



# Valley Township Open Space, Recreation, and Environmental Resources Plan

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# Acknowledgments

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# Valley Township Open Space, Recreation, and Environmental Resources Plan 2019

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## Chapter 1

# Introduction

The *Valley Township Comprehensive Open Space, Recreation, and Environmental Resources Plan* sets forth a blueprint for how the Township can protect and improve its parks, recreation, open space and environmental resources to enhance the quality of life for current and future Township residents. Valley Township is a growing suburban community with a high quality of life, a stable housing market, and a strong sense of community pride. Located in western Chester County immediately west of the City of Coatesville, Valley has not yet reached its fullest growth potential, and is blessed with undeveloped land that can be protected for future public use.

Changing demographics and growing demands on existing parks facilities have prompted the development of a new focused strategy for expanding facilities and programs to enhance quality of life for current and future residents. In order to promote the quality of life for future generations, it is necessary not only to assess current needs, but also to allocate resources wisely to provide for future demands.

### Plan Goals and Objectives

The underlying purpose of the Plan is to identify opportunities and set priorities for parks, recreation, and open space enhancements in Valley Township, to guide future decision making and fund raising. It sets forth policy recommendations intended to inform the Board of Supervisors of issues and objectives of importance to Valley residents, and of strategies for achieving those objectives.

In pursuit of this goal, the Plan addresses the desire to maintain open space for both passive and active recreation, and to protect natural resources, while planning for future growth. The expectation is that an enhanced open space system in the Township will improve the overall quality of life in the community, increase property values, and enhance the attractiveness of Valley Township to new businesses and residents.

The Plan is not a law. It should remain flexible at all times, to react to changing needs and take advantage of unforeseen opportunities. The Plan's recommendations should continually be re-assessed and updated periodically to reflect current conditions and aspirations.

The Plan should be referred to by the Board of Supervisors for guidance on setting priorities, allocating financial resources, and directing staff, volunteers, and outside professionals for collaboration to implement park, recreation, and open space improvements.

### PLAN GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

#### Overall Goals:

1. *Provide for current and future recreation needs of the community.*
2. *Conserve natural resources.*
3. *Develop an effective implementation strategy.*

#### Specific Objectives:

1. *Provide a variety of recreation opportunities for people of all ages and interests.*
2. *Provide a basis for potential acquisition of new property to use for parks and recreation.*
3. *Identify opportunities to expand walking and biking trails.*
4. *Identify natural and scenic areas to be protected and enhanced.*
5. *Examine ways that the Township can more effectively partner with outside entities to provide programs and facilities for active and passive recreation.*
6. *Fulfill objectives described in the Township Comprehensive Plan.*
7. *Prioritize needs and wants.*
8. *Identify specific actions and projects.*
9. *Identify funding sources to make improvements.*

## The Importance of Parks and Open Space

There is no question that parks and open space contribute strongly to the quality of life of our communities. Numerous studies have shown that there are significant benefits to conserving open space, as it has the power to attract residents and business, promote tourism, elevate property values, and create a sense of place. More than just a pleasant amenity, open space resources have been proven to have economic benefits. Among these benefits are:

- Increases nearby property values
- Helps to attract business and commercial development
- Energizes economic development and neighborhood revitalization
- Promotes health and fitness
- Builds community spirit by providing venues to interact with others
- Conserves natural resources and cultural heritage
- Attracts tourism

## Public Participation

The public participation process was the guiding force behind the Plan by establishing the needs and wants of the community, identifying opportunities, and providing ideas and recommendations to achieve those objectives.

This plan was developed through extensive outreach and dialogue with a wide range of interested stakeholders, including public officials, adjacent property owners, the Coatesville Area School District, Chester County Department of Parks & Recreation, youth sports organizations, and the general public. The study was predominantly developed during a 12-month period between November 2016 and November 2017. The Plan was shaped and guided by a Steering Committee of interested citizens and businesses representing a cross-section of local civic life. The Committee included representatives of civic organizations, youth sports associations, park neighbors, township officials, the Chester County Airport, and concerned residents. Five meetings were held with the Steering Committee, which took place in November 2016, and February, March, May, and September 2017. Two public meetings were held to present the recommendations of the steering committee and solicit feedback. These took place in November 2018 and May 2019. The Plan was also presented to the Valley Township Planning Commission in December 2018.

To further solicit input from the public, an opinion survey was conducted during 2017, which polled Township residents on a variety of issues related to this study. The results of this survey are summarized in Chapter 3 of this report, as well as the Appendix.

## Plan Preparation and Organization

This Plan is organized to reflect the process that was followed in developing the recommendations.

- **Chapter 1: Introduction** – *What is the Plan?*  
Overall project goals, objectives, and parameters
- **Chapter 2: Existing Resources** – *What do we already have?*  
Inventory of Valley's existing park and open space resources, recreation programming, and park management infrastructure
- **Chapter 3: Needs and Opportunities** – *What more do we want?*  
Identification of needs, wants, issues of concern, and opportunities for improvement
- **Chapter 4: Recommendations** – *What can we get?*  
Opportunities to improve and protect parks and open space and to expand recreational programming
- **Chapter 5: Implementation** – *How do we get it?*  
Action plan to outline a realistic approach to implement the recommendations, including costs, timeline, and responsible parties



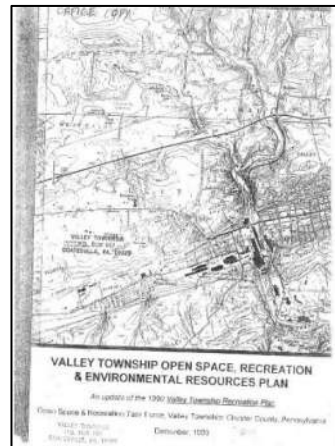


Relationship to Other Plans

This *Valley Township Comprehensive Open Space, Recreation, and Environmental Resources Plan* is consistent with and an extension of other recent and ongoing planning initiatives in the local area and region. For Valley to achieve its goals in sustaining and enhancing quality of life, it is important that a coherent vision for the future is expressed in public policy. The development of municipal planning documents which are consistent in their objectives is one way that this can happen. Related plans and policy documents include the following:

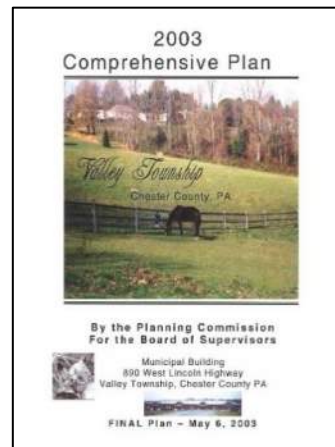
Valley Township Open Space, Recreation & Environmental Resources Plan (1993)

This Plan presented an inventory of natural and open space resources in the Township, and made a wide range of recommendations for protecting, improving, and expanding public open space. Recommendations included development of a community park offering both active and passive recreation, and updating local ordinances to strengthen the protections for environmental resources.



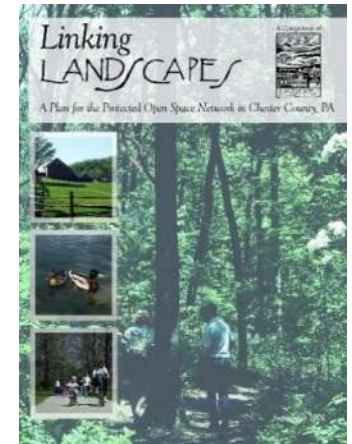
Valley Township Comprehensive Plan (2003)

The Valley Township Comprehensive Plan is the formal municipal policy document that establishes overall goals and objectives for the Township, to guide municipal priorities and policy. This Plan contains specific topics covering a wide range of community issues, including parks and recreation, and protection of natural resources. The existing Comprehensive Plan was completed in 2003. Regarding parks and open space, the Comprehensive plan endorses and carries forward the recommendations of the 1993 Open Space Plan (mentioned above).



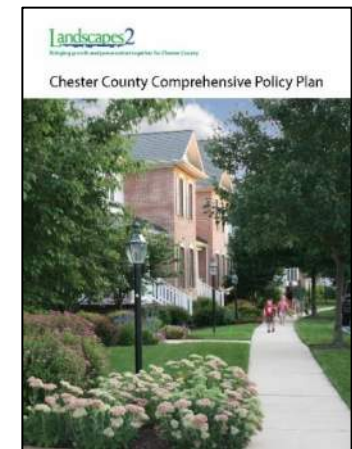
Linking Landscapes: A Plan for the Protected Open Space Network of Chester County (2002)

*Linking Landscapes* provides a vision for multi-municipal open space planning throughout Chester County. It presents a set of actions to coordinate the activities of County government, and also provides municipalities with general guidelines they can use to responsibly protect open space. This countywide vision focuses not only on planning and protecting open spaces, but also on restoring and maintaining them to ensure they will retain their ecological and recreational qualities in perpetuity. *Linking Landscapes* recommends linking the County's isolated protected open spaces through a countywide protected open space network, linked together by recreational trails and wildlife corridors. Valley Township, specifically, is noted to have a deficit of park area compared to the needs of its growing population.



Landscapes2: Chester County Comprehensive Policy Plan (2009)

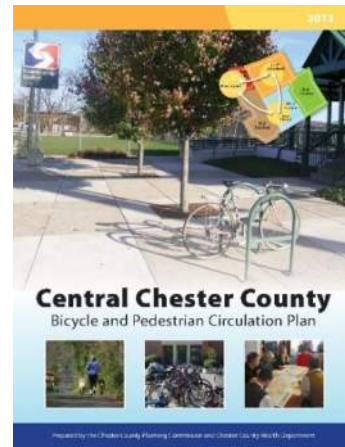
*Landscapes2* is Chester County's comprehensive policy plan and sets out principles to guide county growth while protecting natural, rural, and historic heritage. Protection of natural resources and development of an integrated network of greenways are among the guiding goals of the plan. Within a framework of setting overall goals for the County, the plan urges individual municipalities to protect open spaces as part of their growth management strategy. The Plan identifies the Route 30 corridor as a high priority for multi-modal circulation, and promotes the goal of providing a safe and functional non-motorized circulation network.





### Central Chester County Bicycle and Pedestrian Circulation Plan (2013)

This study provides a detailed plan for bicycle circulation in the center of Chester County incorporating West Chester and Downingtown. However, it also promotes the broader goal of establishing an integrated system of trails and greenways throughout the county.



### The Brandywine Creek Greenway Strategic Action Plan (2014)

This plan lays out a vision for establishing a 30-mile long corridor of protected open space along both branches of the Brandywine Creek through Chester County. The plan provides short, medium, and long-term strategies to be implemented by Greenway advocates over a 20+ year timeframe beginning in 2015. The numerous initiatives recommended will rely on implementation of numerous public and private partners, especially neighboring municipalities such as Valley Township.

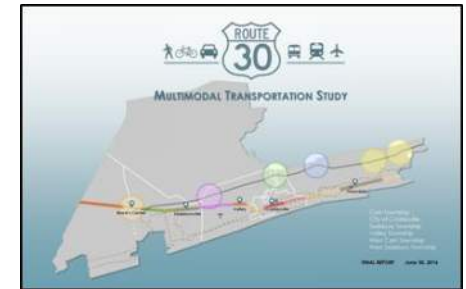
Within Valley Township, the Plan advocates several initiatives, including:

- Extending the Chester Valley trail along the Amtrak corridor
- Implementing a trail along the West Branch Brandywine Creek
- Protecting water quality along streams and tributaries



### Route 30 Multimodal Transportation Study (2016)

This study proposes a coordinated multimodal transportation and future land use plan for the Route 30 corridor, through Valley Township and neighboring municipalities to the east and west. The study builds upon the earlier planning effort of Chester County, which highlighted the importance of the Route 30 corridor to multimodal transportation. In Valley Township specifically, the Study recommends traffic improvements at the intersection of Route 30 and Airport Road and providing sidewalks and bicycle lanes along Route 30.

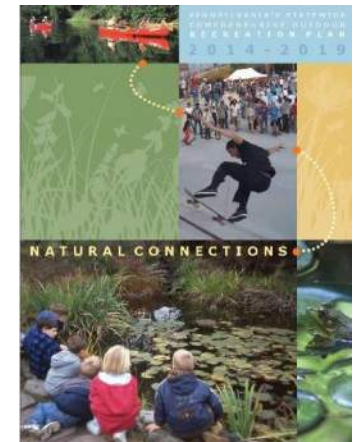


### Pennsylvania Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (2014-2019)

Pennsylvania's outdoor recreation plan helps to guide strategy for local governments, state government and other outdoor recreation providers. Priorities, recommendations and action items delineate a course of action for five years and help to determine where best to make investments in recreation.

Analysis shows that maintenance of existing park and recreation areas continues to be the top concern of Pennsylvanians. Access to recreation programs is also highly important, as is building more greenways and trails, and protecting existing open space and wildlife habitat. These findings are very consistent with the findings of the Valley Township plan. The Plan addresses not only facilities and physical resources, but the full spectrum of recreation priorities, including:

- Health and Wellness
- Local Parks and Recreation
- Tourism and Economic Development
- Resource Management and Stewardship
- Funding and Financial Stability



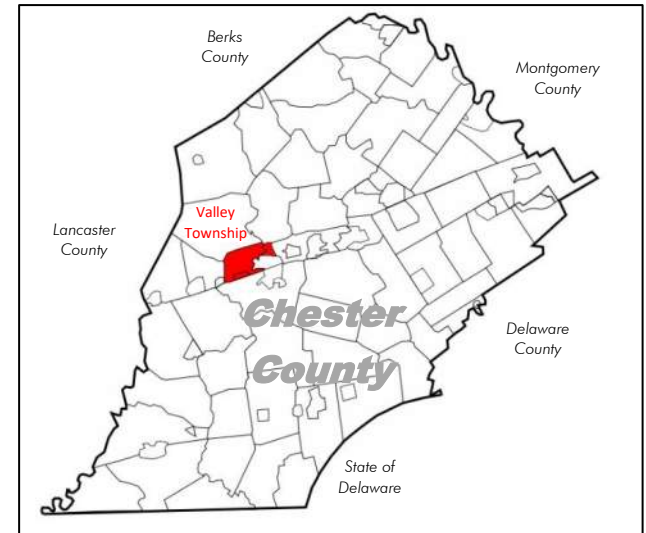
## Chapter 2

# Existing Resources

Valley Township is a growing suburban community with an ample but decreasing amount of undeveloped open space. Until recent decades, the Township was predominantly rural in character, with manufacturing businesses located along the southern part of the Township. Good transportation access along the Route 30 corridor, along with relatively low cost of real estate, has led to suburban development in recent decades. This trend toward suburbanization is expected to put pressure on local resources, including open space and recreation, as well as create demand for expanded facilities and recreation programming to serve a growing population.

### Regional Setting and Development Patterns

Valley Township is located in western Chester County in southeastern Pennsylvania. It is immediately west of the City of Coatesville and approximately 6 miles west of the Borough of Downingtown. Covering an area of 6 square miles, Valley is bounded by several neighboring townships, including East Fallowfield to the south, Sadsbury to the west, and West Caln to the north.





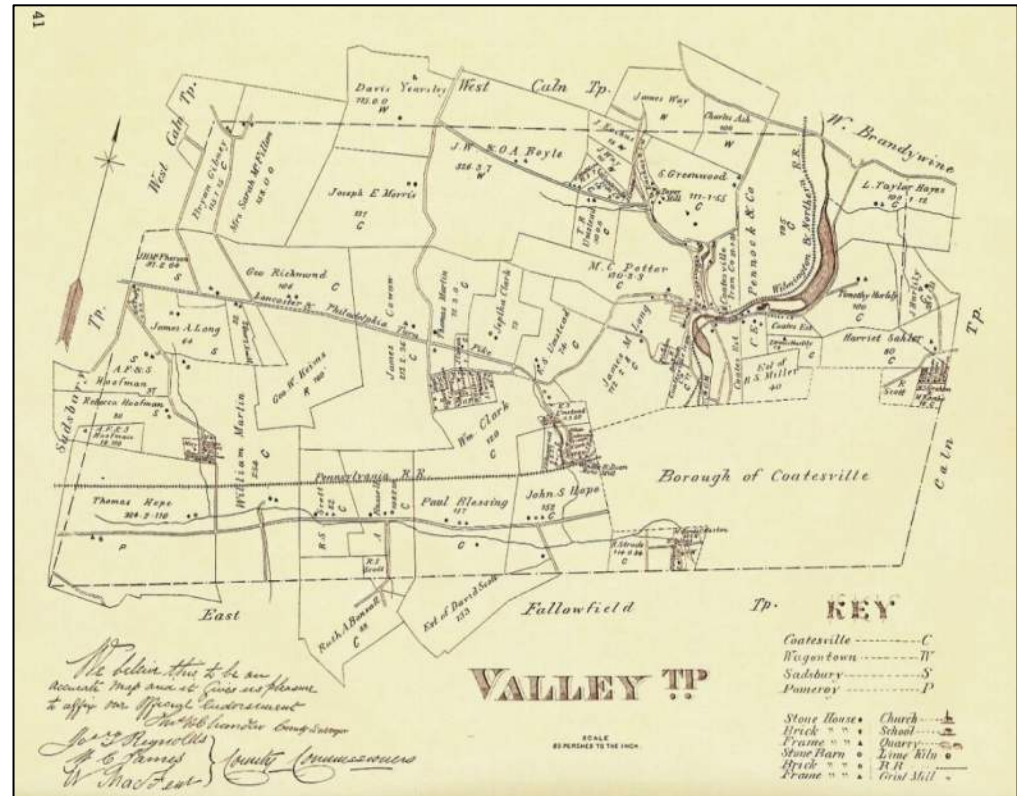
Valley Township was formed in 1852 by a decree of the court; it was composed of a considerable slice off the south end of West Caln and a small slice off the south end of West Brandywine. At that time, Valley included two villages, Coatesville and Midway. There were also two ironworks. Today the Township is half its original size, being reduced first in 1867 by the incorporation of the Borough of Coatesville, and in 1868 by the creation of Caln Township.

Like many other communities in southeastern Pennsylvania, Valley was mostly a rural landscape that grew up around manufacturing businesses. Because of its setting among the stream valleys and its location along road and railway transportation, Valley was ideally suited for manufacturing. One of the early villages formed after Valley became a Township was Rock Run, located north of Coatesville and just above the confluence of Rock Run and the West Brandywine Creek. Originally known as "Valley," this village was named after the Valley Iron Works. In addition to the iron works, the village also grew up around a rolling mill and woolen mill. The Township and its residents were dependent financially on the fluctuating fortunes of the mills, which prospered during the middle decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but floundered at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup>. By the 1920s, the original mills were closed.

When Coatesville was incorporated as a borough in 1867 and grew into a commercial and employment center, Valley's regional position became more suburban. Small settlements grew over time, and original place names survive to property curved in the shape of a rainbow; today the name survives as the Rainbow Elementary School. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, many Haitians were brought in to work in the steel mills in Coatesville. A settlement was established to house them, which became known as the village of Hayti.

