborhood parkland is needed to meet future demand. Based upon the population projections for the Region as a whole, the table below illustrates the neighborhood parkland area needed to adequately serve projected growth:

EXISTING AND PROJECTED NEIGHBORHOOD PARKLAND NEEDED WITHIN THE REGION					
Year	Population	NRPA-Recommended Acres		Existing Acres	Projected Surplus
		1 acre/1000 persons	2 acres/1000 persons		
2000	17,698	17.7	35.4	48.7	+31 to +13.3
2010	19,981	20.0	40.0	48.7	+28.7 to +8.7
2020	22,264	22.3	44.6	48.7	+26.4 to +4.1

From an acreage standpoint, the Region has an adequate amount of neighborhood parkland now and in the projected future. However, its distribution does not cover all neighborhoods as suggested by NRPA standards. **Hence, the Region will need to add neighborhood parklands to these existing and planned neighborhoods beyond one-half mile from an existing park. Once future residential growth areas have been identified, specific recommendations will be offered to ensure adequate service.**

Again, parks comprise more than land; improvements are equally important. The facilities located within the Region's neighborhood parks are somewhat similar. Many have the same list of facilities, suggesting unparalleled baseball popularity. Neighborhood parks should feature facilities in high demand; so if baseball continues to dominate local recreation preferences, then everything is fine. However, many municipalities are finding that the traditional "pastimes" of old are giving way to different activities. **The Region should periodically gauge recreation preferences among all age groups and ensure that the then-current preferences are accommodated by local park improvements. The following lists a "typical" schedule of improvements for a more diverse neighborhood park.**

"TYPICAL" NEIGHBORHOOD PARK IMPROVEMENTS	ESTIMATED COST
6-acre neighborhood park;	\$240,000
a multi-purpose (soccer/baseball) athletic field;	\$48,000
a modular playground with safety surfaces;	\$30,000
6-table picnic pavilion/tables/BBQ grills/waste receptacles;	\$8,100
20-space parking lot;	\$19,140
2 basketball courts;	\$75,200
1 sand volleyball court;	\$8,000
8 park benches;	\$4,000
bike rack;	\$500
landscaping and shade trees;	\$16,000
park sign;	\$4,000
contingency, bonding, and design costs (20% of improvement costs)	\$42,588
Total Improvement Costs	\$495,528

Linear parks are also gaining in popularity throughout the nation as less and less open space remains within developing areas. The Region has an abundance of existing and planned linear parks. The Horseshoe Trail weaves about 16.7 miles in an east-west direction across Robeson and Union townships. French Creek State Park lists some 40 miles of trails that blanket their park. The Thun Trail generally follows an abandoned railroad right-of-way along the Schuylkill River just south of the Region's northern boundary for about 10 miles through Robeson, Birdsboro, and Union. And finally, the proposed Joanna Trail also follows an abandoned railroad right-of-way south of Birdsboro to Joanna along the Hay Creek for about 9 miles and then along the Conestoga Creek for another 1.8 miles. In all, the Region has some 78 miles of existing and planned linear park trails. The NRPA does not apply park size and service area standards to linear parks, recognizing their highly-diverse character and the often "opportunistic" ways that they are acquired.

Horseshoe Trail – The Region is fortunate to have a 16.7-mile segment of the 121-mile Horseshoe Trail cross its center, on its way between Valley Forge to the east and the Appalachian Trail on Stony Mountain in Dauphin County to the west. The trail enters Robeson Township close to Sleepy Hollow Road and generally follows roads in the western half of the Township. Then, at the intersection of Buck Hollow and Zion roads, the trail moves across country through eastern Robeson and all of Union townships. The trail also interconnects with the extensive trail system located within French Creek State Park.



Horseshoe Trail monument to founder Henry N. Wollman in Valley Forge at trailhead.

