

# WHITPAIN TOWNSHIP

## Parks and Recreation Plan: Recreation 2020



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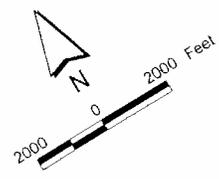
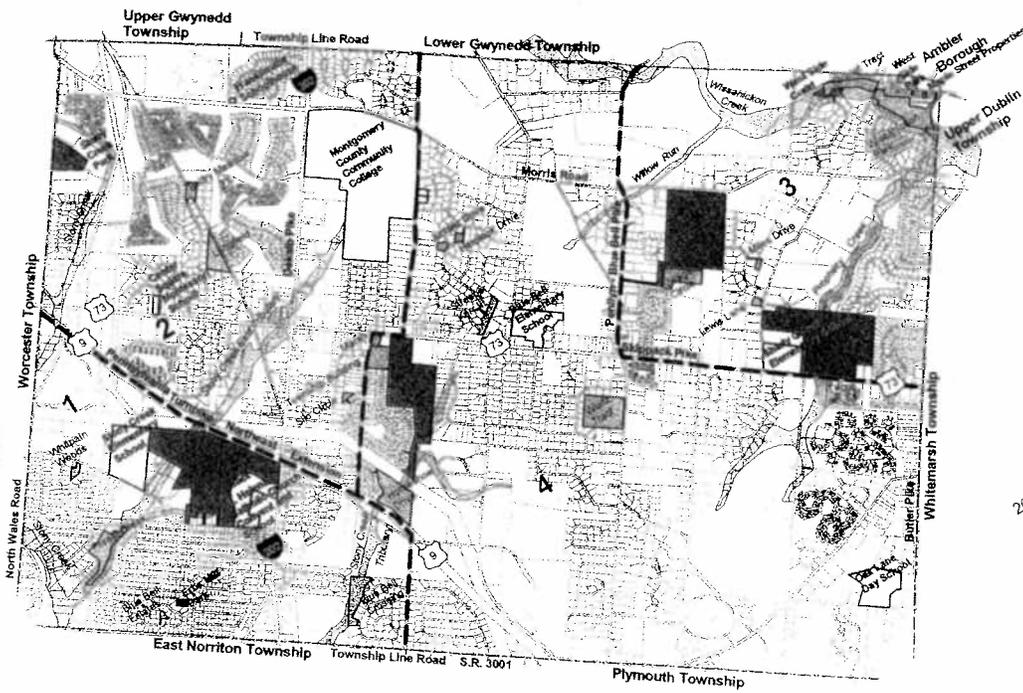


## Introduction

A comprehensive plan functions as a guide for the growth of a community, for its development policies and ordinances, and serves as the principal municipal long-range planning tool. Comprehensive plans are provided for under Article III of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (P.L. 805, "Act 247"), which states that any municipality may prepare and adopt such a plan after a recommendation by the planning agency (Whitpain Township Planning Commission), and following a public hearing(s) held by the governing body (Township Board of Supervisors). The Planning Code requires certain elements to be included in any comprehensive plan, including a statement of goals and objectives, land use and housing plans, a circulation plan, a community facilities plan, a statement on the interrelationships between the various plan elements and with surrounding communities, and a discussion of implementation strategies.

The current comprehensive plan for Whitpain Township was adopted in 1982 and was revised in 1984. The intervening years have seen significant changes that create a need for an update. The Whitpain Township Parks and Recreation Plan: Recreation 2020 was adopted September 16, 2003 and should be considered as an element of this comprehensive plan update.

While this Comprehensive Plan Update will include all of the other required elements, its focus will be on some specific planning issues facing the Township. Whitpain has experienced considerable development since the previous plans and now must consider issues that face communities nearing build-out. This plan will consider other planning documents recently prepared (including the Open Space Plan, Township-wide Traffic Study, Whitpain Township Park & Recreation Plan: Recreation 2020 adopted in September 2003, and others) and synthesize the major planning recommendations into a single policy document.