The old Passtown School, once a one-room schoolhouse, was enlarged and refurbished; it is now the Valley Township Municipal Building. [Note: A new Township municipal building was under construction when this document was prepared.] Passtown School was named for the trail called "Hands Pass", dating back to the Revolutionary War Era. The pass was named for General Edward Hand, because of the bravery shown by him and his men during a battle against the British. Later the pass was widened to accommodate the Lincoln Highway (Route 30) which runs east-west through the village of Hayti and divides the Township.

In the early 1900s, a trolley ran from Coatesville to Parkersburg through Westwood on Valley Road. The introduction of busses brought its demise in the late 1930s. Just below Rock Run, the Penn Central Railroad, which runs east and west, crosses the Reading Railroad, which runs north and south. The G.O. Carlson Airport, now the Chester County Airport, has grown from a small entity to becoming the largest and busiest airport in the county. In recent decades, Valley Township has experienced rapid growth. The opening of the Route 30 Bypass in 1966 made the Township more accessible. Valley Township has become one of the fastest growing communities in the county.



Above: Early map of Valley Township. The area is mostly farms, with commercial development clustered around streams and transportation routes. (Source: Breou's Official Series of Farm Maps, Chester County published by W.H. Kirk, 1883, and viewable online at <http://ancestortracks.com>)

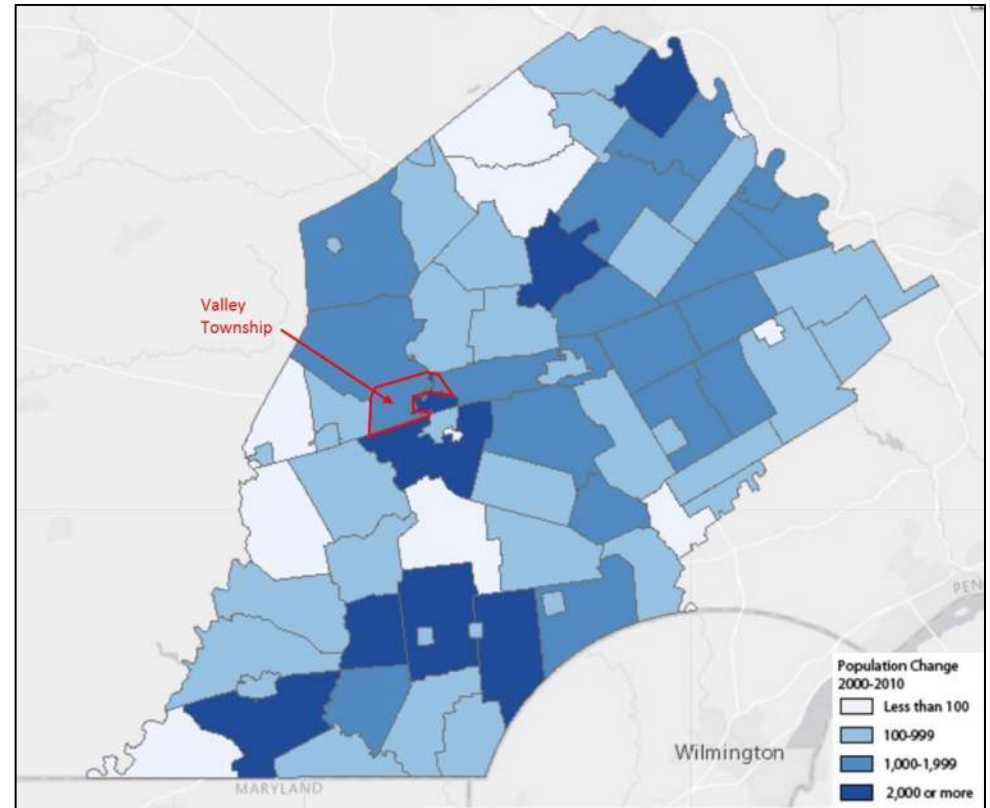
## Demographics

The population of Valley is approximately 7,731 as of July 1, 2017, according to the *United States Census Bureau, PEPANNRES, Annual Estimates of the Resident Population: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2017, 2017 Population Estimates*. An estimate of future population growth in the Township is made by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC), which projects a dramatic 32.8% increase in population in the coming decades (by 2040), at a rate nearly double the projected population increase county-wide. Many nearby communities are projected to see similar increases, as growth pushes out further away from the regional Philadelphia. According to the 2010 US Census, a significant percentage (82%) of Valley residences are owner-occupied, indicating a stable residential population.

## Socio-Economic Profile

The latest US Census (2010) offers a look at how the current population is broken down in terms of age groups, income and racial makeup.

- Approximately 8% of Valley’s population is under 5 years old, while more than a quarter is 18 years old or younger. This represents a relatively youthful population.
- The population is 52% female and 48% male.
- There are 2,828 housing units in the Township, with an average of 2.53 persons per household. 82% of the housing units are owner-occupied.
- The average household income in Valley Township is \$72,729.
- 68 percent of the population describe themselves as White, followed by 23% Black or African American, 7.5% Hispanic, and 1.5% Asian.
- 93% of the population has graduated high school, while 29% has a bachelor’s degree or higher.



Source: Chester County Planning

Valley Population			
Area	2000	2010	% change
Valley Township	5,116	6,794	32.8%
Chester County	433,501	499,132	15.1%

Valley Population Forecast			
Area	2010	2040	% change
Valley Township	6,794	10,186	49.9%
Chester County	499,132	645,562	29.3%

Vacant Housing Units			
Area	2000	2010	Rate
Valley Township	100	172	6.1%
Chester County	5,868	9,562	5.0%

Owner-Occupied Housing Units			
Area	2000	2010	Rate
Valley Township	1,567	2,193	82.6%
Chester County	120,428	139,328	76.2%

Source: Chester County Planning

## Natural and Cultural Resources

A key component of planning for parks and open space is a review of natural features. Sensitive environmental features such as streams, woodlands, steep slopes, and floodplains may warrant some degree of protection, and may be incorporated into the Township's open space plan. Also, these areas may naturally lend themselves to use as public recreation areas such as parks and walking trails.

### Soils

According to the Soil Survey Geographic Database for Chester County, PA (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, 1997), prime agricultural soils make up a large portion of the areas in the Township that are not in developed areas or occupying floodplains, steep slopes, or floodplain zones. The Township Comprehensive Plan notes that Farmland preservation efforts should make the conservation of agricultural soils a priority.

### Steep Slopes

Steep slopes are generally concentrated along two ridge lines running east-west through the Township, as well as along the Brandywine Creek that runs north-south. Areas of "Steep Slopes" are those with a vertical slope between 15% and 25%. "Very Steep Slopes" are any vertical slopes greater than 25%. Steeply sloped areas generally remain undeveloped, however, recent residential development has spread onto the northern ridge that roughly parallels the Route 30 Bypass. Since areas of steep slopes are subject to erosion when disturbed, and present unique building foundation, road construction and septic system limitations, they are the subject of specific land use regulations.

### Woodlands

Wooded areas generally correspond to areas of steep slopes. The most extensive area of woodland in the Township is among the south slopes of the North Valley Hills. Other small areas of woodlands are scattered throughout the Township. Wooded areas diminish stormwater runoff and promote ground water (aquifer) recharge. They also serve as habitat for wildlife and add to the visual quality of the Township's landscape.

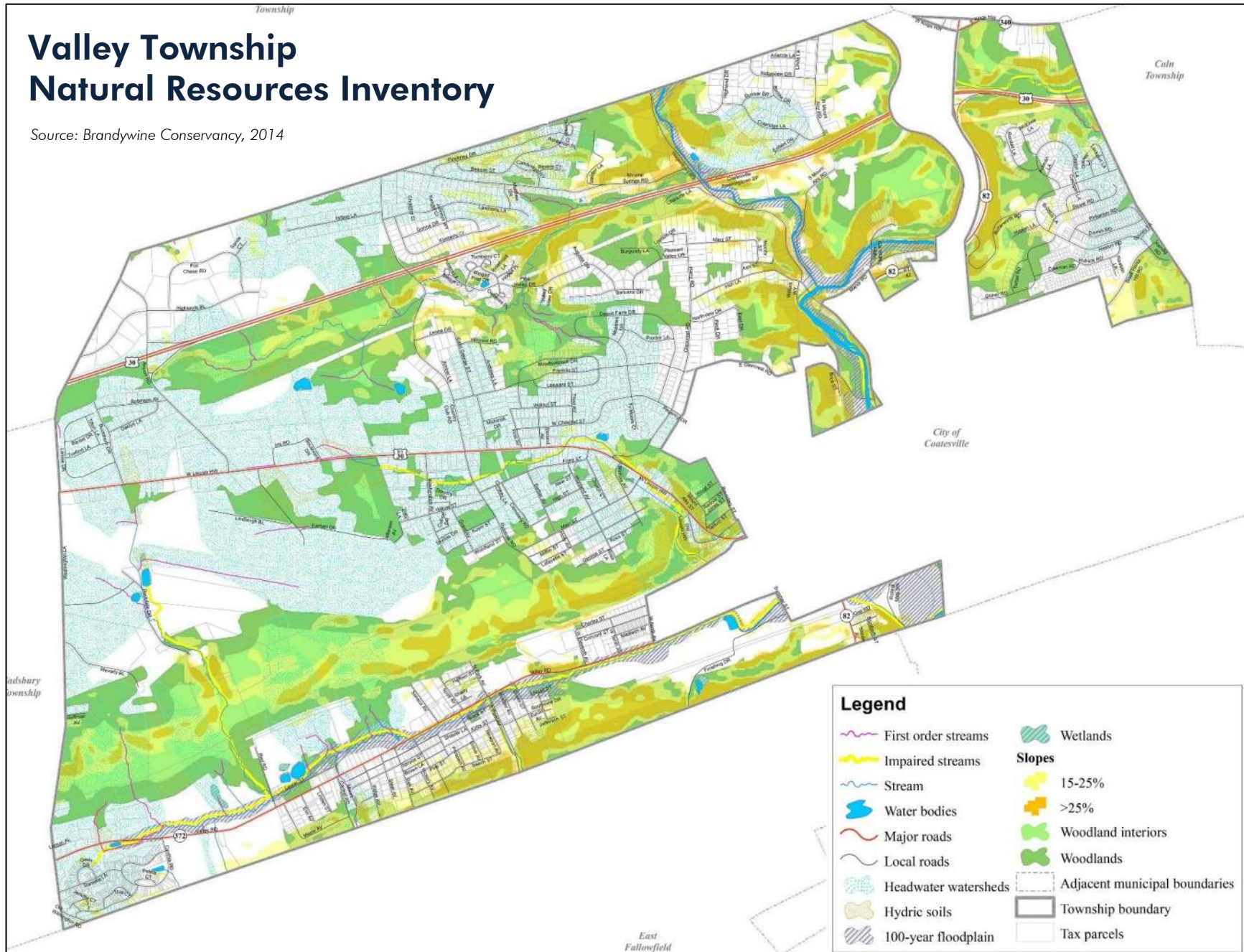


*Prime Agricultural Soils*  
Source: Chester County Planning



# Valley Township Natural Resources Inventory

Source: Brandywine Conservancy, 2014



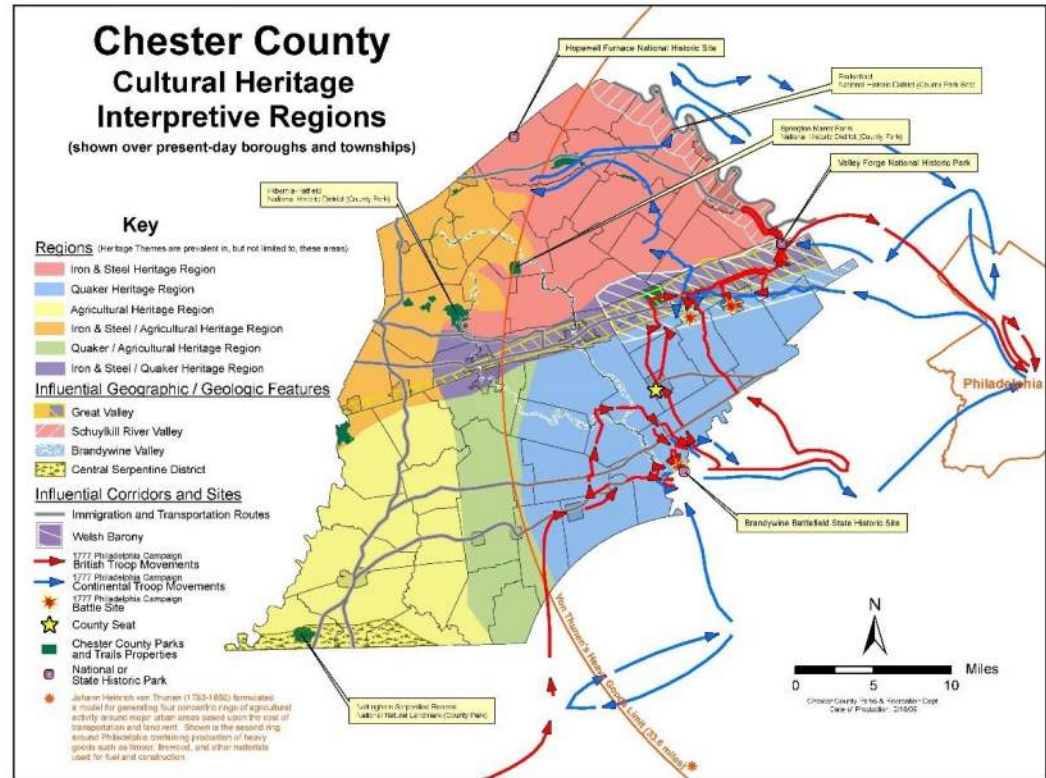


## Hydrology

The Township lies within the watershed of the West Branch of the Brandywine Creek. This tributary drains into the main branch of the Brandywine, which eventually flows into the Delaware River. Several smaller streams form their own watersheds that drain into the West Branch of the Brandywine Creek, including Rock Run, Sucker Run, and two streams located in the small Spackman Farm area. All of the streams within the Township are classified as first, second or third order, and are classified “warm water with migratory fish”. None of the streams in Valley are classified as “high quality” or “exceptional value” waters, which are defined as a stream or watershed that has excellent quality waters and environmental or other features that require special water quality protection.

Floodplains within the Township fall generally along the stream corridors, as mapped by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), most notably the West Branch of the Brandywine Creek, the Rock Run tributary, and Sucker Run.

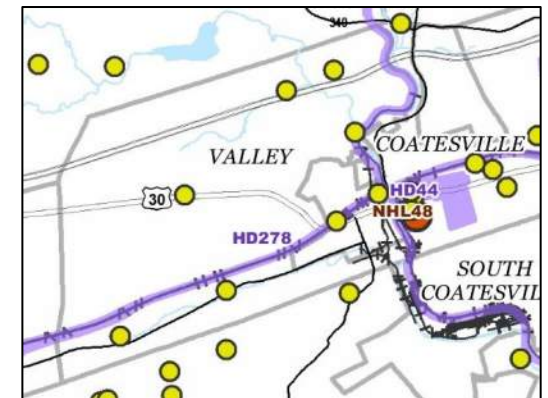
According to the National Wetlands Inventory Map, there are few known wetlands in Valley Township. These are located along Sucker Run, and a few other areas.



Chester County Cultural Heritage Interpretive Regions  
Source: Chester County Planning

## Cultural Resources

Chester County completed an inventory of historic resources throughout the county in 2014 and identified several individual sites and buildings in Valley Township (see diagram at right). These generally include buildings over 50 years old, and those having historic significance. The bridge over the West Branch of the Brandywine Creek on Rock Run – Wagontown Road (known as County Bridge 101) is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Overall, the cultural heritage of Valley Township and the surrounding area has local importance in the region as part of the early growth of the iron and steel industry and is part of the Quaker Heritage Interpretive Region of Chester County.



Local Historic Resources  
Source: Chester County Planning

## Land Use Policies and Protections

Current land use and development ordinances in Valley Township contain provisions for the protection and conservation of natural resources.

### Zoning

The Valley Township Zoning Ordinance was significantly updated in 2015 to include extensive **natural resource protection standards**, expansion of Conservation Zoning, and increased open space area requirements, in addition to countless other ordinance enhancements.

- The Conservation Zone (C) (see Zoning Map, Pg. 13) is established to protect areas of the Township that are characterized by sensitive environmental features. Such areas are noted to be unsuited to intensive development, and to provide valuable passive recreation opportunities. Many steeply-sloped wooded hillsides and stream valleys comprise areas within this zone. Accordingly, land development is severely limited to conserve the character and environmental quality of these settings.
- Specific objectives for the protection of natural resources are stated in the code, and are to sustain and enhance natural, scenic, and historic resources for the benefit of current and future generations while accommodating planned growth.
- In those areas containing wetlands, aquifers, watersheds, prime agricultural lands, floodplains, steep slopes, woodlands, and unique natural areas, development is limited and is subject to certain specific conservation measures such as:
  - **Steep Slopes:** Limitations are provided for construction and disturbance of slopes between 15-20%, 20-25%, and greater than 25%, with greater limitations for steeper slopes; delineation requirements are provided; and maximum finished grading slopes are established.
  - **Wetlands:** Regulations establish specific wetlands identification and delineation criteria, prohibit the disturbance of a wetland except with state and federal permits, and establish a 50-foot wide margin around all wetlands in which disturbance is strictly limited.
  - **Riparian Buffers:** A 50-foot buffer is established around all sides of watercourses in which timber harvesting is prohibited and woodland and land disturbance is strictly limited.
  - **Woodlands:** Regulations provide a definition for “woodland” that is defined in a measurable way, based on the density of trees within a wooded area with a specific diameter; require delineation of woodlands; limit disturbance of woodlands to a maximum of 35%, 50%, or 75% depending upon the underlying Zoning district, lot area, and whether it is an agricultural use; and provide specific exceptions for timber harvesting in which a timber harvesting plan is required.
- Specific criteria for residential Conditional Use developments also stipulates minimum open space areas as a percentage of the overall development acreage, requiring that such open space be designed to protect natural resources, protect historical sites, provide usable play and recreation areas, and/or integrate green belts.

### Floodplains

The Valley Township Floodplain Ordinance was re-written in 2017 to bring floodplain standards into compliance with updated standards and mapping in the Pennsylvania Flood Plain Management Act and National Flood Insurance Program. Land disturbance and new construction is prohibited within the floodway and floodplain, except for unique cases in which specific hydrologic and hydraulic engineering analyses and state permitting is provided and obtained.



*Significant portions of the Township are protected by Conservation Zoning*

## Subdivision and Land Development

The Valley Township Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO) was last codified in 1999, but there have been numerous amendments to the ordinance since then.

