



East Goshen Township Department of Parks & Recreation Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan Update

Adopted October 2015; Status Updates April 2020

Executive Summary

Introduction

East Goshen Township has developed this Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan (Plan) Update to enhance the quality of life in our community through the conservation of our natural resources and the promotion of parks and recreation. The Plan will serve as a guide to help community leaders improve and sustain our parks and recreation system to benefit citizens of all ages and interests now and for many generations to come. The Plan provides a road map to achieve the shared vision to be implemented through 2025, as resources become available.

Dept. of Park and Recreation Mission Statement

To promote and encourage the use of the Township parks and open spaces by Township residents and visitors in a manner that will preserve the Township's natural and historic resources for the enjoyment of future generations; and to develop and provide educational and recreational activities, programs, partnerships and special events to further enhance the quality of life for Township residents, businesses, and visitors.

Plan Purpose

The purpose of the Plan is to:

- Address current and future needs by updating the 1993 East Goshen Township Open Space, Recreation, and Environmental Resources Plan;
- Serve as the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space element of the Township's Comprehensive Plan;
- Advance the Central Chester County Bicycle and Pedestrian Circulation Plan with respect to safe walking and cycling in East Goshen Township (2013); and
- Position East Goshen Township to be competitive for grant funding.

Realized Principal Actions:



Pollinator Garden installed through WCGC partnership

Paoli Pike Trail



Kid-designed accessible destination playground

Methodology/Process

In 2013, East Goshen Township retained Toole Recreation Planning, the Brandywine Conservancy, and the Natural Lands Trust to update the 1993 East Goshen Township Open Space, Recreation, and Environmental Resources Plan. The team included a Certified Parks and Recreation Professional, a Registered Landscape Architect, a Certified Community Planner, and GIS specialists. They worked in collaboration with the Township to engage the public to determine recreation needs; evaluate the current parks, recreation and open space system; and develop practical and achievable recommendations to improve the community through parks, recreation, and open space. A major element of the planning process was public participation through the Plan Advisory Committee, focus groups, interviews, public meetings and an online public opinion questionnaire. The goal of this multifaceted community outreach was to provide residents with a variety of ways to provide their ideas for consideration in the plan.

Findings

Three key findings emerged from the needs assessment and research:

- The East Goshen Township parks, recreation, and open space system is the crown jewel of the community. Citizens recognize it as key to the quality of life here and expressed a high level of satisfaction and pride in their Township's parks, recreation, and natural areas.
- Elected officials and township staff are committed to supporting Parks and Recreation. The Township invests six percent of the annual operating budget annually in the 24 parks and open spaces totaling 508.76 acres and high quality, year round recreation programs and services.
- The three most important future improvements to residents are the preservation of open space, the creation of trails to facilitate safe travel for bicycling and walking, and maintenance of existing facilities that are wonderful but getting worn and tired from a great deal of use.

Plan Objectives

Based upon public opinion and the findings of the planning process, East Goshen Township established one goal for this Plan: ***To continue to provide premier parks and recreation facilities and services while protecting the Township's scenic beauty, natural resources, and open space.***

To achieve this goal, East Goshen Township identified four key objectives:

Obj. 1: Take care of and improve our parks and recreation system.

Obj. 2: Protect our scenic beauty, open space and natural resources.

Obj. 3: Engage citizens in active healthy living and lifelong enrichment through recreation opportunities.

Obj. 4: Continue to provide operational excellence and financial sustainability for the parks, recreation, and open space system through a mix of public and private support.



Principal Actions, Recommendations and Action Items (Status Updates in bold/italics)

The blueprint for achieving these four objectives includes the following 10 principal actions:

1. Undertake a feasibility study to develop a multipurpose trail on Paoli Pike. ✓ *Study adopted 1/4/16*
2. Develop a Park Master Plan for East Goshen Township Park with a special focus on creating a plan for a new destination playground to replace the current tot lot. ✓ *Plan adopted 3/1/16*
3. Re-configure the Recreation Department as the Parks & Recreation Department with park planning as an official function. ✓ *Re-configured 1/1/16*
4. Plan, design, and install Township park signage. ✓ *Planning, design, installation 2017–2019*
5. Work in collaboration with partners in the public and private sectors to conserve the remaining open space so it is preserved without responsibility to the Township for ownership or maintenance.
✓ *On-going; PHS-award winning Pollinator Garden opened in partnership with the WCGC.*
6. Develop and implement natural resource management plans for open space and natural areas.
Partnering with Conservancy Board to develop; in-progress
7. Increase recreation programming to serve a broader base of citizens and strive for cost recovery to offset programming costs. ✓ *Recreation programming hours have increased 594% since 2014*
8. Create a Capital Improvement Program (CIP) for parks and recreation to incorporate into the Township's Capital Improvement Program. ✓ *P & R projects are incorporated into the Township's CIP*
9. Increase public awareness and understanding about the Township's support and investment in parks and recreation. ✓ *SOPARC Reporting showcases park usage, health benefits and Township investment.*
10. Work toward the long-term financial and environmental sustainability of public parks and recreation in East Goshen Township. ✓ *Passed \$8M bond and secured \$5.6M in federal, state and county grants for playground, Paoli Pike Trail and two passive parks with ponds.*

The Plan further identified 22 recommendations, with a total of 56 associated action items. Of these 56 action items, EGTTPR has completed 44 (78%) since the Plan was adopted October, 2015.

Conclusions

East Goshen Township strives to provide a wonderful quality of life for its residents. Elected officials and Township staff work together with the public to deliver a deliberately planned park and recreational experience that is inclusive, encompassing and memorable. We are proactive, as can be seen by implementing 100% of the Plan's principal actions and 78% of the action items during the first four years. The Township's status as a premier community that is enthusiastically engaged and values park and recreation is most notably evident in its passing of an \$8M bond in 2017 that is funding four capital projects: the Paoli Pike Trail construction, and renovations to the EGT Park playground, Milltown Dam Park and Hershey's Mill Dam Park. The entire Township operating budget is only \$10.1M—seen through this prism it shows just how important park and recreation is to our residents. The East Goshen Township Department of Parks and Recreation is emboldened by the wonderful progress its made in shaping the current quality of life for its residents, and looks forward to continuing to shape life here in East Goshen Township. After all, we're *"In the Business of Making Memories..."*