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*Recreation 2020***

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# Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	i
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b>	
Introduction to the Plan .....	1
Planning Process .....	2
Update as a Guide .....	3
Reader's Guide .....	5
<b>Chapter 2: Whitpain Township Profile</b>	
Facts and Figures .....	7
Community Trends .....	10
Overview of Parks and Recreation in Whitpain .....	17
Public Involvement .....	18
Analysis .....	21
Conclusions and Recommendations .....	22
<b>Chapter 3: Parks, Recreation Facilities, and Greenways</b>	
Park Definitions .....	25
Six Factor Assessment .....	31
Amount of Parkland .....	31
Park Configuration .....	32
Park Location .....	34
Connections .....	35
Recreation Facilities .....	42
Park Conditions .....	45
Analysis of Parks, Facilities, and Greenways .....	54
Conclusions and Recommendations .....	55
<b>Chapter 4: Programs and Services</b>	
Recreation Trends .....	63
Community Recreation Services .....	66
Program Analysis .....	73
Conclusions and Recommendations .....	76
<b>Chapter 5: Administration and Management</b>	
Purpose of the Management Assessment .....	77
Department Organization .....	78
Customer Service .....	81
Maintenance Management .....	83
Management Analysis .....	85
Conclusions and Recommendations .....	86
<b>Chapter 6: Financing</b>	
Economic Benefits .....	89
Whitpain's Tax Revenue Sources .....	90
Whitpain's Investment .....	94
Financing Analysis .....	98
Conclusions and Recommendations .....	99

**Chapter 7: Goals and Recommendations**

Guide, Not A Law .....101  
Foundation for Recommendations .....101  
Vision .....103  
Benefits of Parks and Recreation .....104  
Goals .....105  
1. Park, Facility, and Greenway Goal .....106  
2. Programs and Services Goal .....116  
3. Management Goal.....121  
4. Investment Goal .....128

**Chapter 8: Implementation Schedule**

1. Park, Facility, and Greenway Schedule .....135  
2. Programs and Services Schedule .....136  
3. Management Schedule .....138  
4. Investment Schedule .....139

**Tables**

Table 1. State, County and Township Population .....11  
Table 2. Whitpain Percentage of Population by Age Group .....11  
Table 3. Detailed Population Groups by Age Group .....12  
Table 4. Whitpain 2000 Population Age Group Raw Numbers .....14  
Table 5. Median Per Capita Income .....15  
Table 6. Educational Attainment.....15  
Table 7. Racial Composition .....16  
Table 8. Housing Information.....16  
Table 9. Whitpain Township Parks .....26  
Table 10. National Recreation & Park Association Park Definitions .....33  
Table 11. Key to Whitpain Program Inventory .....67  
Table 12. Whitpain Program Inventory .....68  
Table 13. WRA Soccer Participation 2002 .....70  
Table 14. WRA Baseball & Softball Participation 2002 .....71  
Table 15. WRA Basketball Participation 2002 .....71  
Table 16. WRA Field Hockey Participation 2002 .....72  
Table 17. Conventional and Strategic Managemet .....78  
Table 18. Parks and Recreation Revenue Sources .....93  
Table 19. Comparison of Township and Parks and Recreation Operating Budgets .....94  
Table 20. Park and Recreation Operating Budget Summary .....95  
Table 21. Open Space Budget .....96  
Table 22. Public Works/Park Operating Budget .....96  
Table 23. Park and Recreation Capital Reserve Items .....97

**Maps**

Inventory Map .....29  
Greenway Map .....41  
Recommendations Map .....107

**Figures**

Figure 1. Whitpain Township Municipal Organization..... 8  
Figure 2. Generations and Implications ..... 13  
Figure 3. Parks and Recreation Organizational Chart ..... 79  
Figure 4. Whitpain Township Revenue Sources ..... 91  
Figure 5. Comparison of Tax and Non-Tax Support ..... 92  
Figure 6. Factors for Capital Project Selection ..... 131

# Parks and Recreation Plan: Recreation 2020

Whitpain Township is committed to maintaining the quality of life in this community that has achieved the status as one of the best places in which to live in the Greater Philadelphia Region. Over the past decade, Whitpain Township has implemented creative planning strategies and made a major financial commitment to protect open space and provide an award winning parks and recreation system. The Parks and Recreation Department strives to deliver a variety of parks and recreation opportunities to all township residents that contribute significantly to the livability of Whitpain.

As the next step in planning for open space, parks, and recreation, Whitpain Township developed **Recreation 2020**. This plan provides a strategy for improving parks and recreation facilities, enhancing programs, and meeting the needs of a changing population in the 21st century. **Recreation 2020** is a guide and does not have the power of law. It is intended to be a living document that will be responsive to changing needs and emerging opportunities. It will enable the Township to make sound decisions in allocating resources effectively in its continued pursuit of delivering excellent public service.