It contains the following **recreation requirements** for proposed residential developments (SALDO §402.E.(5)):

*“Provide a development recreation area per the 1990 Valley Township Recreation Plan recommendation as follows:*

- (a) A recreation area of at least 0.021 acres per dwelling shall be provided in proposed developments of twelve (12) or more single family dwelling units or six (6) or more multi-family dwelling units, except as may be modified in (f) below.*
- (b) This area shall be suitable for active recreational uses without interfering with adjacent dwelling units, parking, driveways and roads.*
- (c) The total required recreation area shall be comprised of no more than two (2) separate individually contiguous areas not less than ¼ acre, graded and seeded at a slope acceptable to the Township’s Engineer for the purpose of a suitable recreational activity and the avoidance of retaining walls in these areas.*
- (d) Any required recreation area shall have a minimum dimension of one hundred (100) feet and a maximum to minimum dimension not exceeding 8:1.*
- (e) The minimum required recreation area shall not include (i) land within public or private streets or street rights-of-way or access drives, (ii) required setbacks, (iii) required front, rear or side yards, (iv) required separations between buildings, (v) required areas between lot lines and access drives or parking areas, (vi) parking areas, or (vii) wetlands or stormwater retention or detention basins.*
- (f) The minimum required area for recreation may be reduced by an area having a monetary value equal to that of the recreation equipment provided by the developer as approved by the Board of*

*Supervisors. The reduction shall not be more than fifty (50) percent of the original required minimum area.”*

The SALDO notably does not require the impact of a new development on existing Township recreational facilities to be addressed, whether it be a commercial, residential, or institutional use.

The SALDO was updated in 2019 to include enhanced standards for **protection of natural resources**:

- **Riparian Buffers:**
  - An additional 100-foot buffer (Zone 2) is established around all sides of water bodies that are identified as “impaired” by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP) beyond the 50-foot buffer (Zone 1) required in the Zoning Ordinance. The total buffer shall therefore be 150-feet around all sides of an “impaired” water body. For “non-impaired” water bodies, Zone 2 shall be an additional 50-feet, for a total riparian buffer of 100-feet. Allowable disturbance and activity within the Zone 2 buffer is limited. (SALDO §610.3)
  - Impacted riparian buffer areas shall be restored to a forested riparian buffer through removal of invasive species and planting of a diverse mix of native tree and shrub species. (SALDO §610.4)
- Existing natural features such as streams and wooded areas, and steep slopes must be preserved and incorporated into development plans (SALDO §611.1).
- When street trees are removed, supplemental trees shall be provided every 50 to 100 feet (SALDO §611.3).
- Woodland disturbance in excess of 10,000 square feet or 25 percent of an existing woodland area shall require replacement plantings in accordance with quantity, density, species, size, and standards set forth (SALDO §611.3).
- Existing trees shall be protected from damage during construction and grading activities (SALDO §611.4).



# ZONING MAP

## VALLEY TOWNSHIP CHESTER COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

### ZONING INDEX

- (C) CONSERVATION
- (R-1) RESIDENTIAL
- (R-2) RESIDENTIAL
- (NCO) NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL OFFICE
- (HC) HIGHWAY COMMERCIAL
- (RC) REGIONAL COMMERCIAL
- (I) INDUSTRIAL
- (PD) PLANNED DEVELOPMENT
- (MFR) MULTIPLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL OVERLAY OPTION



## Park and Open Space Resources

An inventory and assessment of existing parks was conducted in spring of 2017 to identify current facilities and to determine safety concerns, usage, overall condition and character. This information is used as a basis from which to identify overall park needs and to develop recommendations for park improvements, which is summarized in the following Chapter.

### Park Classifications

Parks and open space can be described in a variety of different ways. The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) classifications are widely accepted and are intended to be used at the local level. The park types listed in the adjacent column are adopted from the NRPA standards, which take into consideration community needs. It is possible that a single park can be classified as more than one type. The first four types are more illustrative of the size and service area of a park, while the others relate to its ownership, facilities, and intended use.

### Ownership of Parks and Open Space

When considering parks, it is common to think first of township-owned parks and other public places. While these may be the dominant opportunities for recreation, it is important to also take into account the full range of open space that may be available for use by residents of the community, in one form or another. This broader range of open space may include private and institutional properties which are open to public use, and even public-inaccessible areas which nevertheless are preserved as green space.

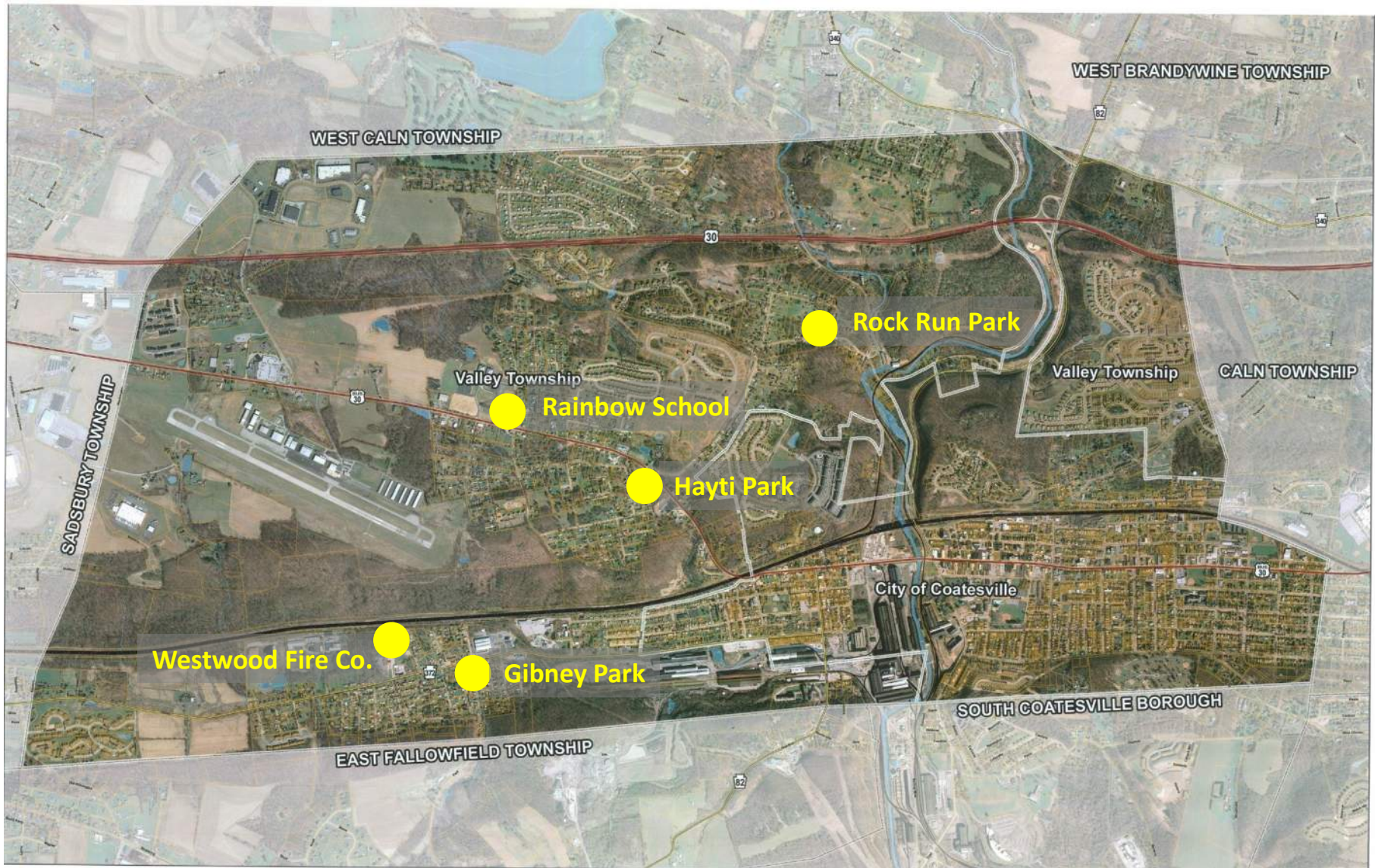
### Township Parks

Valley Township has a fairly narrow range of recreational facilities available to the residents of the Township. Currently the Township maintains three neighborhood parks. These are supplemented by several institutional and privately-owned recreation spaces.

### NRPA Park Classifications

- **Mini-Park** - Also known as a “pocket park,” is the smallest size park, usually serving one recreational need in a residential setting. It can be a small playground, ornamental garden, or sitting area, up to one acre in size and serving an area within a ¼ mile radius.
- **Neighborhood Park** - The basic unit of a municipal park system, serving one neighborhood and not more than one municipality. Many different activities can take place at one neighborhood park. Five to ten acres is often an optimal size.
- **Community Park** - Serves a broader area than a neighborhood park. The size is as needed to accommodate desired uses, but is often between 30 and 50 acres. Emphasis may be placed on the preservation of unique landscapes and open spaces within these parks. Programs and facilities at these parks attract people from surrounding municipalities or from around a county.
- **Regional Park and Park Reserve** - Large scale, regionally based parks and open spaces, focusing on natural lands preservation and nature recreation. Size can be in the thousands of acres. State and national parks and preserves fall under this category.
- **Sports Complex** - Consolidates heavily programmed athletic fields and associated facilities on larger and fewer sites strategically located throughout the community. These are optimally 40 to 80 acres and may also include community or neighborhood park facilities.
- **School Park** - Can be used in conjunction with, or in place of neighborhood or community parks. School sites often provide a majority of a community’s indoor recreation and community center facilities.
- **Special Use** - Single-purpose parks that serve a wide area because it contains unique features that cannot be provided by municipalities in many areas of a county.
- **Greenway** - Linear connection that ties park systems together to form a linear park, preserves natural resources, or provides space for a trail.
- **Private Park / Recreation Facility** - Park and recreation facility that is privately owned and operated as a club or commercial operation, contributing to the overall park and recreation system.
- **Undeveloped Open Space** - Publicly-owned open space that has not been developed with recreation facilities and is not part of a greenway. These spaces could become a park or remain as an undeveloped area for wildlife or as scenic visual relief.





## Valley Township Existing Parks and Open Space Resources

### Base Features

- US Roads
- PA Roads
- Local Roads
- Railroad
- Water Bodies
- Parcels
- Municipalities



0 950 1,900 3,800 Feet

Data Source: Municipalities, Parcels, Roads, Railroads- Chester County Bureau of Land Records & DCIS/GIS Department, 1997/2012.



## Hayti Park

This 1.5-acre neighborhood park is adjacent to the Valley Township Municipal Building on Route 30. The park consists of a children's playground with updated play structures, asphalt basketball court, picnic pavilion, and small lawn area. Parking is shared with the municipal building. The park is centrally located within the Township, is easily accessible, and is therefore heavily used.





### Rock Run Park

This 1.5-acre neighborhood park consists of a children's playground with updated play structures, asphalt basketball court, picnic pavilion, and small lawn area. There is no off-street parking, and there are no sidewalks on adjacent streets. The park is lightly used and has been subject to occasional vandalism and illicit behavior.





## Westwood (Gibney) Park

This 1.0-acre neighborhood park is located in the Westwood neighborhood and consists of a children's playground with updated play structures, asphalt basketball court, picnic pavilion, off-street parking lot, small wooded area, and small lawn area. The park is adjacent to the Sucker Run stream and experiences occasional wet conditions that have resulted in temporary closures of the playground.



### Quasi-Public Institutional Recreation Spaces

Valley Township is within the Coatesville Area School District. **Rainbow Elementary School** on Lincoln Highway is the one District school located in Valley. The school and its grounds are a hub of community activity and recreation. The school has three separate playgrounds available for public use, as well as a little-league-sized baseball field, and large lawn areas that are utilized for youth soccer. Generally in our region, public schools allow residents to use their facilities when not in use by school teams or classes. In Valley as elsewhere, the school allows use by residents and youth sports organizations, subject to schedule coordination and other limitations.



Rainbow Elementary School



The grounds of the **Westwood Fire Company** are regularly used for community events and recreation activities. The 4.5-acre property has a baseball field, large picnic facility, and large lawn area for events, along with indoor meeting space.

### Privately Owned Open Space

Some privately-owned properties in Valley are accessible to the public for recreational use, subject to limitations. Other properties may not be available to the public but are nevertheless protected from development to some degree. They may contribute to the scenic value of the landscape and serve an important role in conservation of natural resources. For these reasons, the public usually has an interest in seeing these resources preserved, even though they are in private hands. Examples of privately-owned recreation and open space include:

- **Homeowners Association Open Space:** In Valley as elsewhere, developers often set aside portions of a property for open space as part of the process of residential subdivision. The open space is usually preserved to satisfy an ordinance requirement to dedicated open space or preserve environmentally sensitive land. The land that is preserved is often owned and maintained by a homeowners association. There are several examples in Valley. While the dedicated open space on these properties does not necessarily provide for public access, it does provide a potential future opportunity for public use for recreational use such as walking trails, provided appropriate access easements can be negotiated. Small tot lots are present within several of these residential neighborhoods in the Township, and feature various combinations of swings, slides, and climbing equipment.
- **Vacant and Undeveloped Properties:** There are a number of undeveloped open space parcels that are not protected and could potentially be developed at any time (though Conservation Zoning does place restrictions on development). These parcels represent potential future opportunities for expansion of public recreation and open space.

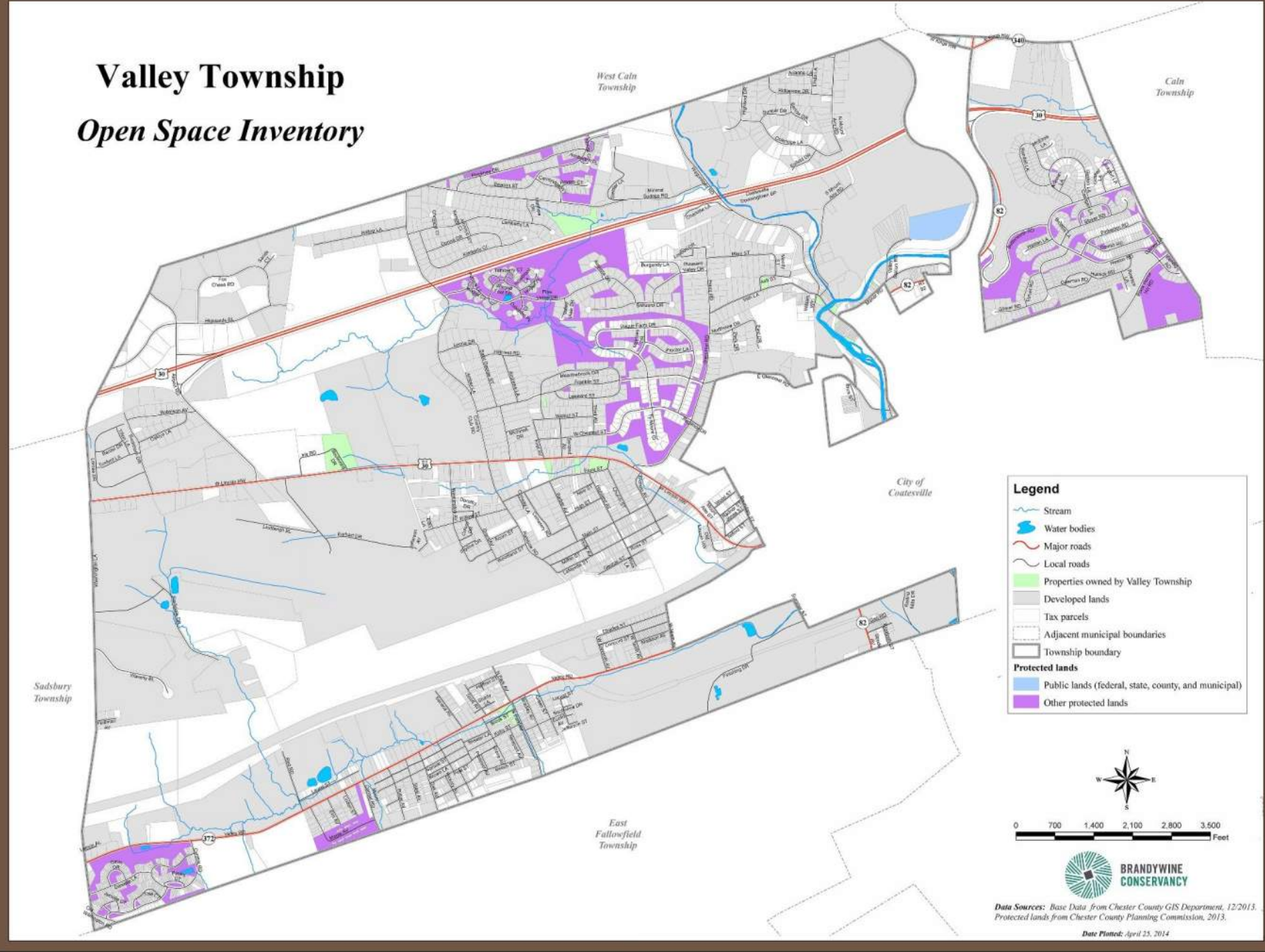


Westwood Fire Company



Meadowbrook Homeowners Association Tot Lot

# Valley Township Open Space Inventory





## Parks and Recreation Resources Beyond Valley Township

Outside Valley Township, many popular types of parks and recreation facilities are available to Valley residents. Even though these may not be within the Township's park system, they should be accounted for as part of the overall available recreation resources. To the extent these facilities exist elsewhere, it may not be necessary for them to be provided by Valley Township. This is a partial list of park and recreation resources available outside Valley but is not intended to be a comprehensive inventory.

### Community Parks in Nearby Municipalities

Several nearby municipalities have larger community parks that are open to use by Valley residents. Those closest include:

- In Coatesville, several facilities serve the needs of Valley residents for active recreation. These include Scott Field (football, baseball) and Coatesville Senior High School (various sports).
- The centerpiece of Sadsbury Township's parks and recreation facilities is Bert Reel Park. It features a baseball field, walking trail, basketball court, playground, snack shack and a large pavilion.
- In East Fallowfield, the Community Park was completed in 2010 and has more than 5 miles of trails along with playground, picnic pavilions, and other amenities.
- In West Caln Township, Layton Park offers a walking trail along with baseball fields, tennis courts, picnic pavilion, and other amenities. Birch Run Forest Preserve is 169 acres of open space, which offers a soft-surface walking trail.
- In Caln Township outside Downingtown, Lloyd Park is a 30-acre facility that offers one of the area's only dog parks, along with playgrounds, picnic areas, and fishing stream.

Proximity to Valley Twp. Recreational Activities	Available in Valley	Available within 5 Miles of Valley	Available within 20 Miles of Valley	Not Available within 20 Miles of Valley
Playground	X	X	X	
Football		X	X	
Basketball	X	X	X	
Baseball/Softball	X	X	X	
Soccer/Lacrosse	X	X	X	
Tennis		X	X	
Walking Trail - 1 mile or less		X	X	
Walking Trail - more than 1 mile		X	X	
Off-Street Bike Trail			X	
Passive Recreation	X	X	X	
Fishing		X	X	
Ice Skating			X	
Swimming		X	X	
Kayaking/Boating			X	
Golf		X	X	
Bowling			X	
Skiing				X
Skateboard Park			X	
Arboretum or Nature Center		X	X	
Regional Park (more than 50 acres)		X	X	
National Park or Wildlife Refuge				X

## Other Types of Public Parks

Public parks are often owned and managed at the County, State, or Federal level. Such parks are not present in Valley, though several are present in nearby municipalities and are available for use by Valley Township residents.