Local officials within the Region should seek ways to protect and incorporate this valuable resource within the Region's overall park and open space system and programs. Development plans proposed along this trail should protect the overland alignment of the trail by reflecting the trail use and designing developments that respect its integrity. Density bonuses through zoning and cluster developments can be used to incentivize this process. More information about the Horseshoe Trail can be found at the following website: <http://www.n99.com/hst/index.html>

Thun Trail – The Schuylkill River Greenway Association owns and operates the 11-mile Thun Trail, which is proposed to run between the City of Reading and the Montgomery County line, where it is to connect with the proposed 25-mile Schuylkill River Trail on its way to Philadelphia. Today, the Thun Trail is open from Lancaster Avenue near Reading through all of the SBC Region. **Like with the Horseshoe Trail, local officials should incorporate this trail into its developing landscape by requiring developers to "work around" the trail and provide for logical connections to it. Again, density bonuses for development plans with these features, plus flexible cluster design standards, can help developers and local government partners in the preservation of these features. In addition, local public facilities projects (e.g., roads, drainage, parks, etc.) should similarly include measures to protect and develop the trail with suitable use and access features.**



Active Thun Trail east of Birdsboro

Joanna Trail (Hay Creek and Conestoga Creek Corridors) – The Berks County Open Space and Recreation Plan (January 1994) recommends that this abandoned railroad bed be converted into a trail that would run from Birdsboro south to the Chester County line, where it would connect to the Robert G. Struble and Brandywine Trails. The segment of the trail north of Elverson Road would generally follow the Hay Creek, and is listed as one of the County’s highest recreation priorities. The southern segment generally follows the Conestoga Creek and is listed as one of several “other potential projects.” The plotting of a potential rail-trail on a map is but the beginning point to a lengthy and potentially difficult process that ends in trail development and use. Many pitfalls can “derail” this process and prevent trail completion. Nonetheless, these trails have become one of society’s popular priorities and therefore, funding for feasibility studies is readily available.

The Berks County Parks Department has secured funding for the acquisition of the abandoned rail line right-of-way under the Federal Highway Administration’s Transportation Enhancement Program as administered by PENNDOT. Next, ***it is recommended that the RRB and Berks County make a joint application under the Pennsylvania Recreational Trails Program. The PA DCNR offers an 80%-State to 20%-local matching grant for trail development projects under its Community Conservation Program. According to their staff, this program is described as follows:***

Phase 3 - Trail Development – Design and installation of surfaces, bridges, underpasses, retaining wall, trail maps, and signs. Construction materials and activities must be publicly advertised, bid, and awarded in accordance with applicable laws.

More information about the State grant program can be found at the following website: <http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/recreation/grants/rectrails.htm>. ***In the end, it is expected that Berks County would likely own and manage this trail as part of its countywide park system. However, local officials should offer input and insight into the feasibility, acquisition and trail development process; the RRB can logically provide this assistance.***

D. MANDATORY DEDICATION (OR FEE-IN-LIEU THEREOF) OF RECREATION LAND

Mandatory dedication of parkland has become a standard technique for local park systems to keep pace with growth since it was enabled by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code in the late 1980s. Each township within the Region has adopted mandatory dedication provisions within their respective subdivision and land development ordinances. Birdsboro Borough’s relative lack of undeveloped land has prevented the Borough from undertaking this approach in the past.

EXISTING MANDATORY PARKLAND DEDICATION STANDARDS		
Municipality	Required Acres / Dwelling Unit	Fee-In-Lieu of Parkland
Birdsboro Borough	N/A	N/A
Caernarvon Township	Negotiated case-by-case	
Robeson Township	0.028	\$286 per unit
Union Township	0.073 acres/unit (residential) 0.02 acres/1000 sq. ft. (nonresidential)	\$870 per unit

Given changing demographics, land values, and parkland needs, it is important for municipalities to periodically recalculate mandatory dedication standards and their related fees-in-lieu thereof. The following will provide a basis for such recalculations: The NRPA's recommended minimum standards is listed below:

NRPA LOCAL PARK ACREAGE STANDARDS	
Park Type	Minimum Acres Needed per 1,000 Population
Community Park	5 to 8 acres
Neighborhood Park	1 to 2 acres
Total	6 to 10 acres

To date, the Region has provided local parklands exceeding the NRPA standards listed above; however, much of this has been derived from sources other than the mandatory dedication regulations in effect. For this reason, this Plan will only calculate needed parklands on the higher of the NRPA standards – namely 10 acres per 1,000 people. To derive a per-unit or per-lot standard, the 1,000 population is divided by the average household size (year 2000) reported for each municipality as follows:

MANDATORY PARKLAND DEDICATION CALCULATIONS (FOR RAW LAND)			
Municipality	2000 Average Household Size	No. of Dwellings per 1,000 Population	Required Park Acres per Dwelling Unit
Birdsboro Borough	2.63	380	0.026 acres
Caernarvon Township	2.50	400	0.025 acres
Robeson Township	2.67	375	0.027 acres
Union Township	2.52	397	0.025 acres
Southern Berks Region	2.61	383	0.026 acres

If raw land was all that was needed to provide for local parks, then the preceding required park acres per dwelling unit would enable the Region to collect parkland that would to keep pace with its projected growth. But a community and/or neighborhood park is more than raw land; it requires a high level of infrastructure and improvement. Generally, the value of these improvements equals the value of the parkland itself. Therefore, it is recommended that each municipality double the preceding acreage figures to derive needed mandatory dedication standards to effectively meet expected demand for developed parks, as listed below.

SUGGESTED MANDATORY PARKLAND DEDICATION STANDARDS (FOR IMPROVED PARKS)	
Municipality	Required Park Acres per Dwelling Unit
Birdsboro Borough	.052 acres
Caernarvon Township	.050 acres
Robeson Township	.054 acres
Union Township	.050 acres
Southern Berks Region	.052 acres

As an alternative to parkland dedication, municipalities can accept a fee-in-lieu of parkland dedication. This approach can only be used in those instances where the developer and municipality agree on the amount of the fee-in-lieu. In addition, such funds cannot be used merely to maintain existing facilities, but must be used to:

1. purchase new parkland;
2. purchase new equipment for new or existing parks; and/or,
3. make improvements to existing parks that will serve existing residents and those of the proposed development.

According to requirements within the Municipalities Planning Code, amounts of the fees-in-lieu should be derived from the following approach:

An appraiser should be retained by the municipality to analyze recent real estate transactions and derive estimates of fair market value. Such estimates can be based upon all properties within the municipality, or on a neighborhood basis. It is important that the appraiser be informed of the development features (e.g., utilities, zoning, curbs, sidewalks, etc.) common to such lands, so that accurate real estate comparisons can be identified. Once these estimates are derived, they should be periodically updated to reflect the ever-changing value of land.

When disputes between the developer and municipality occur, both the developer and municipality should select an appraiser who, in turn, should jointly select a third appraiser. This third appraiser should then determine the fair market value of the land.

Funds collected under this approach must be used to provide for recreation facilities that are accessible to residents of the proposed development. In determining accessibility to the park, local officials should be guided by the respective park service areas as listed in this Plan.

To estimate the value of fees-in-lieu of parkland dedication, an average value of \$40,000 per acre will be used to account for the value of improved, residentially-zoned land within the Region. The following lists estimated values for fees-in-lieu of parkland dedication by municipality.

SUGGESTED MANDATORY PARKLAND DEDICATION/FEES-IN-LIEU STANDARDS		
Municipality	Required Park Acres per Dwelling Unit	Fee-In-Lieu of Parkland
Birdsboro Borough	0.052 acres	\$2,080 per unit
Caernarvon Township	0.050 acres	\$2,000 per unit
Robeson Township	0.054 acres	\$2,160 per unit
Union Township	0.050 acres	\$2,000 per unit
<i>Southern Berks Region</i>	<i>0.052 acres</i>	<i>\$2,080 per unit</i>

By applying these above figures to the Region’s projected growth as described in Chapter III, the following dedicated acres and/or fees-in-lieu can be collected to meet increasing park demand generated by growth:

PROJECTED DEDICATED PARKLANDS OR FEES-IN-LIEU-THEREOF 2000 TO 2010			
Time Period	Projected New Dwellings	Projected Dedicated Parklands	Projected Fees-In-Lieu of Parkland Dedication
2000-2010	1,079	56.1 acres	\$2,244,320
2000-2020	2,158	112.2 acres	\$4,488,640

As can be seen, the value of updated mandatory dedication/fee-in-lieu-thereof standards is about 2.2 million dollars per decade across the Region. For all these reasons (2.2 million of them), it is vital that Birdsboro Borough adopt mandatory dedication standards within its Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance and each of the Townships update their existing standards to reflect current conditions and trends.

The revenues/parklands acquired through this process should be used across the Region as detailed in this Chapter and recommended in the upcoming peer-to-peer study. The RRB should oversee such spending on an ongoing basis. In coming years, the calculations contained in this section should be updated so as to allow for parkland/ revenues to keep pace with changing demographics and land values.