## Creating the Plan

Together the Board of Supervisors, the Park and Recreation Board, and the Parks and Recreation Department helped shape this plan by:

- Evaluating current services and facilities of the Township.
- Assessing needs for parks, recreation facilities, and greenways.
- Identifying ways to improve the community through parks and recreation.
- Developing recommendations and an action plan to achieve the greatest community-wide benefit possible.

## **Process**

Whitpain Township hired a team of recreation planners and landscape architects to work with the Township in developing the plan. The planning team assessed community needs, parks, recreation facilities, programs and services, management, and financing. Based upon the findings, the team worked with the Park and Recreation Board to develop a vision, goals and recommendations. The final step was to establish a plan of action that sets forth a schedule for moving ahead with the recommendations.

## **Public Involvement**

Public involvement included four components: a steering committee composed of the Park and Recreation Board, citizen participation at the work sessions, key person interviews, and a public meeting. Combined, the process harnessed public opinion from the general citizenry, community organizations, and special interests. The responses elicited information from both organized groups who typically vocalize their needs as well as individual citizens. Those interviewed represented a range of people from individuals, small groups involved with community matters, and large organizations with thousands of members.

## **Findings**

Based upon the public involvement process, it is apparent that the community has a positive regard for the commitment of the Board of Supervisors to open space preservation, parks, and recreation. The public appreciates the quality of the services, appearance of the parks, and responsiveness of the Parks and Recreation Department. Overall the resounding theme of the interviews was that it is time to move into making the best use of the land and facilities the Township now has. The citizens want to see park and recreation opportunities for people of all ages and interests, year-round. Pathways for walking and biking and an indoor recreation center emerged as the top facility preferences. While the Township provides excellent programs and services for children, there is a need to look ahead to planning to meet the needs of an aging community: lifetime recreation opportunities for an active, healthy, well-educated population over the age of 55 are essential. The citizens are also interested in family recreation opportunities.

The Township needs to achieve balance in its facilities and services for the citizens throughout their lifetime. Whitpain Township should continue to provide facilities for sports while making the park system a destination for all citizens for fitness and wellness, socializing with family and friends, environmental education, and the simple enjoyment of the great outdoors.

## **Overview: Parks & Recreation**

Whitpain Township has 194 acres of parkland distributed through seven parks. The parks range in size from West Side Park with .13 acres to Prophecy Creek with 82 acres. The parks are as diverse as the innovative sports complex of Stony Creek Sports Park to the magnificent scenic beauty of Prophecy Creek. Wentz Run Park with its gazebo and mix of recreation facilities is the hub of community activity. The Township has no indoor recreation center and makes the best use of school facilities possible.

The Township offers programs and services year round with over 50 organized programs such as the township anniversary celebration, concerts, movies, sports camps, summer recreation program, trips, Harvest Festival, and sports leagues. The Township is fortunate in having many community organizations that provide important community service such as sports leagues, historic preservation, trail care, and facilities for public recreation use.

The Parks & Recreation Department operates with a small, professional staff that plans, directs, and operates all aspects of community recreation. About 55 seasonal hourly workers provide recreation services and park maintenance. Challenges for the staff include planning for an aging and family oriented community, expanding services with a broad recreation focus including the arts, nature, fitness and wellness, and planning to make the best use of the public parklands – all within a climate of fiscal austerity. Although the Department's responsibilities have expanded, the reality ahead is operating on a tight budget. Creativity is called for in meeting future recreation needs through partnerships, alternative funding sources, grants, and moving into providing and promoting self-directed recreation opportunities beyond scheduled organized programming.

## **The Plan**

The vision, goals, and recommendations are based on assessment of parks and recreation, trends, public opinion, and township resources. The vision forms the basis for the recommendations and future actions.

## **Foundation and Vision**

The foundation for the goals and recommendations is based upon public opinion, analysis of the township's parks and recreation system, and research into trends and issues. Overall, Whitpain has an exemplary municipal parks and recreation system rooted in a successful history of strong community volunteerism supported by professional management. This plan presents a strategy for making the best use of the township's success and positioning the Parks and Recreation Department for the future. The underlying message of the Plan is for the Township to maintain the course of its current operations and implement gradual, incremental expansion of programs and services.