- **Chester County** manages six extensive parks that encompass more than 3,000 acres of open space. These tend to be large-scale regional parks with trails and other amenities. The nearest one is Hibernia Park, which consists of over 900 acres of trails, woodlands, meadows, open fields, play areas, pavilions, camping and picnic areas. Fishing sites include the Brandywine Creek's West Branch, Birch Run, and a children's pond. Boating and fishing are allowed on Chambers Lake. Campgrounds are open on weekends in May through October.
- There are numerous **Pennsylvania State Parks** in the area. The two closest are French Creek State Park (20 miles north) and Marsh Creek (17 miles east). Both parks offer substantial opportunities for hiking, fishing, boating, and swimming.
- **National Parks** are considered to have the highest level of scenic beauty or cultural importance to U.S. history. The closest National Park is Valley Forge National Historic Park in Valley Forge, PA, located approximately 30 miles to the east. This park has almost 30 miles of trails as well as extensive historic sites and natural areas.

## Special Use Facilities

- **Golf:** Several public and private golf courses are present in the area. The nearest courses open to the public are the Ingleside Golf Course (8 miles east) and Downingtown Country Club (14 miles east). Nearby private courses include Coatesville Country Club and Applecross Country Club.
- **Fitness:** Numerous private commercial fitness centers are located in the nearby vicinity. In addition, the Brandywine YMCA offers a wide range of fitness and recreation programs for all ages. This is one of several YMCA branches in the region and is located about 5 miles away, north of Coatesville.
- **Natural Areas and Nature Preserves:** There are numerous natural areas in the nearby region which are open to the public and serve as outstanding resources for experiencing the natural environment. Those closest to Valley include Sadsbury Woods Preserve. The 508 acres that make up Sadsbury Woods include one of the largest remaining, unfragmented woodlands in Chester County. The preserve is an important habitat for interior nesting birds and small mammals.



Hibernia  
Park



French Creek  
State Park

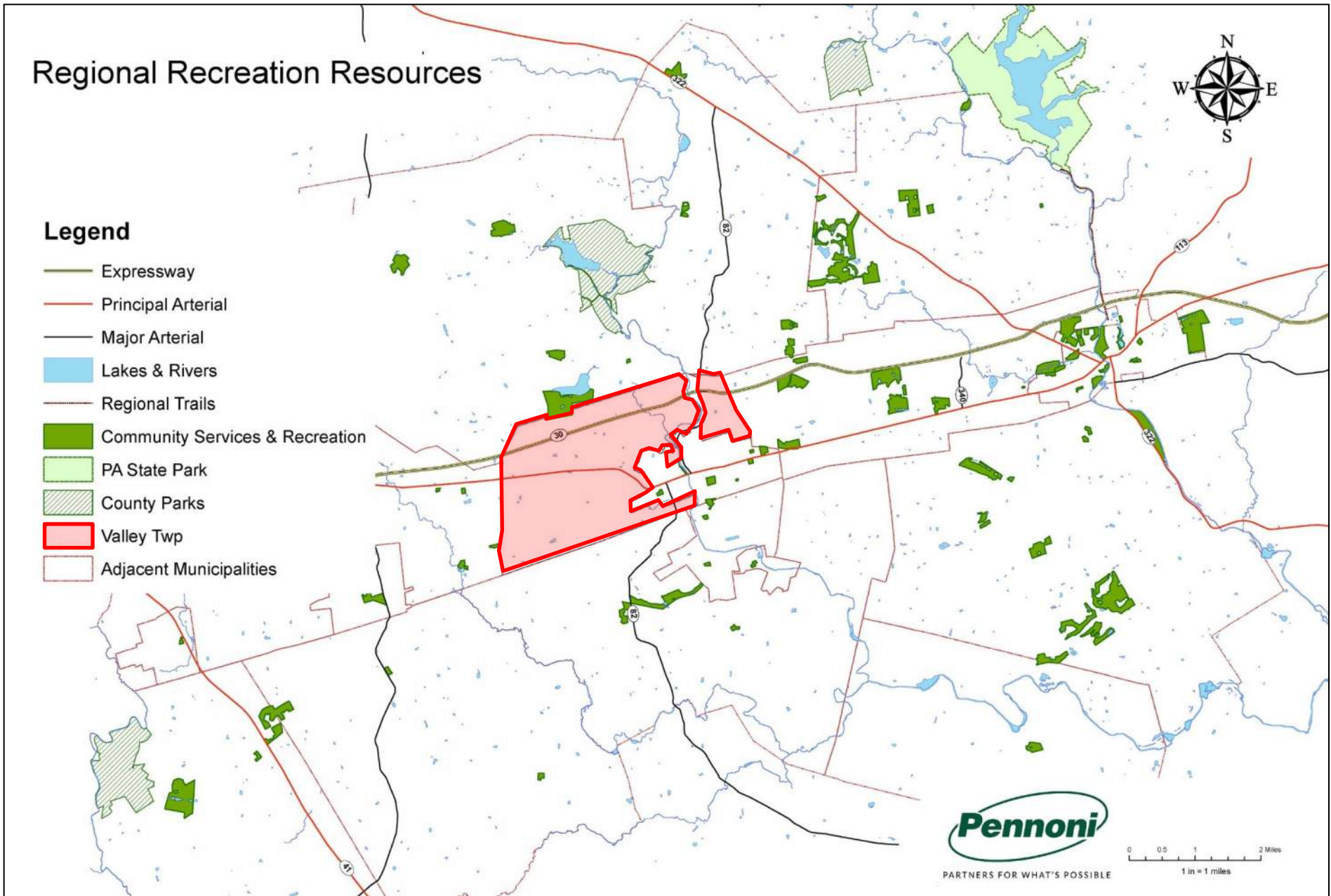


Sadsbury  
Woods  
Preserve

# Regional Recreation Resources

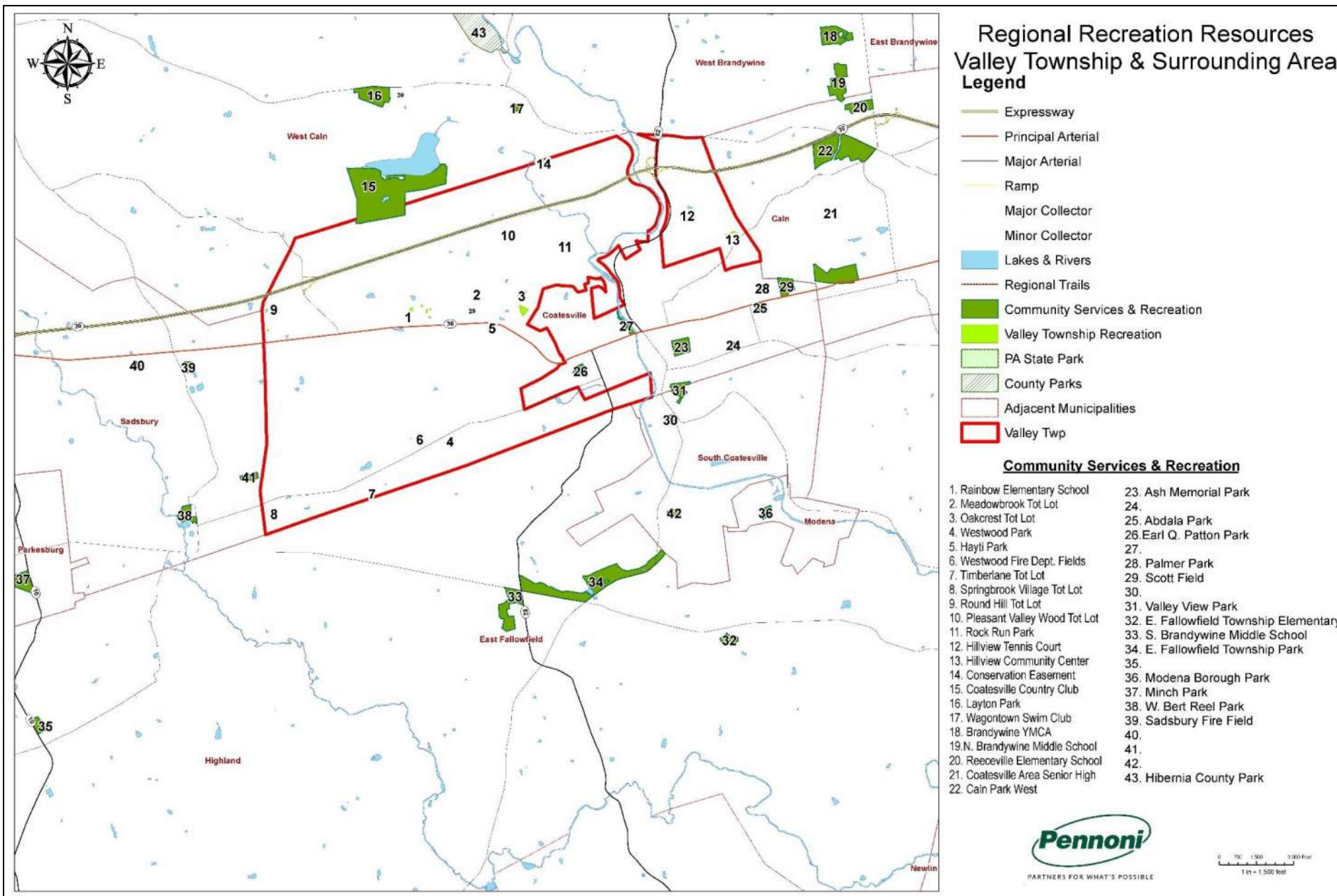
## Legend

- Expressway
- Principal Arterial
- Major Arterial
- Lakes & Rivers
- Regional Trails
- Community Services & Recreation
- PA State Park
- County Parks
- Valley Twp
- Adjacent Municipalities



0 0.5 1 2 Miles  
1 in = 1 miles





## Nearby Trail Resources

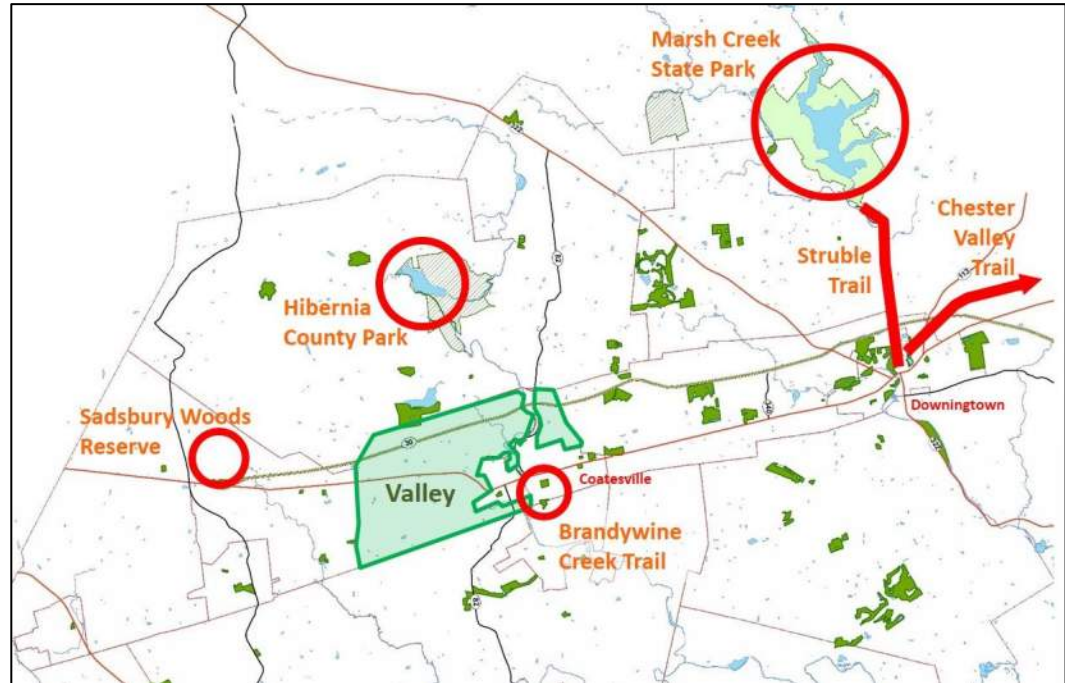
While there are no true public walking trails currently available within Valley Township, many existing trails are located nearby and are available for use by Valley residents. Chester County strongly advocates the development of a county-wide trail network, to include lengthy continuous trails that can extend across long distances to link destinations within the county and nearby region. Some of the nearby local trails include:

**Sadsbury Woods Preserve** is a 508-acre protected open space that includes one of the largest remaining, unfragmented woodlands in Chester County. There are more than 12 miles of unpaved trails ranging from easy to difficult. The preserve is an important habitat for interior nesting birds and small mammals. This preserve and hiking trail are owned and maintained by the non-profit organization, Natural Lands Trust.

**Hibernia County Park** consists of more than 900 acres of public open space, including trails, woodlands, meadows, open fields, play areas, camping and picnic areas. Hibernia is on the National Register of Historic Places and the Pennsylvania Inventory of Historic Places. It is also part of the Hatfield-Hibernia National Register Historic District.

The **Struble Trail** is managed by Chester County, and is a 2.6-mile multi-use trail that follows the East Branch of the Brandywine Creek as it flows south from Marsh Creek Lake towards Downingtown. Sitting on the original rail bed of the Waynesburg Rail Line, the trail is generally flat, and although some undulations occur, the terrain is considered low in user difficulty. This trail effectively connects Marsh Creek State Park to Downingtown.

**Marsh Creek State Park** is a 1,700-acre park containing nearly 18 miles of trails as well as Marsh Creek Lake, a popular resource for fishing, sailing, and migrating waterfowl.

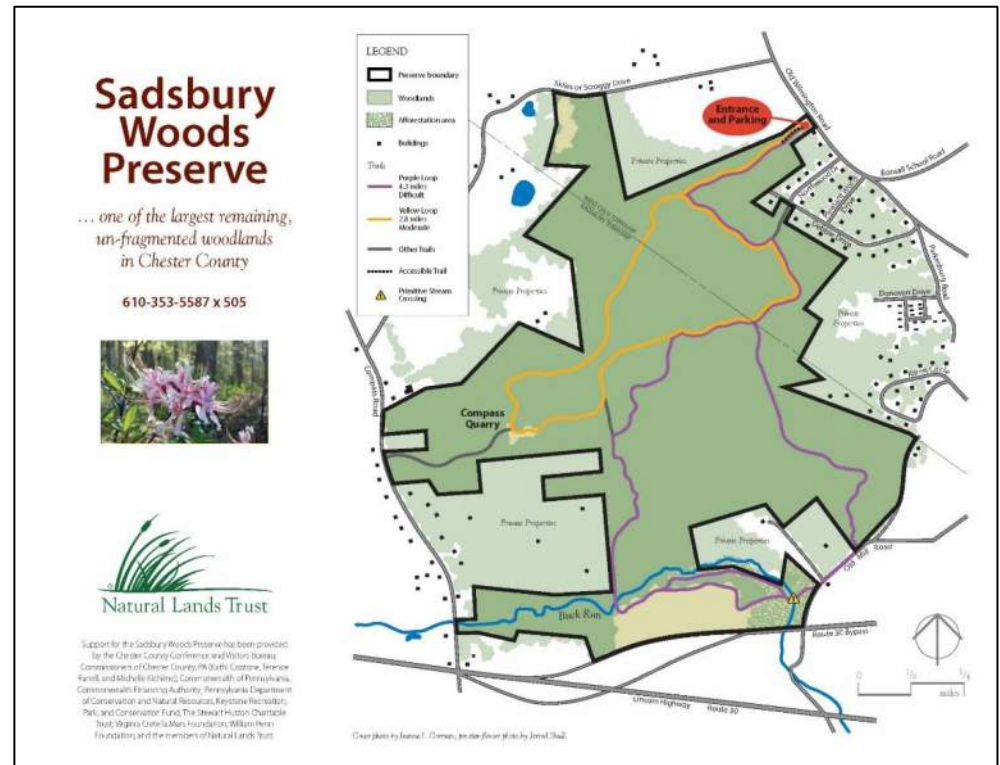
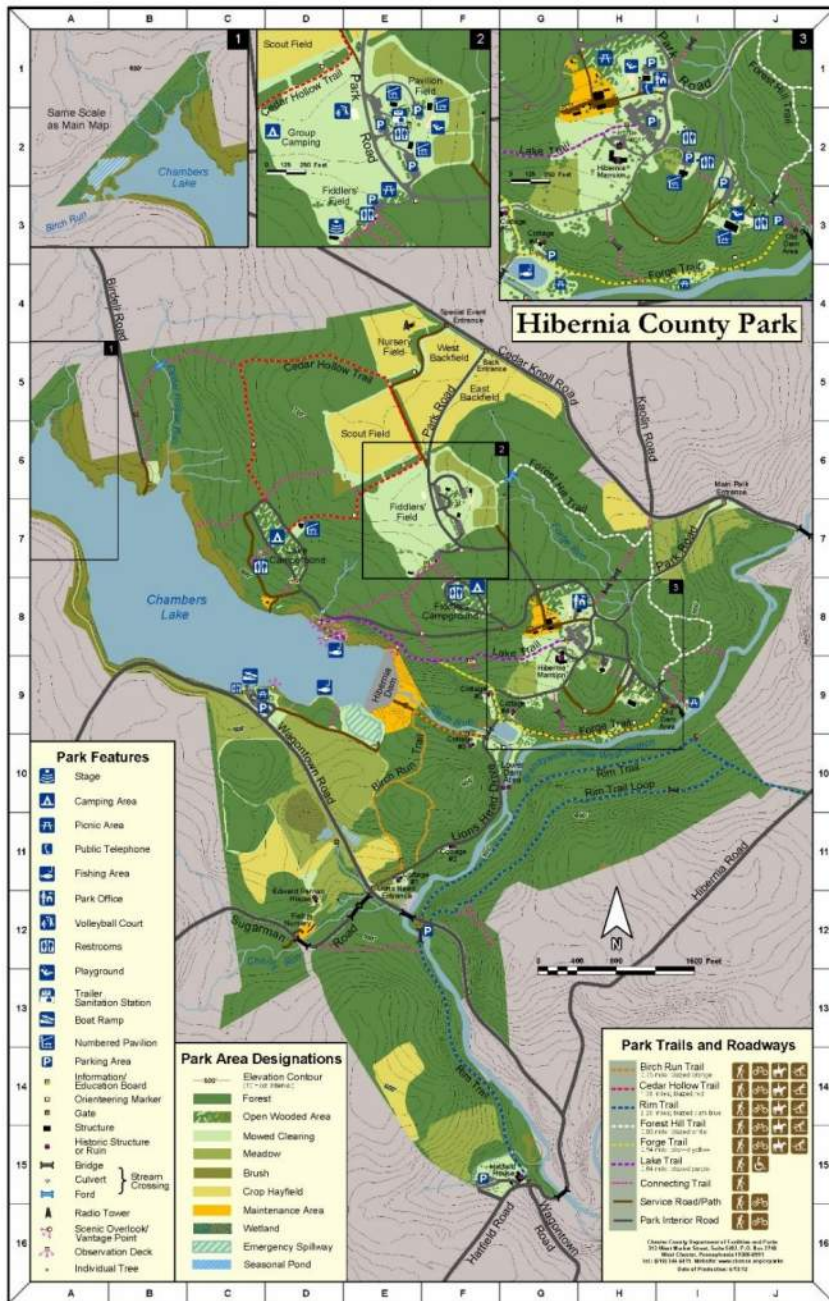


Hibernia Park



Struble Trail





There are no walking trails currently in Valley Township, but several excellent trails are located nearby.



## Park and Open Space Programming in Valley

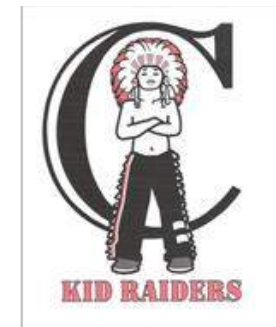
A strong sense of community, promoted and supported by active community and recreation programs, helps to create desirable places to live and work. Low-cost activities for all ages provide opportunities for the entire community to become active and involved. Community programming can also become local traditions that bring residents of all ages together. The traditions created help to promote community pride.

Valley residents participate in a wide range of recreational and community programs. Not all of these are offered exclusively within Township boundaries. These programs are offered in a variety of places and draw participants from both Valley and surrounding municipalities.

Current programming includes the following notable organizations and activities:

### Organized Sports Associations

- **Coatesville Area Little League (C.A.L.L.)** provides youth baseball for approximately 250 children from ages of 4-14 yrs. The league is chartered by Little League Baseball, and games are held at Scott Field in Coatesville, and other locations.
- **Caln Athletic Association (Caln AA)** is home to Caln AA Little League (Baseball and Softball), and Coatesville American Legion Baseball. The boundaries for Little League (ages 7-12) are Caln, West Caln and West Brandywine Townships. American Legion (ages 13-18) is the Coatesville Area School District, including Valley Township.
- **Coatesville Kid Raiders** is a member of the Bert Bell Memorial Conference, and open to children ages 6-13 in the Coatesville Area School District and surrounding areas, including students from other charter, public or private schools and home-schooled students. Games and practices are held at Coatesville High School and Scott Field.
- **Continental Football Club** offers a wide variety of soccer programs for players of all abilities ages 6-18. The league covers a wide geographic area that includes Exton, Downingtown, Coatesville, and other nearby communities. In Valley Township, youth games are held at Rainbow Elementary School.
- **Coaching Victory Basketball** runs a wide range of indoor youth basketball programs for boys and girls age 7-16. These programs primarily utilize the gymnasiums of the Coatesville schools, most commonly the high school.



*Local Sports associations offer a wide range of athletic programs.*

### Coatesville Area School District

The school district offers a wide range of age-appropriate sports and activities for students. Students who are Valley residents benefit from school programs and activities. However, those programs and activities are offered at the discretion of the school district and are not addressed within the scope of this study.

### Township Programs and Budget

Valley Township does not currently have the resources to provide paid staff dedicated to parks and recreation. The Township has a volunteer Parks and Recreation Board, which organizes several community events during the course of the year. These events include Valley Day (in October), Easter Egg Hunt, Christmas Party, and occasional summer concerts. In addition, community organizations such as churches and other groups sponsor events and programs available to Valley residents.

The Township has maintenance responsibility for Hayti Park, Rock Run Park, and Gibney Park. Maintenance tasks include mowing, trash collection, basic repairs, and overall oversight. The current Township Parks and Recreation Budget is included in the Appendix. It is understood by the Township that future new and improved facilities will require an enhanced annual maintenance budget. Provisions for that budget increase should be planned for in advance, as funds for capital improvements are identified.

### Other Programs

Valley residents often take advantage of other nearby opportunities to meet their needs for recreation programs. Other than youth sports associations described above, a popular local source of fitness and recreation programming is the Brandywine YMCA located about 5 miles away outside Coatesville. The YMCA offers an extensive range of youth and adult programs that are available to members. Programs include exercise and fitness classes, swimming lessons, a variety of sports, youth summer camps, and many other options. Memberships are available at a monthly or annual fee, and need-based financial assistance is available.

Another local option for fitness programs are private membership-based local gyms and fitness clubs. Nearby examples include Snap Fitness on Lincoln Highway in Valley, Philadelphia Rock Gym in Valley, and Planet Fitness and LA Fitness in Downingtown, along with many others.

*The Brandywine YMCA offers a wide range of programs available to Valley Township residents.*





## Chapter 3

# Needs and Opportunities

The previous chapter outlined the current parks facilities and programs available in Valley Township. This chapter examines these resources and envisions how the parks system in Valley could be better, by identifying issues of concern to residents, needs and wants for improved facilities and programs, and opportunities to make future improvements. Strategies to address these issues, needs, and opportunities are outlined in the following section, *Chapter 4: Recommendations*.

### Assessment of Needs

In order to assess the demand for parks and open space in Valley Township, it is helpful to rely on objective criteria and accepted standards. There is not one universal standard that can be applied to all communities. However, it appears clear that by any measure, Valley Township currently does not have a sufficient amount of public open space, and certainly does not have enough to serve a growing future population.

At one time, park planning relied on numerical standards based on population to determine open space needs. For example, one accepted standard was that communities should have at least 10 acres of park land per 1,000 residents. These numerical standards, however, provide only a rough idea of how well a community's park system serves the needs of its residents. Traditional numerical standards do not account for private open space, or lands owned and managed by institutions and school districts which share use of their facilities with the community, providing many of the same benefits as municipal parks. Nor do they account for age of the population, availability of natural resources, or specific local interests, or for the presence of nearby recreational facilities that happen to be outside the formal community boundaries.

In recent years, park planners have taken the view that the traditional fixed park and recreation standards were too crude and rigid to be applied uniformly to something as complicated and variable as recreation planning. The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) now emphasizes a systemic approach that accounts for unique needs and opportunities of a community.

Despite this trend away from numerical standards, the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) developed basic "parkland" standards

based on population density (*Recreational Open Space Needs Analysis for the Delaware Valley, 2002*). Chester County referenced this standard in its 2002 *Linking Landscapes* county-wide open space plan. According to the 2010 Census, the population of Valley is 6,794. With an area of 6.0 square miles, the population density for Valley is 1,132 people per square mile. This places the Township in the "medium" density class. For this class, the standard park acreage needed is 8.0 acres per 1,000 population. Based on this, *Linking Landscapes* estimates that Valley Township currently has a need for 38.1 additional acres, and estimates that based on projected population increases that need will rise to 68.8 acres by 2025.

Projected further out to 2040, the recent population increase is expected to continue, and need for park and open space will increase accordingly.

Today, the three parks owned and maintained by Valley Township take up only 4 acres. Additional area is provided at the Rainbow Elementary School, owned by the school district.

Parks and Open Space Area		
	2010 Census	2040 estimate
Valley Twp. Population	6,794	10,186
Current Park Acres <sup>1</sup>	16	tbd
Park Acres Needed <sup>2</sup>	54	82

<sup>1</sup> Includes Rainbow School

<sup>2</sup> Based on DVRPC formula of 8 acres per 1,000 residents

Public Priorities

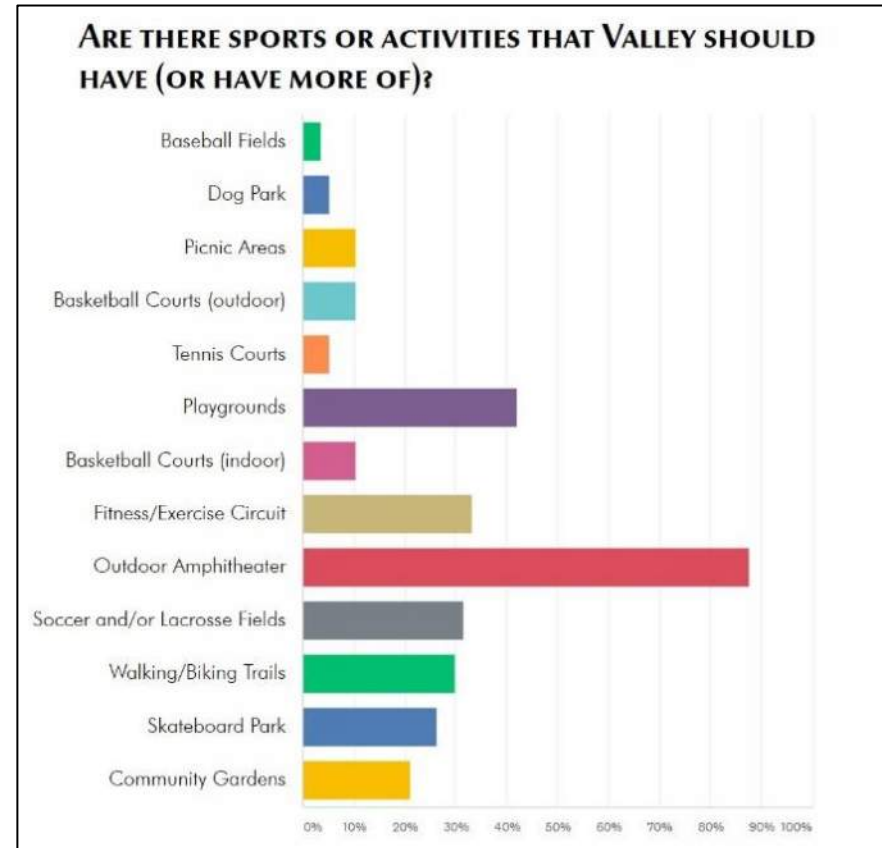
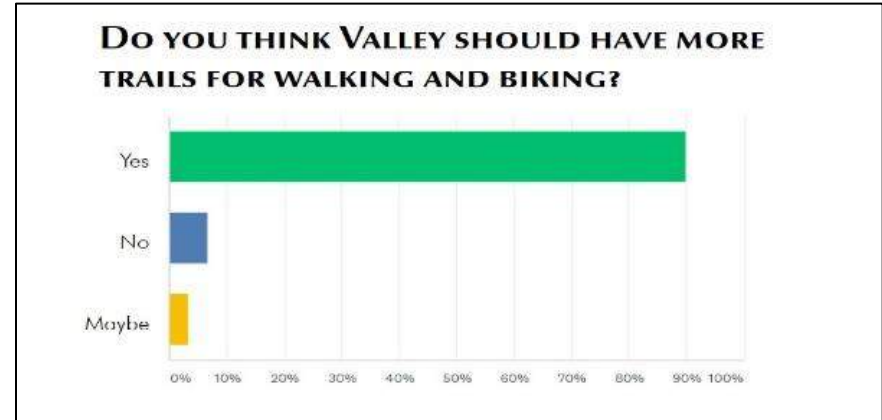
It is important for Valley to plan its future open space according to its own unique circumstances, to the priorities of its own residents, and for park needs to be balanced against other needs for land use in the community.

With this in mind, extensive discussion took place with the Steering Committee and other stakeholders in the Township to assess perceived needs and wants for park facilities and resources. The outcome of these discussions was a general consensus of concerns and priorities. These are presented in four primary categories:

- **Current Strengths:** Positive attributes to be protected and enhanced
- **Issues and Concerns:** Problems that should be addressed
- **Needs and Desires:** Improvements and new features that would be beneficial
- **Opportunities to Improve:** Unique circumstances that will help make improvements possible

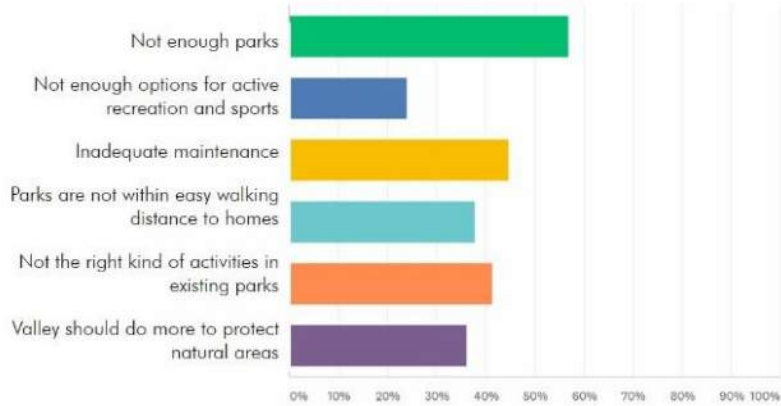
Opinion Survey

This Study was developed through extensive outreach and dialogue with a wide range of interested stakeholders, including local public officials, local institutions, and the general public. As part of the outreach effort, a public opinion survey was conducted over a two-month period in spring 2017. The survey was available online and was also advertised and distributed to residents in hard copy form. A total of 79 responses were received. Residents were asked a variety of questions about their views of the current parks and open space in Valley, and their opinions on what improvements they would most want to see. Some questions were multiple choice, and others were open-ended to allow respondents to describe their opinions in their own words. Overall public opinions are incorporated into the summary of strengths, concerns, and desires outlined below.

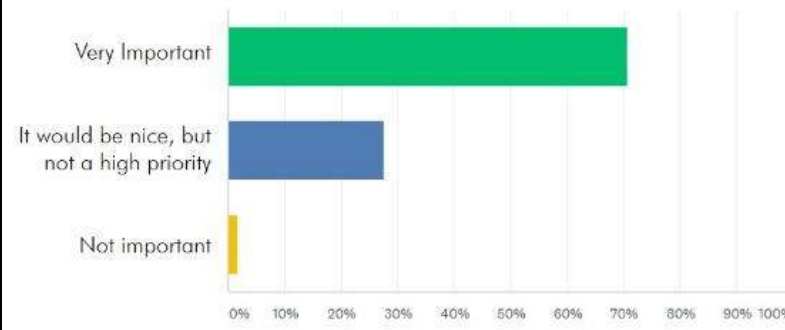




### WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE BIGGEST PROBLEMS FACING PARKS IN VALLEY?



### HOW IMPORTANT DO YOU THINK IT IS TO HAVE MORE NATURE-ORIENTED PARKS AND ACTIVITIES?

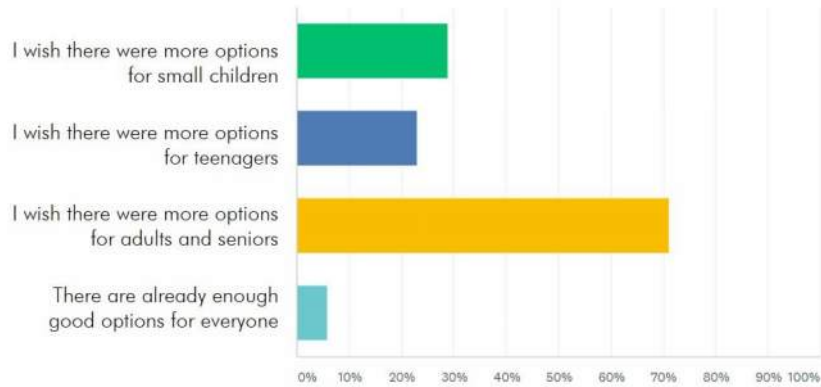


### Current Strengths

While the focus of the Study was predominantly on ways to enhance public open space in Valley, it was important to identify the perceived strengths of the current parks and open space system, in order to protect and enhance those aspects of the system that are already of high value. During analysis of the current system, several components were recognized as strengths:

- **Community Events:** Valley residents enjoy the various community events hosted by the Township throughout the year and wish for more.
- **Growing Population:** Valley is one of the fastest-growing communities in the county. While the increasing population will create greater demand for parks and recreation facilities, this growing population can also provide resources to enable new parks, and users to justify them.
- **Rainbow Elementary School:** Located in the heart of the Township on the main traffic artery, the elementary school in many ways functions as a de facto community center. The school grounds hold multiple playgrounds, as well as the only true athletic playing fields in the Township. Portions of the school property are undeveloped, providing room for future expansion of open space amenities.

### DOES VALLEY OFFER ENOUGH OUTDOOR OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE OF DIFFERENT AGES?



- **Neighborhood Parks:** The three current neighborhood parks are generally well-used by younger residents, and they have potential as hubs of social activity at the neighborhood level. This potential could be enhanced through park-specific improvements and the involvement of local residents.
- **Natural Areas:** Valley may lack dramatic scenery or widely-known natural attractions. But the current undeveloped open areas of the Township are nevertheless appreciated by residents. The rural character that remains in some places is valued for its visual character. These stream corridors are the best place in the Township to experience the natural landscape up close, and they are also important elements of Valley's cultural heritage with its origins as a mill town.

### Issues and Concerns

While parks and open spaces in Valley are generally appreciated, this Study encouraged the Committee to identify problems that should be addressed and ways that current parks could be improved. A range of issues and concerns emerged, including the following:

- **Vandalism** is perceived as a problem, both as a visual blight and a threat to public safety. General maintenance in the parks is adequate but uneven and is limited to basic upkeep rather than major improvements.
- Valley residents generally need to go outside the Township for active recreation. Most youth sports are centered in nearby Coatesville. However, with a **growing population**, sentiment is that Valley deserves its own recreation facilities.
- There is a **general lack of variety in the current parks** and playgrounds in Valley. The three main parks offer the same basic amenities – playground equipment, basketball court, and small pavilion.
- There is a **lack of walking trails** in the Township. Residents tend to drive to nearby places such as Hibernia Park. A closer alternative would be preferred.
- **Development pressure** is gradually eating up remaining open space. There is a concern that the visual character of the Township will change if too much open space disappears.
- The **stream bank corridors** of the West Branch of the Brandywine Creek, Rock Run, and Sucker Run are valuable natural resources that should be protected for future public access as well as for environmental conservation. Ownership is currently mostly in private hands.



*Rainbow Elementary School has existing facilities that could be expanded as a hub of recreation and open space in the Township.*



## Needs and Desires

There is a perceived need for different, enhanced, or enlarged facilities, to meet the level of demand and address the interests of current and future residents. Prominent needs and desires are as follows:

- There is a perceived need for **athletic playing fields**. Currently residents of Valley must travel to other nearby communities to participate in active recreation, even for common basic facilities such as youth baseball and soccer. This need was reflected less in the public opinion survey but was confirmed by youth sports organizations.
- While parks often cater to the needs of children and youth sports, there is strong desire for open space resources in Valley to **appeal to all ages**, including senior citizens.
- Residents enjoy the opportunity for community events, and there is a desire for **public events space** that has improved facilities such as an amphitheater and supporting amenities such as restrooms and picnic pavilion.
- **Trails for walking and biking** were a frequently-noted desire expressed by residents in the opinion survey and public meetings. Trails have appeal for users of all ages and abilities and provide an opportunity to experience the natural environment.
- Closely related to trails is an appreciation for the natural environment. Residents express a desire to **preserve open space**, to protect the scenic quality of the Township and to promote environmental sustainability.
- A **dog park** is desirable, as there is no such facility in Valley. Off-leash dogs are perceived to be a problem at existing parks.
- Recycling, composting, community gardening, and other **environmentally sustainable** practices should be accommodated within the parks system, along with environmental education.