## **Vision for Whitpain Township's Parks, Recreation, & Open Space System**

Whitpain Township is committed to enhancing the quality of life for our citizens through parks and recreation. Parks and Recreation is an essential public service that strengthens our community by fostering health and wellness; building family and community bonds; crime prevention; environmental protection; and contributing to the local economy. The Township will structure a balanced parks and recreation system that:

- Provides sufficient, safe, clean, and attractive parks and recreation facilities to meet the needs of citizens of all ages, interests, and abilities.
- Ensures equitable distribution of recreation facilities throughout the community in parks or through trail connections to parks.
- Builds a sense of community through shared recreational experiences and programs.
- Involves and is responsive to the residents as active recreation participants and partners in all aspects of parks and recreation.
- Creates and maintains partnerships to optimize funding opportunities, use and operation of recreation facilities, and improvement and expansion of recreation programs and services year-round.
- Protects the township's investment by providing quality facility maintenance.
- Informs the public about the Township's parks and recreation opportunities.
- Provides for effective and financially sound management of public resources.

### **Goals**

The plan is intended to be a "living document." It will serve as a guide for elected and appointed officials, community groups, and citizens regarding parks, recreation and open space. Four goals provide the foundation for future discussions and decision-making. The goals are to:

1. Provide adequate parkland and recreation facilities connected by a system of greenways and trails to meet the needs of the citizens now and for generations to come.
2. Offer programs and services that will enrich the lives of the people of Whitpain.

3. Manage the parks and recreation system in a professional manner that conveys the greatest possible benefit to the public.
4. Invest in parks and recreation to sustain and enhance the quality of life in Whitpain Township into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## Recommendations

While the plan recommends a host of actions for parks and recreation over the next twenty years, they can be summarized in the following steps that serve as a blueprint for action. This blueprint provides the overall framework for Whitpain Township's parks and recreation planning strategy.

1. **Stay the course:** Overall the Township has done a good job of preserving parkland, developing recreation facilities, and establishing a quality recreation program. It is important to continue on this path towards making the best use of existing facilities and taking on new projects as resources are available. Any expansion needs to be undertaken with respect to the resources (human and financial) available, partnership potential, and financial support.
2. **Make the best use of township parkland and recreation facilities:** Focus on existing parkland and open space. This includes master planning Prophecy Creek, St. Helena's, and the Cook tract to develop a common public vision for these future park sites; adding facilities to all of the parks for lifetime fitness and wellness such as walking and biking paths; connecting parks and other community destinations through a community trail system; and insuring that the public has access to beautiful scenic areas in order to enjoy the beauty of nature and solitude. Make the parks attractive to individuals, families, friends, and community groups to serve people of all ages and abilities.
3. **Continue to focus on land conservation:** There is only a limited time left to preserve land in Whitpain that has not been developed. Given the recent, major acquisitions of Whitpain Township, there may be public concern about additional land acquisition. However, with the development pressures in the region and the community's desire to maintain the charm and beauty of Whitpain, the Plan urges the Township to consider the preservation of remaining large tracts, land contiguous to parks, and areas for natural resource protection or for trail linkages as both important and urgent. Public outreach and education about the necessity of doing this is needed. Land use planning tools and alternatives to outright purchase should be considered including conservation easements.
4. **Expand the focus of programs and services:** Focus on serving active aging seniors, families, and teens. Concentrate in program areas beyond sports to include the arts and culture, lifetime fitness and wellness, and nature. Provide

facility-based recreation opportunities that people can use at their own discretion such as trails and pathways, indoor recreation facilities for fitness, wellness, and socializing. Recreation programming should continue to be largely self-supporting. New program directions need to be considered through a program management plan with respect to human and financial resources.

5. **Make gradual and strategic changes:** Given the small staff, expand programs and services incrementally and gradually. Focus on a combination of development of information and referral services, partnership efforts in target program areas, and programs offered or co-administered by the Whitpain Parks and Recreation Department.
6. **Plan for an indoor recreation center:** Indoor recreation facilities should serve citizens of all ages and interests to use throughout their lifetime and on an expanded basis once they retire. The lack of an indoor public recreation center is a major factor in service limitations for senior adults, fitness and wellness, youth and family recreation, as well as programming in the arts and culture.
7. **Continue maintenance and operational support as the park and recreation system develops:** Provide administrative, maintenance, and financial support commensurate with the parks and recreation system responsibilities. To achieve the goals of this plan, the Township may want to consider assessing staffing, resource needs, and administrative space in conjunction with facility or service changes.
8. **Continue financial investment in parks, recreation and open space:** Work within the climate of fiscal austerity that is on the horizon for Whitpain Township. Continue to generate over half of the budget through non-tax sources and provide stable township investment in parks and recreation. Work within the township budget to continue using a mix of tax and non-tax sources to fund township initiatives. This could include compulsory resources such as taxes, grants and gifts, fees and charges, sponsorships, partnerships, bequests, and fundraising.

## **Funding Plan**

The implementation of the recommendations of this plan will make a significant positive impact on the Township's livability through the social, environmental, economic, and environmental benefits, but not without investment. Projects range in cost from volunteer time to thousands of dollars for facility development, operations, and maintenance.

- Continue to operate within the limits of township resources.

- Develop an impact statement for any new project or program. Investigate alternatives for supporting the identified project through non-tax dollars. Only undertake the project if sufficient resources are available.
- Seek state and federal grants for park planning and development.
- Establish partnerships for recreation facility development and operation.
- Since the Parks and Recreation Department already uses sponsorships and partnerships, consider developing a strategic plan for corporate involvement and grants. Pursuit of such partnerships requires time.
- As the Township retires debt on current park projects, consider additional bond funds for projects on the recommendations list.

## **Implementation Schedule**

The Township's accomplishments in parks, recreation, and open space in the last decade have been in leaps and bounds. This was in response to public wishes and development pressures. The implementation schedule for the actions over the next ten years is configured to maximize the accomplishments of the Township prior to this Plan. The schedule is set forth to make the best use of existing facilities and lands, work within the lean structure of township staffing, and respect the limitations of township resources. The schedule is based on a philosophy that municipal government cannot do everything on its own and that more can be accomplished through public and private partnerships and funding alternatives to local tax dollars. Opportunities arise and needs change requiring adjustments to the schedule. In summary, the implementation schedule is focused as follows:

### **Short Term through 2005**

- Undertake the master plan for Prophecy Creek.
- Master plan public parkland to determine the best uses for resource protection and responsible public use.
- Make the building at Prophecy Creek available for use.
- Incorporate citizen participation into planning.
- Explore ways of expanding recreation for an aging population and in the areas of the arts, culture, nature, and wellness.
- Investigate ways to enhance customer service through an internship program, volunteers, or part time staffing.
- Pursue greenway and trail planning to take advantage of state and county initiatives and funding.

- Consider additional land preservation through alternatives to outright purchase. Focus on land adjoining existing public lands, trail connections and linkages, and for additional recreation facilities to meet community needs in the future. As development pressure grows, land is disappearing forever changing the character of the community.
- Plan for an indoor recreation facility.
- Implement management efficiencies such as software training and use.
- Initiate a cyclic playground replacement program.
- Develop a partnership plan for facility and program projects.
- Adopt the **Whitpain Township Parks and Recreation Plan** as part of the **Whitpain Township Comprehensive Plan**.