*New types of park features desired in Valley include a dog park, trails, and outdoor amphitheater.*





Opportunities to Improve

In considering ways to achieve stated goals, there are a number of advantageous circumstances that present opportunities to address current issues and needs. These opportunities include:

- There is an undeveloped 38-acre parcel owned by the school district next to Rainbow Elementary School, which could be put to use for public recreation. A local youth sports organization – the Continental Football Club – previously expressed interested in partnering with the school district and Township to develop the site for use as athletic fields. These fields could be used for a wide variety of active recreation and events, with shared programming by the Township, School District, and youth sports organizations. This would provide a high-quality recreation site for Valley residents, as well as draw users from outside the Township, benefitting economic development.
- Valley Township is going to relocate the current Township administration building to a new site just to the west of Rainbow Elementary School on Lincoln Highway. Construction is ongoing, and the building is expected to be occupied in 2020. This property is adjacent to the vacant parcel that may be developed for soccer fields. There is great potential for all parties to work collaboratively to maximize the synergy created by these projects. The school and Township could work together on a master plan incorporating all three properties, to allow for shared parking, amenities, and facilities.
- Just to the west of the proposed site of the new Township administration building, a large residential and commercial land development project is proposed known as Valley Suburban Center. As part of the land development agreement, the developer will be required to dedicate a portion of the property for public open space. The Township has the opportunity to utilize this area in a manner that will be most advantageous to public recreation, such as for passive recreation, dog park, and/or nature-oriented activities.
- There are two linear utility corridors that have the potential for development as recreation trails. North of and roughly parallel to

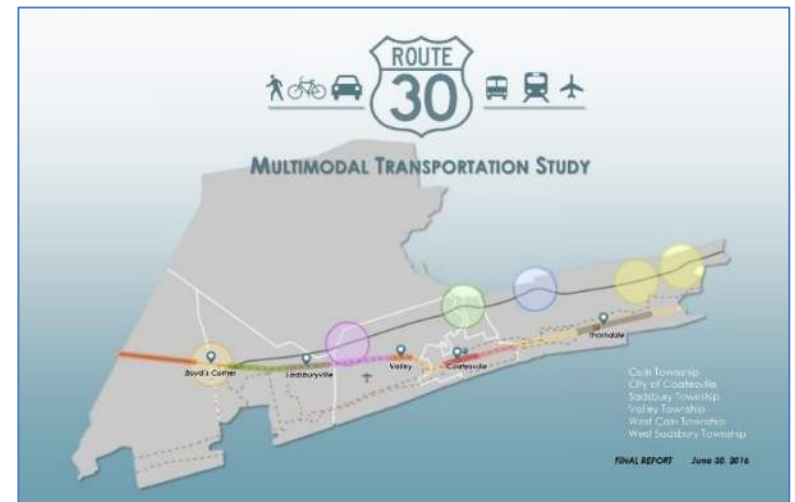
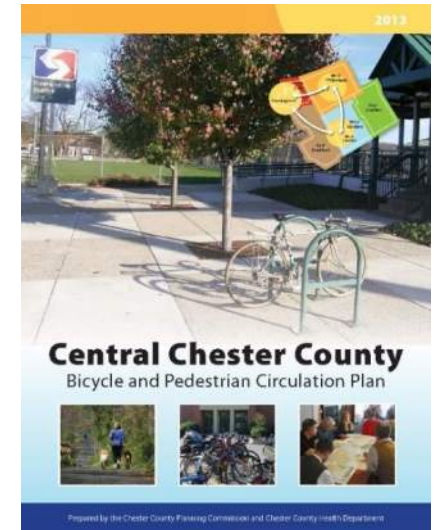
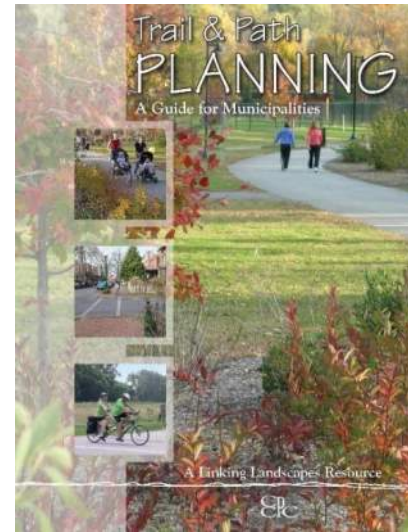


*An undeveloped parcel next to Rainbow Elementary School has strong potential for active recreation.*



Lincoln Highway, Transcontinental Pipe has an easement over a linear corridor for an underground natural gas line. This corridor is generally maintained and cleared by the utility company. It offers an excellent opportunity for a public recreation trail, in a way that can connect potential new parks and recreation areas to residential neighborhoods, community facilities, and natural areas. Another possibility for a linear trail is the Amtrak rail line that runs along the southern edge of the Township. The lands to the north of the rail line are undeveloped, and are already being used informally as (unauthorized) ATV trails. A recreation trail parallel to the tracks could serve as an east-west artery in the growing regional trail system.

- The existing Township administration building at 890 W. Lincoln Highway will be vacated upon occupancy of the new administration building. This building is located on the same lot as the Hayti Park. While the building is aged and in need of significant rehabilitation, it presents an opportunity for re-purposing as a community facility (following rehabilitation) or for demolition and expansion of the Hayti Park.
- Though development pressure has increased in recent years, **undeveloped properties** remain which could be conserved for open space or developed for recreation. These are generally associated with natural features that are natural impediments to development, such as steep slopes, wetlands, and streams.
- **Regional planning for trails** in Chester County has been underway on several levels. Both Chester County and the Brandywine Conservancy have promoted trail development in the County and have studied ways to make trail connections through and nearby to Valley. It would be a benefit to the Township to collaborate with the County and other planning agencies to plan and implement trails in Valley.
- There is a strong opportunity for Valley to **partner with neighboring municipalities to provide enhanced parks and recreation programs** and services. In 2019, the Township intends to participate in a peer study along with the City of Coatesville, Caln Township, and others, to explore ways in which they can collaborate and share resources to provide a higher level of service collectively than each of these could provide individually.



*A significant amount of planning for trails has taken place locally and in the region.*



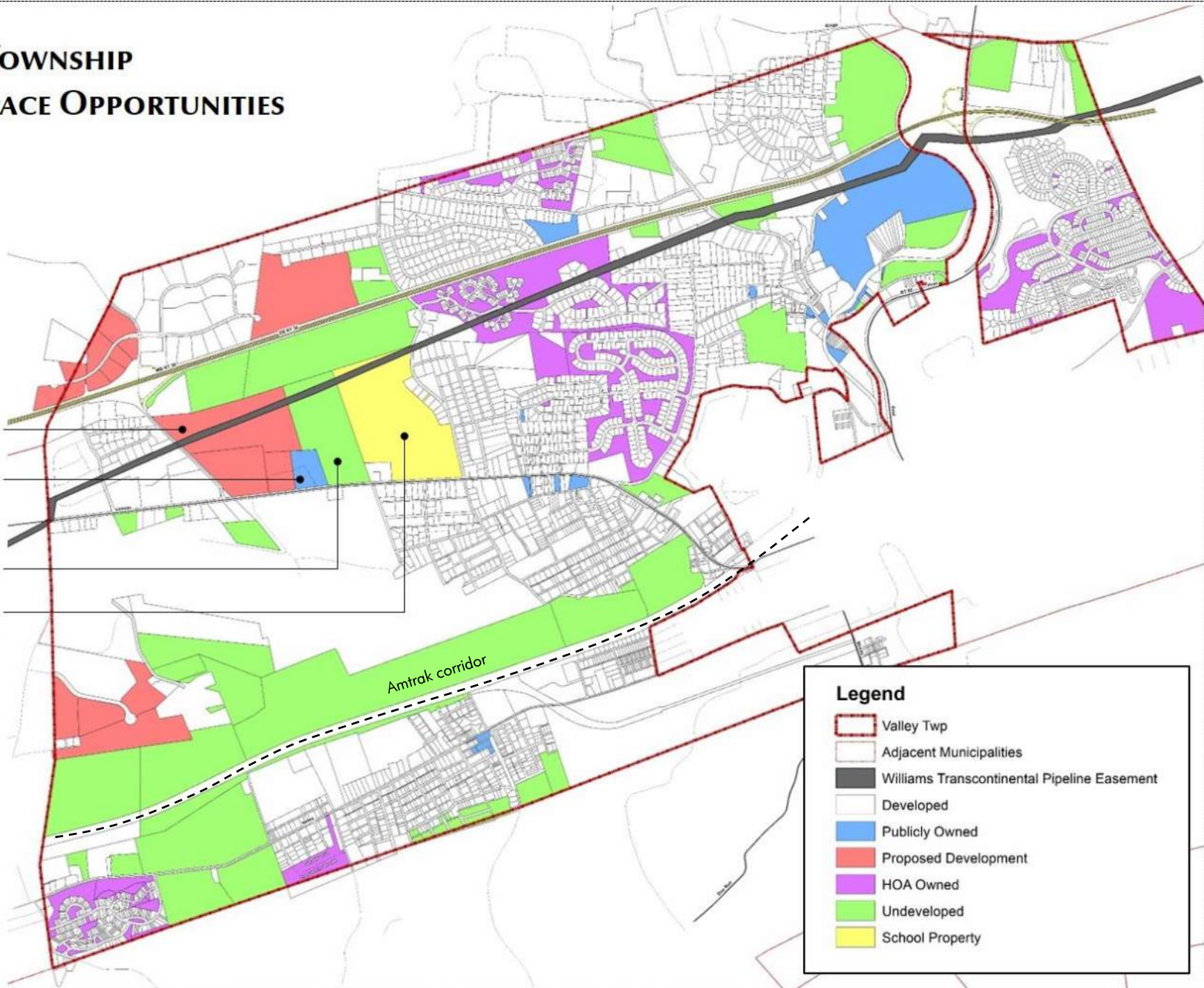
# VALLEY TOWNSHIP OPEN SPACE OPPORTUNITIES

Valley  
Suburban Center

Site of new  
Township Bldg.

Undeveloped School  
District Property

Rainbow Elementary  
School



**Legend**

- Valley Twp
- Adjacent Municipalities
- Williams Transcontinental Pipeline Easement
- Developed
- Publicly Owned
- Proposed Development
- HOA Owned
- Undeveloped
- School Property



## Trends in Recreation Programming

The range of potential recreation programming is practically endless. The ideal range of programs will differ for every community, depending on the age, interests, and ability of its residents, as well as the type and quality of its park resources. In general, recreation activities are classified into two categories: **Active recreation** typically consists of sports and athletics that require higher levels of movement for participation. **Passive recreation** generally involves less vigorous levels of activity, such as walking, picnicking, or wildlife observation.

There are a number of national trends in recreation and programming that are relevant to Valley, including the following:

- **Increasing participation in sports**, such as soccer and lacrosse, result in the need for additional sport facilities. Nationally, about 60 percent of boys and 47 percent of girls will participate in organized youth sports by age six. Most children will play sports at some time: only about 15 percent of boys and girls will never play a team sport.
- **Certain types of facilities are growing in overall popularity, in our region and elsewhere:**
  - **Dog parks** - Dog parks are the segment of public parks experiencing the fastest rate of growth in the United States.
  - **Spray parks** - A spray park is a zero-depth play area where water sprays from structures or ground sprays and then is drained away before it can accumulate. When properly designed, spray parks offer cost-effective, safe, and fun additions to public play spaces that are suitable for children of all ages. There is no need for lifeguards, and water jets can be easily controlled to turn off and on at specific times. Spray parks provide the opportunity to engage in water without the cost and safety risk of traditional swimming pools.
- **Self-directed recreation activities are important.** While organized recreation programs create opportunities for recreation, it is also important to provide people with the opportunity to create their own activities informally. This includes the unprogrammed use of athletic facilities such as tennis and basketball courts, as well as informal activities like hiking, biking, fishing, picnicking, and socializing.



*Naturalized playscapes are becoming popular as an alternative to traditional play equipment.*



*Spraygrounds are safe and fun additions to playgrounds.*

- **Partnerships are important.** Municipalities can maximize their park and program resources by partnering with outside organizations for financial resources, recreation programs, and park maintenance.
- **Strengthening connections to the natural environment** is becoming a high priority of citizens, conservation organizations, and government. Across the country and our region, people recognize the importance of conserving nature and developing facilities that help people directly experience the natural areas in their locality. The increased popularity of nature trails is an evidence of this trend.
- **Health and wellness is a growing national concern.** Long-term, the nation's biggest health concern remains obesity. Despite all the youth leagues, the waistlines of America's children are growing. According to national statistics, 17 percent of children were obese in 2009-10; almost triple the rate of 1980. Many people, including both adults and children, fail to get minimum amounts of daily/weekly exercise.
- **Trends in Recreation Programming** include:
  - **Health and fitness.** Parks and recreation departments have begun to take an active role in public health and fitness through creative recreation programs.
  - **Generational programming** encompasses the development of recreation programs for all ages young to old, as well as opportunities for people of different ages to participate together.
  - **Life sports** include activities that people can play throughout their lifetime, such as bicycling, kayaking, swimming, jogging, and tennis.
  - **Collaborative programming** is becoming more prevalent, as the public and private sectors frequently collaborate to provide programs and services.

### Park Accessibility

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal law which prohibits discrimination based on disability. The federal government publishes regulations

which outline accessibility standards setting minimum requirements for newly designed and constructed or altered facilities, public accommodations, and commercial facilities to be readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities. The most current regulations were updated in 2010, entitled "2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design."

Park facilities, designed for and used by the public, are required to comply with these regulations. The regulations cover both new construction and alterations to existing facilities that were commenced after January 1992. Certain exemptions do apply, such as if it were structurally impracticable to provide the accommodations.

Design professionals are familiar with the regulations and inherently incorporate the standards into new designs. For exterior park facilities, this includes steps, handrails, ramps and curb ramps, etc. The regulations also include standards which apply specifically to public playgrounds and sports facilities. One of the township-wide recommendations, and many of the park specific recommendations for improvements, include elements of ADA compliance. The most frequently noted are:

- **Accessible Routes:** Regulations state that at least one accessible route, most commonly a paved sidewalk, be provided to the site and shall connect accessible buildings, elements and facilities within the site. An accessible route is required to connect to the boundary of each area of sports activity (both courts and field sports). For play areas, accessible routes must be provided to each play area, and also within the play area to connect accessible play components. Various types of rubber surfacing or engineered wood mulch can provide the accessible surface within the play area.
- **Play Areas:** For a new playground, or if an existing playground receives new equipment, regulations require that a certain number of the individual components, based upon the total number and type of components, be accessible by children with disabilities, on an accessible route, and integrated into the play area.

# Chapter 4

## Recommendations

The underlying purpose of the Valley Township Comprehensive Open Space, Recreation, and Environmental Resources Plan is to identify opportunities and set priorities for parks, recreation, and open space enhancements in the Township. The following recommendations represent a suggested course of action for Valley to follow during the next ten years, and represent the priorities set by the Steering Committee during the course of this Study. They include a wide variety of actions. Some recommended projects are straightforward and relatively low-cost. Others are ambitious long-term initiatives that will require significant funds. Some involve policy decisions that cost nothing, only the will to act.

Even with successful implementation of all the recommendations contained here, it is possible that future needs for open space may exceed the Township’s ability to provide it. In Chapter 3 it was noted that based on general standards for municipal open space, the total available in Valley Township is deficient. The recommendations that follow propose to add significant acreage. The Township should remain vigilant for other opportunities to expand open space that may arise in the future.

### Highest Priority Recommendations

#### 1. Partner with School District to develop the parcel adjacent to School for active recreation

Great potential exists to create a community-oriented open space and recreation hub adjacent to the Rainbow Elementary School on Lincoln Highway. The Rainbow School already serves as a central community facility for Valley Township, with multiple playgrounds, playing fields, and unprogrammed open space. Immediately to the west of the school is an undeveloped parcel owned by the school district. Initial discussions have taken place between the School District and Valley Township, with the intent for the Township to obtain a long-term lease for the property and develop it for community recreation. Bordering that property on its west side is the site of the new Valley Township Municipal Building, expected to be completed construction and occupied in early 2020. The close proximity of these public-oriented uses presents the opportunity to develop them in a coordinated manner as a community hub, with public buildings, recreation, and associated amenities that relate to each other and are connected by a system of walking trails.

Parks and Open Space Area		
	2010 Census	2040 estimate
Valley Twp. Population	6,794	10,186
2019 Current Park Acres <sup>1</sup>	16	16
Parcel next to Rainbow School	na	37.5
Valley Suburban Center	na	7.5
Trail Easement Areas	na	21
Total Park Acres	16	82
Park Acre Standard <sup>2</sup>	54	82
Acreage Deficit/Excess	-38	0

<sup>1</sup> Includes Rainbow School and Fire Company property

<sup>2</sup> Based on DVRPC formula of 8 acres per 1,000 residents



The undeveloped parcel next to Rainbow Elementary School has great potential for active recreation

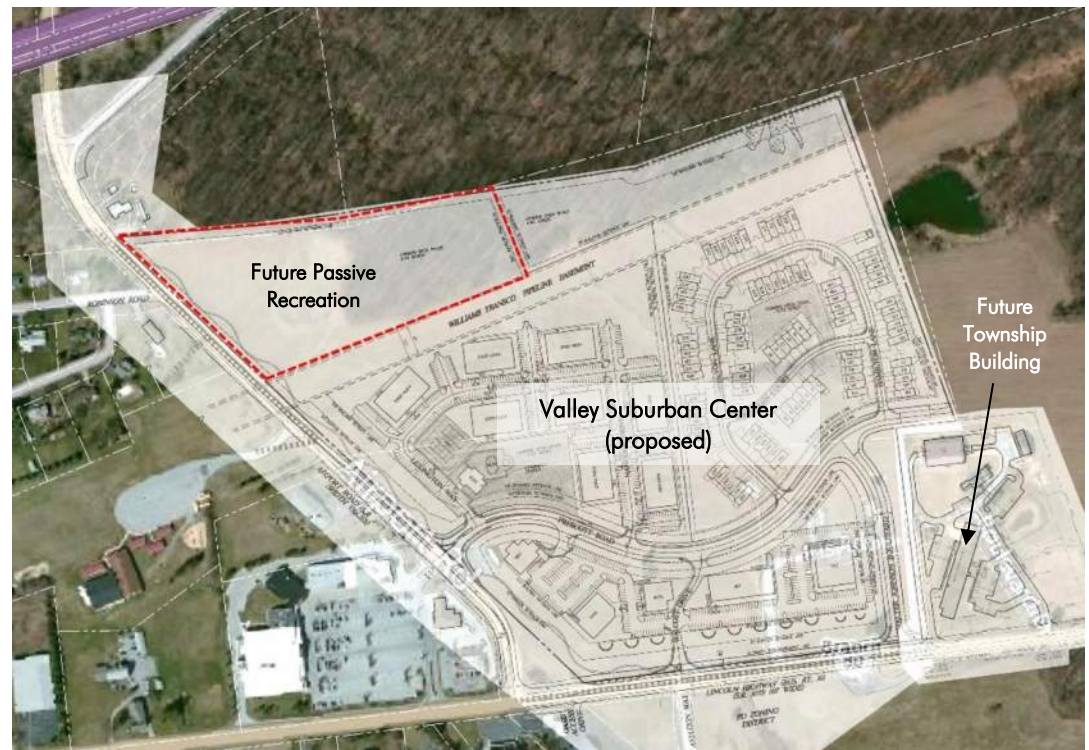


The potential of the site for active recreation can satisfy demand of local youth sports organizations for new and improved fields for soccer, baseball, and other sports. Representatives of local youth sports organizations were actively engaged in the development of this Study. They have indicated a willingness to partner with the Township on development and use of the parcel to include public-use trails, a community playground, pond access for fishing and wildlife observation, and shared parking in addition to the soccer fields.