### **Medium Term 2006-2010**

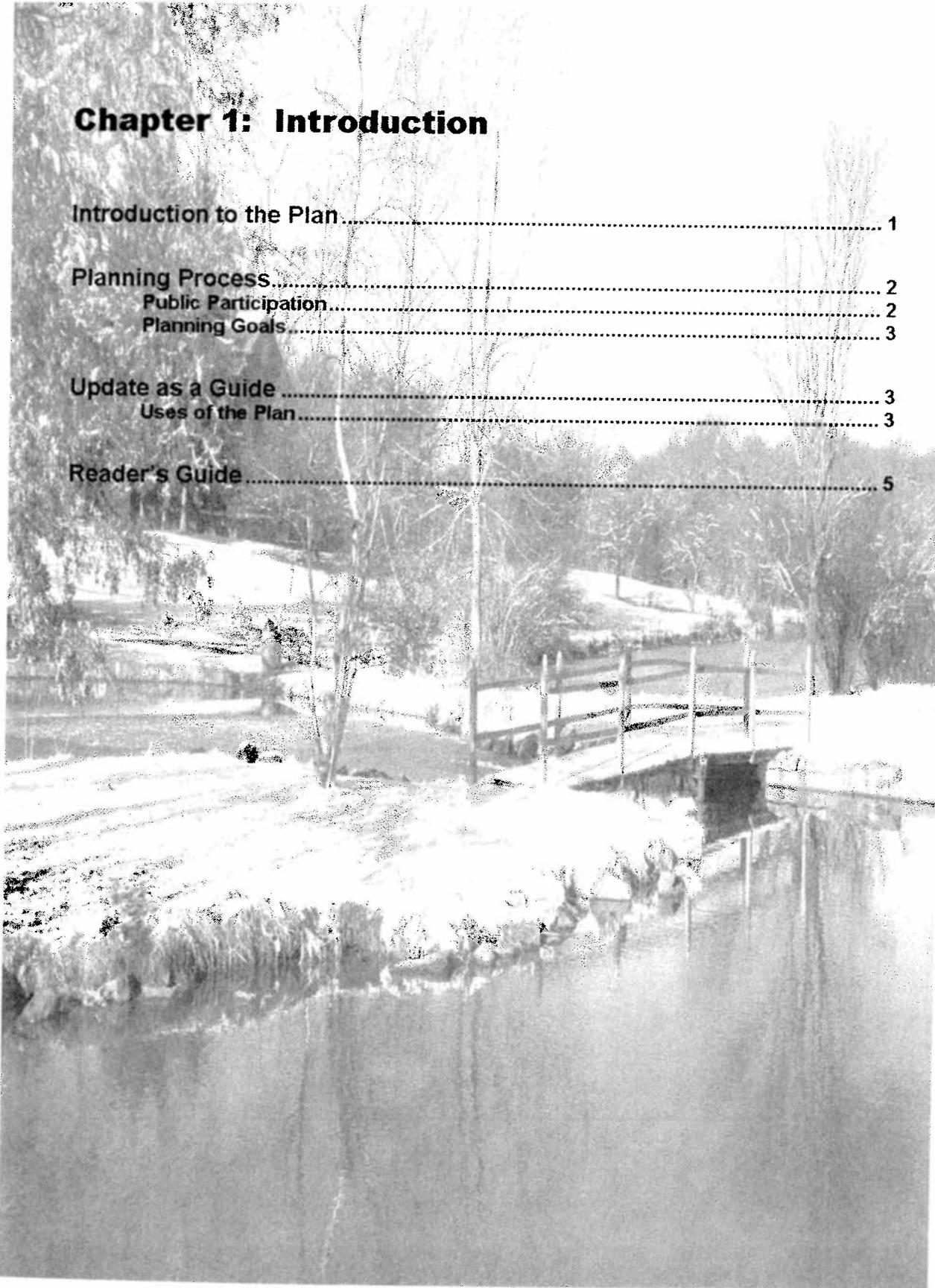
- Add trails and bike paths.
- Continue development of park projects initiated in planning stages of preceding years.
- Implement program for active aging adults.
- Focus on fitness and wellness programming, and environmental education in partnership with the Wissahickon School District and the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association.
- Undertake cultural program component as a function of recreation services.
- Continue land preservation efforts.

### **Long Term 2011-2020**

- Continue trail and greenway development.
- Undertake cyclic rehabilitation projects in the parks.
- Continue to adjust services to meet the changing demographics and public needs.
- Continue to focus on resource and open space conservation.

# Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction to the Plan.....	1
Planning Process.....	2
Public Participation.....	2
Planning Goals.....	3
Update as a Guide.....	3
Uses of the Plan.....	3
Reader's Guide.....	5



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# Introduction to the Plan

**Recreation 2020** is Whitpain Township's **Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Plan**. It complements the township's **Open Space Plan** by setting forth a vision for how the Township can conserve and make the best use of its parks, recreation facilities, and open space.

The Plan represents Whitpain's commitment to parks and recreation in response to the public's expressed opinions. It is based upon consensus achieved through a public participation process that brought together elected and appointed officials, township management, community organizations, and the citizens.

Not everything can be accomplished immediately. Recommendations can be phased in as resources allow and opportunities emerge. Limited resources, a changing population, and growing demands on parks and recreation combine to show that a broad time frame for plan implementation is essential. Improvements will take time, commitment, and investment from public and private partners.

The Township will use this plan as a guide. It does not serve as law but rather as a blueprint for action. **Recreation 2020** creates a vision for the future, not merely a tune-up for what exists today. Just as the community develops and evolves, so must parks and recreation in order to serve the needs and interests of the people of Whitpain Township throughout their lifetime.

## Benefits of Parks and Recreation

- **Increased property values**
- **Deterrence of crime and substance abuse**
- **Establishment of strong family bonds, the foundation of our society**
- **Environmental protection and preservation of natural resources**
- **Fostering of healthy lifestyles that add years to life and life to the years**

## Planning Process

Whitpain Township retained Toole Recreation Planning and YSM, a team of recreation planners and landscape architects to work with the Township in the development of this plan. The plan consisted of an assessment of Whitpain's parks and recreation system; development of conclusions and recommendations; establishment of goals and implementation strategies; and an action plan with a time frame. The planning process addressed five areas.