With the new Township Building next door, the Township should work closely with the sports organizations and the School District to explore ways that development can create mutual benefit. For example, parking, restrooms, playground areas, and other features may potentially be shared, so that redundant features are not created. The layout for the proposed field improvements should be done such that future trail connections to adjacent facilities can be easily made.

### 2. *Acquire and develop land dedicated from Valley Suburban Center property*

The potential for a community open space hub can be further expanded to the west through collaboration with the developers of the proposed Valley Suburban Center property, at the corner of Lincoln Highway and Airport Road. As part of the approval process for the planned mixed-use development, a 7.5-acre portion of the property is proposed to be dedicated to the Township for open space and/or recreation purposes. Located on Airport Road, this potential new public open space appears to be suitable for development as passive recreation, dog park, and/or trailhead access for a potential recreation trail system. The development is in the final stages of the Subdivision and Land Development process, and the land dedication could occur as early as 2020.



*Land proposed for dedication to the Township from the proposed Valley Suburban Center development can be utilized for passive recreation*

### 3. Develop Loop Trail to Connect Community Recreation Areas

Running diagonally through all these properties – the school, neighboring parcels, and Valley Suburban Center property – is a utility easement used for an underground natural gas pipeline. Such easements are natural locations for recreation trails, and locally as across the country they are commonly utilized for this purpose. Utility corridors are typically clear of obstructions and maintained for service access by utility companies. Adding a public trail within this space can benefit the utility by bringing a higher level of maintenance provided by the Township and improving accessibility for service access. This particular easement is in an ideal location to connect a variety of planned community facilities and natural features to the residential population. This trail can be the spine of a future trail system connecting the Rainbow Elementary School, new Township Building, planned recreation fields, and natural areas currently inaccessible to the public. The trail can also connect to residential neighborhoods in the northern half of the Township, allowing residents to access community facilities by foot or bicycle on an off-road pathway. The Township should enter a dialogue with the utility company to discuss terms and parameters to allow potential trail development.



Above: A potential trail loop (green) can connect community facilities and recreation with residential neighborhoods (yellow).

Below: Off-street trails are a high priority for Valley residents.





# RECREATION IMPROVEMENTS

VALLEY TOWNSHIP, PENNSYLVANIA



PENNONI ASSOCIATES INC.  
121 Chestnut Drive, Suite 207  
Newark, DE 19711-4210  
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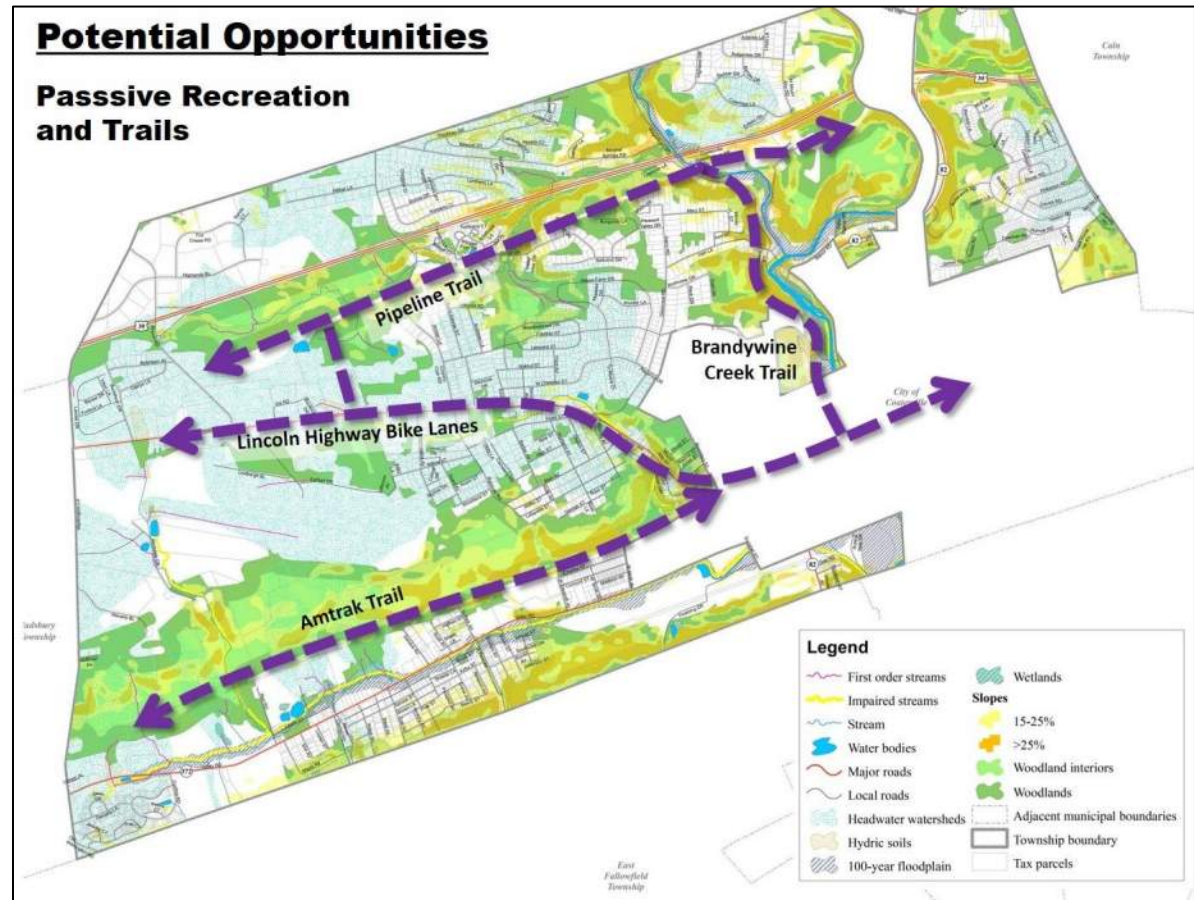
## Township-Wide Planning Recommendations

### 1. Prepare Township-Wide Trails Master Plan

In addition to the potential trail network mentioned above that could connect recreation areas along Lincoln Highway, a broader trail system could be developed to serve all areas of the Township. Trail planning for broader areas of the county has been underway for some time by such organizations as the Brandywine Conservancy and Chester County Planning Commission. This prior planning has resulted in several concepts that could impact Valley Township. These include:

- The Chester Valley Trail is a popular recreation greenway that runs roughly parallel to Route 202 through Exton, Malvern, and King of Prussia. There is a long-term desire for the trail to be extended west through Downingtown, Coatesville, and beyond. In Valley Township, this could occur along the Lincoln Highway corridor, or along the Amtrak rail corridor that runs along the southern edge of the airport property.
- The Route 30 Corridor (Lincoln Highway) has been studied for ways to improve multi-modal accessibility, including dedicated bicycle lanes and sidewalks.
- The Brandywine Conservancy has advocated for a trail to be developed along the length of the Brandywine Creek. Where the West Branch of the Brandywine Creek flows through Valley Township, property rights-of-way and steep topography would make this a difficult proposition, but it should be studied more closely.

These various ideas could be pulled together into one cohesive plan for Valley Township. Such a plan also should focus on smaller-scale trail opportunities to connect individual residential neighborhoods into an overall Township-wide trail network.



### 2. Strengthen community involvement in parks planning and maintenance

The Township should encourage the creation of “Friends” groups to act as stewards of individual parks and promote other ways to maximize community input.

### 3. Determine the best location to create a township-wide dog-park

An off-leash fenced dog park is desired but may be something many residents do not want in their “back yard.”

### 4. Clarify administrative responsibilities with respect to implementing parks improvements

Within the Township administrative structure, roles and responsibilities should be clearly defined so that specific steps to implement recommended improvements can be carried out effectively.



*The public should be included in planning for neighborhood parks*

## Site-Specific Recommendations

### 1. Westwood Fire Company

The grounds of the Westwood Fire Company are regularly used for community events and recreation activities. The 4.5-acre property has a baseball field, large picnic facility, and large lawn area for events. The baseball field is seldom used and is in need of rehabilitation. A community partner should be found which will commit to using and maintaining the field, or repurposing the space to a different community use. The site could generally be improved to better support community events. Specifically, a permanent bandshell and lawn seating could be created given the existing suitable topography, large lawn, and existing off-street parking.

### 2. Repurpose Former Township Administration Building

When the new Township Building is occupied in 2019, the former Township Building will be vacant and available to be repurposed. The building could be sold or transferred to a non-profit entity for public and community use. However, major upgrades to the building are needed, and it is expected to be difficult to find a buyer or tenant willing to make the necessary investment. The building has a community legacy as the former Passtown School, and in 2017 it was determined by the Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission (PHMC) to be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Further consideration of its eligibility is ongoing at the time of this report, with the intent to repurpose the building if possible. If the building is not designated as historic, it may be possible in the future for the building to be taken down, and the space used to expand the current Hayti Park. In addition to the current playground and basketball court, any number of new features could be added, such as a second basketball court, enlarged playground, dog park, sprayground, community gardens, or other similar amenities.



*Existing Township Administration Building*

## Land Use Policy Recommendations

There are a number of actions that the Township can take regarding Land Use Policy that help to facilitate implementation of the proposed park and open space improvements.

## Municipal Comprehensive Plan

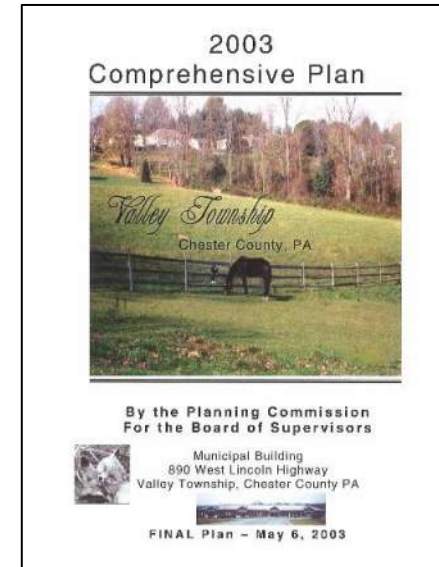
The recommendations of this Plan should be incorporated into the Valley Township Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan represents the overriding planning document that formally defines the community vision and articulates in detail the long-term community goals and objectives. The Comprehensive Plan serves as the basis for implementation of a wide range of municipal land use policies such as Zoning and Land Development Ordinances. It also is a basis to justify major capital improvements such as for parks and recreation. This Plan may serve as the *Recreation* element of the Comprehensive Plan.

The latest update to the Township Comprehensive Plan was prepared in 2003. The Pennsylvania Municipal Planning Code recommends that comprehensive plans be updated every ten years, so the Township is overdue for an update.

## Official Map

To protect its interest in acquiring the properties and rights-of-way necessary to establish future trails and parks, the Township can depict the proposed improvements on an Official Township Map. An “official map” is a combined map and ordinance designed to implement the goals set forth in the comprehensive plan. The official map shows the locations of planned future public lands and facilities such as transportation, recreational parks and trails, and open space. The official map expresses a municipality’s interest in acquiring these lands for public purposes sometime in the future. The authority to create an official map is granted in Article IV of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC).

Listing a parcel or portion of a property on an official map notifies developers and property owners that the area mapped is of interest to a municipality for public purposes sometime in the future. According to the MPC, designation of a property on the official map does not constitute a taking in and of itself. It simply gives a municipality an opportunity to negotiate acquisition of property, or rights thereto, where a public use would be beneficial before development or redevelopment occurs. Once a property owner or developer notifies a municipality of their intention to build, subdivide or perform other work on land that is located on an official map, the municipality has one year to either purchase the land, come to a mutual agreement with the developer, condemn the land through eminent domain, or decide not to pursue the acquisition of the land. Adoption of the Official Map and corresponding Ordinance are subject to public review and must follow an established process as required by the MPC.



*The Comprehensive Plan was most recently completed in 2003*



### Zoning Ordinance

The current Township Zoning Ordinance has been recently updated and provides adequate provisions to meet Valley's open space, recreational, and environmental resource protection needs. The Township should continue to monitor its needs, trends, and regulatory changes in those fields and amend the ordinance over time when applicable.

### Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance

The Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO) has recently been updated and provides adequate provisions for natural resources protection. The SALDO should be reviewed and strengthened where possible to facilitate protection and enhancement of recreational facilities. Specific provisions may include:

**Recreation:** Regulations should be considered to maintain the Township's existing recreation facilities and assure adequate facilities for new development:

1. Stipulate minimum equipment requirements for neighborhood "tot lots".
2. Require developers of large-scale commercial and residential developments to prepare an impact statement that assesses the increased demand for recreation and potential impact on existing Township recreation facilities, taking into account any new recreation facilities to be provided.
3. Evaluate a recreation impact fee as part of the above impact statement requirement.
4. Evaluate an option for a fee-in-lieu of small, on-site recreational facilities in locations where a larger, community/regional park or facility would be more beneficial to the new development and existing community.

## Chapter 5

# Implementation

The previous chapters outline the *What?* - a broad range of recommendations for individual parks and open space intended to better provide for the current and future recreational needs of the community.

This chapter concerns the *How?* - the steps necessary to implement the proposed improvements and bring these ideas to reality. Implementation of the recommendations will be described in terms of the probable costs, sources of funding, and optimal sequence. It also outlines specific actions that are necessary, how they may best occur, and how different entities can collaborate to achieve the most effective results. It may be helpful to think of recommended actions as belonging to one of three categories:

- **Policy** recommendations are actions that are largely administrative and can be performed largely with existing staff using existing resources. Examples of policy recommendations are updating zoning ordinances or drafting an official map. The process of implementing policy actions is not as much financial as it is political. Policy changes must have political support, which almost always means having public support. This often requires considerable public outreach and education to effectively communicate the expected impact of proposed changes and the ultimate public benefits that are expected to result. Since implementation of policy actions does not require much in the way of funding, these can be undertaken almost immediately. The impact of policy changes may seem subtle, since they rarely result in tangible improvements in the ground that can be seen right away. However, policy changes are critical since they establish clear objectives for planning and development and set the legal framework for funding and management of improvement plans.
- **Planning** recommendations are those that clarify goals, investigate possibilities, and identify specific projects. Examples of planning efforts include drawing up master plans for future park expansion and working out the possibilities for new recreation programs. This report is another example of a planning activity. Planning efforts can also include feasibility studies, to determine whether certain “good ideas” are really possible; public outreach, to build broad support and

understanding; coordination between the Township and its partners; and many other activities. Planning activities are most useful when they are focused and specific. For this reason, plans usually require staff or professional consultants to devote the appropriate amount of time and attention. There is a cost to this time, often referred to as “soft costs”. Fortunately there are many grant and funding programs available to municipalities, which are described later in this chapter. Since the level of funding necessary is moderate, planning efforts can be undertaken in the near-term.

- **Capital Projects** are those involving acquisition of property or construction of physical improvements – these are the initiatives that cost money. The chief obstacle is financial. By the time a project reaches the capital project stage, it has usually gained public support. Larger capital projects frequently require funding beyond the typical municipal budget. Valley will look to outside sources of funding, such as grants, bonds, or other techniques described later in this chapter. In today’s economic environment, successful strategies almost always involve partnerships, which can be with the private sector, other public sector agencies, non-profit organizations, or (frequently) regional multi-municipal collaboration. Since the process of raising capital funds is often laborious and time-consuming, these projects are usually seen as long-term.





### Anticipated Costs

As described in the previous Chapter, the Plan includes a wide range of recommendations. Some can be implemented at minimal cost, while others are very ambitious and will require significant financial investment. It is expected that funds for major expenditures will be sought from grants and other outside sources and will not be funded from the operating budget of the Township. Minor expenditures for small projects, planning efforts, and specific maintenance tasks will be funded from the annual budget and should be planned for accordingly.

Ultimately, the total cost of planned improvements will be dependent on the exact nature of the work, which will need to be determined by a thoughtful design process for each individual project site. Until such time as specific improvement plans are drawn up, potential costs are speculative. Potential costs for the recommendations made in this Plan are detailed in the Appendix.

### 10-Year Action Plan

With an aggressive approach, it is conceivable that a significant number of the Plan recommendations can be completed or underway within the next ten years.

### Years 0-2

Near-term actions should focus on tasks and projects that can achieve results quickly and effectively. Tangible results will build momentum and public support and demonstrate credibility with stakeholders and potential funding partners. Other short-term actions should involve continued planning for the more ambitious elements of the Plan. Bigger, more complicated projects take time, since they involve many steps and many stakeholders. **Near-term actions that should be initiated within the next two years include:**

1. Establish administrative responsibilities for implementing recreation improvements.
2. Initiate efforts to strengthen community involvement in parks and recreation such as through creation of a "Friends" group and promotion of this 10-Year Action Plan.
3. Engage in productive discussions with the School District regarding the potential to lease or purchase the parcel adjacent to Rainbow Elementary School. Establish an agreement for development of active recreation, trail and playground improvements on the parcel.
4. Perform public outreach regarding repurposing of the old Township building. As part of this process, consideration should be given to location for a dog park at the old Township building site or another property in the Township. Seek grant funding for Master Planning for the repurposing. Perform Master Planning.
5. Engage in discussion with utility companies regarding potential use of utility (pipeline) easement for development of a future recreation trail.
6. Seek grant funding for Master Planning of a park and trail system connecting future recreation parcels along Lincoln Highway.
7. Amend SALDO with enhanced recreation improvement standards.



8. Acquire dedicated open space land from Valley Suburban Center, dependent upon Subdivision and Land Development Plan approval.
9. Resurface basketball courts at the three existing Township parks.

### Years 2-5

In subsequent years, further steps can be taken to advance projects, and physical improvements can be made to high-priority sites identified during the community outreach and Master Planning phases. **During years 2-5, Valley Township should expect to undertake the following activities:**

1. Engage in discussion with Westwood Fire Company regarding potential public use and repurposing of their open space land and ballfield, such as for a bandstand.
2. Implement repurposing of the old Township building. This could involve executing agreements to turn it over to another entity, demolition and expansion of the Hayti Park, or another alternative, as determined during the outreach and Master Planning. Funding assistance will be sought for any construction.
3. Perform Master Planning for Township-Wide Trails and for the park and trail system connecting future recreation parcels along Lincoln Highway. Obtain easements or rights-of-way approvals from pipeline and/or adjacent property owners for trails.
4. Seek funding for construction of aforementioned park and trail improvements along Lincoln Highway.
5. Construct any needed site improvements at the new Township Administration building, such as sidewalks along Lincoln Highway, to complement improvements planned for neighboring recreation spaces.
6. Seek funding for Master Planning of the Valley Suburban Center dedicated open space.

### Years 5-10

In the longer-term, complex construction projects are envisioned to have been funded, designed, approved/permitted, and ready for construction. **Long-term action in Years 5-10 are anticipated to include the following:**

1. Review this Open Space, Recreation, and Environmental Resources Plan, and update as applicable.
2. Construct recreation trails connecting Rainbow Elementary School, new Township building, multi-purpose fields, and Valley Suburban Center dedicated open space. Construct municipal playground on parcel adjacent to school.
3. Perform Master Planning for the Valley Suburban Center dedicated open space.
4. Seek funding and/or partner and implement construction of improvements to the Valley Suburban Center dedicated open space.
5. Seek funding and construct trails in Township-Wide Trails Master Plan that were not constructed in Years 2-5.
6. Perform planning and implement any improvements to the Westwood Fire Company open space.

## Sources of Funding

A wide variety of financing tools and outside funding sources are available to municipalities in Pennsylvania, which can be directly targeted to the recommendations made in this report. The most successful strategies will involve pursuing multiple sources in combination. In this way, locally-generated funds can be used to “match” funds (i.e., grants) from outside agencies.

**Grant Funding Programs:** Dozens of grant programs are potentially available through various agencies at the federal, state, and local levels to fund the type of planning and development initiatives that are recommended in this Plan. Each grant program has specific requirements and is subject to certain limitations. These grant programs are almost universally competitive and are awarded based on the merits of individual proposed projects and on the quality of grant application submissions. The most common funding source to local municipalities is the DCNR Community Conservation Partnerships Program (C2P2), which brings together a number of streams of public money into one application program. C2P2 grants generally cover 50% of the cost for a variety of project types for parks and recreation, including planning, land acquisition, park development, and trails. Below is a list of grants and other funding sources which are applicable in Chester County and its municipalities. These sources are for projects relating to open space, parks, recreation, greenway, environmental education, and environmental stewardship projects for which municipalities are eligible applicants, unless otherwise noted. Most grant funding programs are not guaranteed in perpetuity; some programs end and new ones are established every year.

**Local Taxes:** The most direct way to generate funds is through local taxation, through means such as property taxes, earned income taxes, and real estate transfer taxes. Tax allocations for recreation and open space must compete with the full range of other municipal needs, and new taxes are subject to political and voter consent.

**Municipal Bonds:** Significant expenditures such as the construction of recreation facilities or purchase of land often cannot be funded out of general municipal operating revenue. For this reason, municipalities sometimes issue long-term debt to finance major capital projects. Bonds have been used to great effect

in Pennsylvania, and are a proven and effective way to finance open space projects. A variety of different types of bond options are available to municipalities. Most commonly, local governments issue *General Obligation Bonds*. These are bonds that are secured by the full trust and credit of the municipality and backed by the taxable value of its property. In this case, the local government pledges the use of any sources of its revenue (like raising taxes, for instance) to generate sufficient revenues to make the debt service payments. *Revenue Bonds* are a type of bond that can be used to fund projects that requires a large up-front cost but can be paid over time with municipal revenue generated in subsequent years. The issuing government entity pledges to generate sufficient revenue annually to cover the new project’s operating costs, plus meet the annual debt service requirements.

Nationally, The Trust for Public Land maintains LandVote, a database of local bond referenda and special tax increases dedicated to public open space, including trail and greenway development. According to this database, since 1995 Pennsylvania voters have approved more than \$1.2 billion in local bonds and taxes for open space protection, acquisition, and development.

**Corporate Sponsorship:** There is a growing recognition by corporations and others in the private sector that there is a positive value in being associated with parks and recreation initiatives. Additionally, there has been a growing boldness on the part of local governments to ask for private sector financial support. This has led to a wide array of sponsored programs, including events such as fitness runs and concerts, advertising promotions that use park facilities as a backdrop, and widespread presence of corporate logos and brand names in public venues.

**User Fees:** It has become commonplace for maintenance and operational costs for recreation facilities to be subsidized with user fees. In many places these fees have become an essential source of revenue. These fees can be captured in a variety of ways, often through paid participation in recreation programs.

**Donations:** Not to be discounted is the potential for “voluntary fees.” Voluntary donations from users are a big part of the revenue budget for many familiar cultural institutions. The same philosophy can be applied to recreational amenities. Many individuals are happy to make contributions to park agencies and programs solely to improve the community in which they live.



## Grant Funding Programs

Potential funding resources for acquisition, design, and construction of open space and recreation facilities can be found through a variety of federal, state, and local grants. Each has specific requirements and is subject to certain limitations. These grant programs are almost universally competitive and are awarded based on the merits of individual proposed projects and on the quality of grant application submissions. It is expected that grants such as these will be an essential source to fund most of the expense of expanding local open space resources.

### *Federal Programs*

Grant programs sponsored by federal agencies (such as the Federal Highway Administration) are administered at the state level by various state agencies and at the regional level by the local Metropolitan Planning Organization, which for the southeast Pennsylvania region is the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC). Application for federal funding is made to the specific state or regional agency designated for each specific program.

### *Regional Programs*

#### DVRPC - Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission

DVRPC administers a range of funding programs to facilitate planning and design of trails and greenways. These programs evolve annually. In recent years, programs oriented toward multi-modal transportation have included the Transportation and Community Development Initiative (TCDI), Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ), and Regional Trails Programs (RTP). It is expected that programs of a similar nature will be offered in future years.



### *Pennsylvania State Programs*

#### DCED - Greenways, Trails and Recreation Program (GTRP)

The PA Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) administers this program, which allocates funds to the Commonwealth Financing



Authority (CFA) for planning, acquisition, development, rehabilitation and repair of greenways, recreational trails, open space, parks and beautification projects.

#### DCED and PennDOT - Multimodal Transportation Fund (MTF)

The PA DCED and PennDOT each administer this program, which provides grants to encourage economic development and ensure that a safe and reliable system of transportation is available to the residents of the Commonwealth. Funds may be used for the development, rehabilitation and enhancement of transportation assets to existing communities, including lighting, sidewalk enhancement, pedestrian safety, bicycle circulation, connectivity of transportation assets and transit-oriented development.

#### PennDOT - Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)

The TAP program utilizes federal funds authorized through the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) legislation. Funding is awarded by PennDOT, with program administration at the local region provided by DVRPC. Each County recommends its top priority projects requesting funding. TAP grants are intended for pedestrian and bicycle facilities, improved access to public transportation, safe routes to school, and trails projects that serve a transportation purpose, while promoting safety and mobility.



#### DCNR - PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

DCNR administers a range of grant programs to fund parks, recreation, and open space projects in local Pennsylvania communities. Most prominent among these programs are the federally-funded Recreation Trail Program and the state-funded Community Conservation Partnerships Program (C2P2).



- The Recreation Trails Program is designed to develop recreational trails and trail related facilities for trail users. Project examples include development and rehabilitation of trailside and trailhead facilities and trail linkages and acquisition of easements or property for recreation trails.
- The Community Conservation Partnerships Program (C2P2) is designed to provide grants for comprehensive recreation and park planning and

greenway planning. Potential projects include development of public park and trail recreation facilities, acquiring land for park and conservation purposes, site development planning, and feasibility studies.

### Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP)

RACP is a Commonwealth grant program administered by the Office of the Budget for the acquisition and construction of regional economic, cultural, civic, and historical improvement projects. The grant requires a 50% match, and eligible projects must have a total cost of at least \$1,000,000.



## County Programs

### Chesco DCD - Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)

The Chester County Department of Community Development (DCD) CDBG administers federal funds for a wide range of activities such as housing rehabilitation, acquisition of real property, demolition, infrastructure and public facility improvements, and economic development. Funds are also used to expand economic opportunities geared to low-and moderate-income individuals and to improve infrastructure critical to community health and welfare. Seventy percent of each entitlement grant must be used for activities that benefit low- and moderate-income persons. Refer to program guidelines.

### Chester County - Municipal Grant Program

Chester County offers an extensive grant program intended to preserve land while funding park, trail, and greenway acquisition and construction projects with maximum public benefits that attract substantial funding from other sources. All 73 municipalities and land-owning municipal recreation authorities may apply for these grants. The goal of the Municipal Grant Program is to advance the County's Strategic Plan by providing funds to assist local governments in providing parks, trails and preserves. There are two elements to the Municipal Grant Program – each administered by the County Department of Open Space Preservation:

- Acquisition Grants reimburse a maximum of 50% up to \$500,000 of the approved cost to buy land, conservation easements, or trail easements.

- Development Grants reimburse park facility and trail construction costs at a maximum of 50% up to \$250,000 for parks greater than 20 acres, and a maximum of 25% up to \$100,000 for parks less than 20 acres.

Grant funds from other grant programs can be matched against funds from this program. However, a minimum of 10% funding from municipal sources is typically required.

Contact: Judith Thomas, Preservation Program Coordinator  
Chester County Dept. of Open Space Preservation  
[jthomas@chesco.org](mailto:jthomas@chesco.org)

App. Deadline: Annual, next deadline February 28, 2019

### Chester County - Vision Partnership Program

The Vision Partnership Program (VPP) is a planning grant available to local municipalities and multi-municipal regions seeking to improve their planning programs and achieve consistency with the goals, objectives, and policies of *Landscapes2*, the County's Comprehensive Policy Plan. The VPP grant is open to all Chester County municipalities and funds a wide range of planning activities including Municipal Comprehensive Plans, Natural Resource Protection Plans and Ordinances, and Greenway Plans, among others.

Contact: Susan Elks, Planning Services Director  
Chester County Planning Commission  
[selks@chesco.org](mailto:selks@chesco.org)

App. Deadline: Twice annual, typically 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter

## Corporate Programs

### PECO - Green Region Open Space Grant Program

Green Region grants are available to municipalities to cover a wide variety of planning and expenses associated with developing and implementing open space programs and capital improvements for passive recreation such as trails and greenways. The program is administered in partnership with the Natural Lands Trust.



## Property and Right-of-Way Acquisition

There are several common mechanisms for the acquisition of open space land and right-of-way for future parks and trails, such as fee simple purchase, easements, and donations. They can be used separately or in combination with other techniques listed below to facilitate acquisition.

**Fee Simple Acquisition:** The most effective means of preserving land is through fee simple purchase. Fee simple ownership gives the owner complete control of the land, including all public access and conservation practice decisions. However, fee simple acquisition, particularly purchases at market value, can also be the most expensive. Therefore, many entities interested in land preservation, particularly public agencies or land conservancies with limited budgets, will usually explore more creative options to acquire open space.

**Easements/Deed Restrictions:** An easement is a mechanism by which a municipality or conservation organization can obtain a legal interest in private land for public use or conservation purposes.

**Conservation easements** place restrictions on development at a lower cost than fee simple acquisition. Under a conservation easement, land remains in current ownership, but the property owner voluntarily agrees to donate or sell one or more rights attached to the land. In the case of a conservation or access easement, it would be the right to develop the land. A conservation easement may also provide the property owner with federal income tax and estate tax benefits. Conservation easements are frequently used for environmental preservation without providing for public use of the land. The easement can be held by a municipality, county, or a private conservancy such as Natural Lands Trust, which are headquartered in Delaware County.

A conservation easement can also be combined with a **pedestrian easement** or **right of public access easement** to allow public access for walking, hiking, bicycling, and other activities. The easement language typically establishes rules and restrictions, such as limiting when, where, and how the easement may be utilized. PA Act 68, Recreational Use of Land and Water Act (RULWA),

assures that the landowner is not held liable for any injuries, crimes, or death associated with public use of the land.

A **joint-use easement** allows multiple uses under one easement. Electric transmission lines, sanitary sewer lines, and petroleum or gas pipelines have utility easements for their uses. There are opportunities to use these corridors for trail connection, as they contain a cleared pathway. A joint-use easement allows multiple uses under one easement.

**Purchase and Leaseback or Resale:** An entity interested in preservation, such as a local government or a conservancy, can purchase land in fee simple, place restrictions on the deed prohibiting certain uses (e.g. residential development), and resell or lease the land to an interested party. The original buyer gains the potential for future use at the current price and may recover some or all, of the purchase price through leasing. The land is maintained in open space and may be developed as a park if and when future demand warrants. Resale of some or all of the land with deed restrictions may maintain open space levels, relieve the municipality of maintenance obligations, and return the land to the tax rolls.

**Donation:** Land or an easement on the land is frequently donated by a private owner, organization, or corporation. Local governments should encourage the donation of land or easements by pointing out benefits of such actions, including possible federal income and estate tax benefits and public relations value. In addition to land, corporations and other private parties also frequently provide cash donations for worthy causes, including land preservation.

**Land Development Fees and Mandatory Dedication:** In Valley Township, the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance requires that developers allocate a portion of their property for open space and/or recreation purposes. This ordinance requirement has resulted in the various protected open space areas associated with residential subdivisions. The current ordinance requires that residential developments set aside 917 square feet (0.021 acres) of land for each dwelling unit in developments of 12 or more single family dwelling units, or 6 or more multi-family dwelling units.



## Maintenance and Operations

Current maintenance to most of the Township-owned parks is performed by the Township Road Crew. Most of the park upgrades recommended in this Plan are expected to result in only incremental maintenance costs, which is expected to be able to be absorbed within the existing Township budget and staff capability.

Where more ambitious upgrades are considered – such as a new sports complex or linear trail corridor – the Township may need to rely on private-sector partners to provide supplemental maintenance and operations. For instance, new recreation fields should be cared for by the primary users of the facilities, which are expected to be the youth sports associations.

This type of public-private partnership has become increasingly common in recent decades and can extend the neighborhood parks as well as athletic facilities. Private non-profit organizations often provide supplemental maintenance and programs over and above that which can be provided by the host municipality. These “Friends” groups, as they are often known, make possible a higher standard of care than would otherwise occur. The neighborhood parks in Valley would all benefit from an active “Friends” group comprised of nearby residents who may feel a personal investment in their neighborhood park.



## Responsible Parties

Valley Township government will need to be the responsible lead entity for the implementation of the Plan recommendations. Within the Township administrative structure, roles and responsibilities should be clearly defined and assigned so that specific actions can be carried out effectively. It is expected that the Board of Supervisors, Parks and Recreation Committee, and Township staff will all have important roles in advancing the objectives of the Plan. Given the limited staff and financial resources available at the current time, the Township may need to enlist the support of professional consultants and non-profit community partners to assist in carrying out the recommendations of the Plan.

- **Board of Supervisors:** Key roles are to set policy, approve expenditures, and endorse recommendations of the Parks and Recreation Committee.
- **Parks and Recreation Committee:** Key roles are to spearhead community outreach, determine priorities for parks and recreation initiatives, oversee a limited number of parks programming, and make recommendations to the Board for budgetary expenditures.
- **Township Staff:** Oversee the hired professional consultants, oversee the Road Crew or consultants in managing construction projects, and oversee preparation of grant applications and other fundraising efforts.
- **Professional Consultants:** Prepare feasibility studies, design park improvements, oversee construction permitting required by regulatory agencies, and prepare construction documents.
- **Community Partners:** Operate recreation programs, raise funds, and assist with maintenance.

## Appendices

- **Public Opinion Survey**
- **Budget**

**Valley Township Parks, Recreation and Open Space  
PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY**

1. What do you think are the 3 biggest needs for Parks, Recreation and Open Space in Valley?

1<sup>st</sup>

2<sup>nd</sup>

3<sup>rd</sup>

2. What do you think are the biggest problems facing parks in Valley? *Check no more than 3.*

- Not enough parks.  Not enough options for active recreation and sports.
- Inadequate maintenance.  Parks are not within easy walking distance to homes.
- Not the right kind of activities in existing parks.  Valley should do more to protect natural areas.
- Other (please specify)

3. Are there sports or activities that Valley should have (or have more of)? *Check no more than 3.*

- Baseball Fields  Dog Park  Picnic Areas
- Basketball Courts (outdoor)  Tennis Courts  Playgrounds
- Basketball Courts (indoor)  Fitness/Exercise Circuit  Outdoor Amphitheater
- Soccer and/or Lacrosse Fields  Walking/Biking Trails
- Skateboard Park  Community Gardens
- Other (please specify)

4. Are you involved with any of the athletic associations or sports leagues in Valley?

- Yes, I am directly involved  I help out a little bit  No, not directly

If Yes, which organization(s) are you involved with?

5. Does Valley offer enough community events and recreation programs?

- Yes, there are a lot of Township events and programs.
  - No, Valley should offer more.
  - I am not interested in community programs or events.
- Do you have ideas for new programs or events that Valley should consider?

6. Do you think Valley should have more trails for walking and biking?

- Yes  Maybe  No

Comments:

7. How important do you think it is to have more nature-oriented parks and activities?

- Very important  It would be nice, but not a high priority  Not important

8. Does Valley offer enough outdoor opportunities for people of different ages?

- I wish there were more options for small children.  I wish there were more options for adults and senior citizens.
- I wish there were more options for teenagers.  There are already enough good options for everyone.

Comments:

9. Would you be interested in attending a future public meeting to hear more about opportunities for parks, recreation and open space in Valley?

- Yes  Maybe  No

10. What other information or opinions would you like to share about parks, recreation and open space in Valley?

Please return completed survey by hand delivery or mail to the Valley Township building front office at 890 W. Lincoln Highway, PO Box 467, Coatesville, PA 19320 no later than April 30, 2017.

The survey can also be filled out online at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/26PSHXK>.



VALLEY TOWNSHIP			
2019 GENERAL FUND BUDGET			
<b>DEPARTMENT: Park &amp; Recreation</b>			
ACCT #	DESCRIPTION	2019	BUDGET
01.			
<b>451 PARK &amp; RECREATION</b>			
451.1120	SALARY - ADMIN		\$1,200
	Valley Day (40 hrs)	\$1,000	
	Holiday Party (8 hrs)	\$200	
451.1400	SALARY - PUBLIC WORKS		\$7,625
	Mowing (12 man hrs a week	\$6,700	
	Book Bag Giveaway	200	
	Valley Day	600	
	Easter Egg Hunt	125	
451.1800	SALARY - OVERTIME		\$1,800
	Book Bag Giveaway	150	
	Valley Day Office (20 hrs)	750	
	Valley Day - Public Works	900	
451.5301	MULTI-MUNICIPAL GRANT		\$0
451.5310	PARKS - MATERIALS		\$13,000
	mulch	\$10,000	
	Signage	\$1,000	
	Playground equipment repair	\$2,000	
451.5320	EASTER EGG HUNT		\$1,500
451.5340	MOVIE TICKET SALES		\$4,500
451.5350	VALLEY DAY		\$14,000
451.5360	CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PARTY		\$5,500
451.5370	OTHER PARK & REC ACTIVITIES		\$5,981
	volunteer lunch	\$1,400	
	book bag giveaway	\$500	
	Basketball League Support	\$1,200	
	Concert	\$2,000	
	Casino trip	\$881	
451.7300	Capital Improvements		\$15,000
	<b>TOTAL TWP PARK &amp; REC</b>		<b>\$70,106</b>
456.5400	<b>LIBRARY CONTRIBUTION</b>		<b>\$6,794</b>
	Hayti Basketball Court Resurface		
459.5400	<b>COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTIONS</b>		
	KRAPF BUS "LINK" CONTRIBUTION	\$5,000	
	YMCA CONTRIBUTION	\$1,500	
	<b>TOTAL CULTURE - RECREATION</b>		<b>\$83,400</b>