1. Community recreation needs
2. Parks and recreation facilities from a recreation planning perspective
3. Programs and services
4. Administration and maintenance
5. Financing

## Public Participation

The public participation process included the Park and Recreation Board who served in advisory capacity for the project and key person interviews. The interviews provided valuable information from those in the community who are involved in various parks and recreation related efforts as well and the general public. Through these components, both the needs of the general citizens and the needs of community organizations that provide recreation services were addressed.

The planning process focused on how to achieve a balanced park and recreation system given the resources and opportunities available in Whitpain Township. A balanced park and recreation system provides:

- Opportunities for citizens of all ages, interests, and abilities throughout their lifetime.
- Services and facilities for both the general citizenry and organized groups.
- Programs that include a range of interests such as the arts, culture, music, drama, dance, social activities, volunteer opportunities, fitness and wellness, intellectual stimulation, and individual and team sports.
- Year-round recreation.
- Both active and passive parks and recreation facilities.
- Safe and convenient access to parks and recreation throughout the Township.

## Planning Goals

The township staff and Park and Recreation Board established goals for the plan. These included:

1. Addressing program needs for all ages and a variety of interests.
2. Figuring out how to make the best use of the land and facilities the Township has.
3. Considering the financial challenges of the community that is now near complete development.
4. Assessing facility maintenance and maintenance needs for a planned system.
5. Evaluating facilities with respect to improvements, additions, and priorities.
6. Determining how to set forth a course of action that will bring a host of organizations and interests to work collaboratively towards a common vision for Whitpain Township.
7. Basing decisions on public opinion, resources, and alternatives.
8. Engaging in discussions that lead to possibilities of creating a great public park and recreation system, not just a quick fix for current issues.

## The Update as a Guide

**Recreation 2020** will help to guide township decision-making about parks, open space, recreation facilities, and programs. The recommendations do not have the force of law but instead reflect the direction in which the Township desires to move forward in enhancing the quality of life for the people of Whitpain.

## Uses of the Plan

The plan functions in both a legal and an advisory capacity. It may help Whitpain Township to acquire future funding from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; federal and county grant programs; and foundations. The standards support the township's Mandatory Dedication of Land Ordinance and subdivision and land development ordinances by providing standards for community parks and recreation.

### Advisory

*This plan serves as a reference document for overall township planning and management. It provides a vision for Whitpain as a green and connected community with year-round recreation opportunities for people of all ages, interests, and abilities – not just the maintenance of existing conditions. The recommendations of this plan are based upon an investigative and educational process to identify recreation initiatives and opportunities that are important to Whitpain Township.*

The plan is intended to be a living document that will play a role in the decisions the Township makes about parks, recreation, financing, management, open space preservation, and related planning efforts. The plan should be reviewed annually prior to budget season. Through this review, accomplishments, needs, and emerging opportunities should be determined. Actions should be adapted to changing circumstances in the Township's pursuit of the goals identified. Budgets should then be based on the formulation of an action plan for the upcoming fiscal year. This proves to be a sound way of targeting resources to community needs.

### **Grant Assistance**

State grant programs are in place to provide grants for plan implementation if the Township wishes to pursue grant funding. By adopting a plan that reflects public participation and sets forth a clear vision of the future, Whitpain will be able to undertake the actions recommended and seek the financial support of various grant programs. The principle sources of funds for parks and recreation include the following:

**Growing Greener** is the largest investment in Pennsylvania's environment in modern history. This fund is being supported through state funds including funds from tipping fees at landfills. Growing Greener addresses the environmental challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century: loss of open space and farmland, tainted waterways, abandoned mines, aging sewer systems, and repair state parks and forests. Whitpain Township has already benefitted by this program through a grant for stream bank stabilization.

**Keystone Community Grant Program** provides funding for projects related to local park, recreation and conservation; river conservation; rails-to-trails, land trust acquisition and planning projects; and heritage parks.

**Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century** is a federal program known as **TEA-21**, which is expected to be re-authorized by Congress in 2003. Administered through the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, the program addresses transportation alternatives to automobiles. Project funding has been extremely popular and now needs congressional reauthorization in order to fund grants in the future. Projects are transportation-related including pedestrian and bicycle facilities, education programs for pedestrians and cyclists, landscaping and beautification, historic preservation, rehabilitation of historic structures for transportation, preservation of abandoned rail corridors, control/removal of outdoor advertising, archeological planning, mitigation of water pollution due to highway run off, and establishment of transportation museums.

In addition to the programs described above because of their underlying park and recreation missions, there are other grant programs that the Township could pursue such as Community Development Block Grants and Pennsylvania Arts Commission grants.

### **Legal**

Once adopted by the Township, the plan can serve a legal function. The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code provides planning requirements that can be adopted by municipalities. The MPC stipulates that the municipality provides a defensible basis for sound decision-making regarding land use. The municipality must adopt planning documents and ordinances. MPC Section 503(11) provides municipalities the authority to require a developer to dedicate public land for park and recreation purposes. In order to

obtain the dedication, that is requiring the developer to turn over common open space as a condition of final approval, the municipality must first meet general conditions. According to township officials, based upon the completion and adoption of this plan, Whitpain will have met these conditions and established the requirements for mandatory dedication of parkland. These conditions include:

- Adopting a recreation plan that defines principles and standards for determining developer obligations.
- Providing direction in the parks and recreation plan to ensure that the amount and location of land or fees bear a reasonable relationship to residents of the proposed development.
- Adopting a Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance that reflects the recreation plan's principles and standards and includes definite standards to determine the open space or fee requirements.

## **Reader's Guide to the Plan**

Chapters two through six provide the assessment of the community of Whitpain Township, parks and recreation facilities and greenways; programs and services; administration and management; and financing. Each of these chapters provides an analysis of the findings and recommendations for future actions. Chapter seven sets forth an orderly approach to meeting township parks and recreation needs, goals and recommendations based upon the Vision for Whitpain Township. Chapter eight presents the Implementation Schedule.

## Chapter 2: Whitpain Township Profile

<b>Facts and Figures</b> .....	7
Background and Location .....	7
Government .....	8
Population .....	9
Households .....	9
Socio-Economic Characteristics .....	9
<b>Community Trends</b> .....	10
Growth .....	10
Population Trends .....	10
Age .....	11
Graying of Whitpain .....	12
Population Target Groups .....	13
Family Structure .....	14
Income .....	14
Education .....	15
Race .....	15
Housing .....	16
<b>Overview of Parks and Recreation in Whitpain</b> .....	17
Parks and Recreation Evolution .....	17
Whitpain Department of Parks & Recreation Today .....	17
<b>Public Involvement</b> .....	18
Park and Recreation Board .....	19
Key Person Interviews .....	19
Findings of Public Participation Process .....	20
<b>Analysis</b> .....	21
<b>Conclusions and Recommendations</b> .....	22

# Whitpain Township Profile

## Facts and Figures

### Background and Location

**History:** Established in 1701, one of the oldest municipalities in Montgomery County. The first Whitpain arrived with William Penn on “The Welcome” in 1682. The earliest settlers were farmers of the Protestant and Quaker faiths. Whitpain is a composite of several small communities established before and after the Revolutionary War including Blue Bell, Broad Axe, Custer, Franklinville, Centre Square, West Ambler, Washington Square, and Belfry. From 1734 to 1950, the Township grew from 24 landowners to a population of 3,063. In the last fifty years, the township population increased six fold to over 18,000. The rural farmlands of the township’s first 250 years have yielded to the establishment of a variety of businesses including some of the Delaware Valley’s largest corporations including Aetna US Healthcare and Unisys. At the Millennium, Whitpain Township is one of the most desirable places to call home in the five counties of southeastern Pennsylvania. It is consistently rated as one of the top places to live in annual quality of life polls.

**Location:** Twenty miles north of Philadelphia in central Montgomery County, bordered by Upper and Lower Gwynedd to the north; Ambler, Upper Dublin, and Whitemarsh to the east; East Norriton and Plymouth to the South and Worcester to the west. Convenient access to major transportation has made the community an ideal bedroom community enabling residents to work throughout the region in Philadelphia, King of Prussia, the Lehigh Valley and beyond. The Pennsylvania Turnpike traverses the western portion of Whitpain and offers an exchange just two miles south of the Township in Plymouth. Other major routes include North Wales Road, Route 202, Penllyn Blue Bell Pike, Butler Pike, Morris Road, Route 73 and Township Line Road.

**Area:** 12.9 square miles.

**School District:** Wissahickon School Districts which includes Whitpain, Ambler and Lower Gwynedd.

## Government

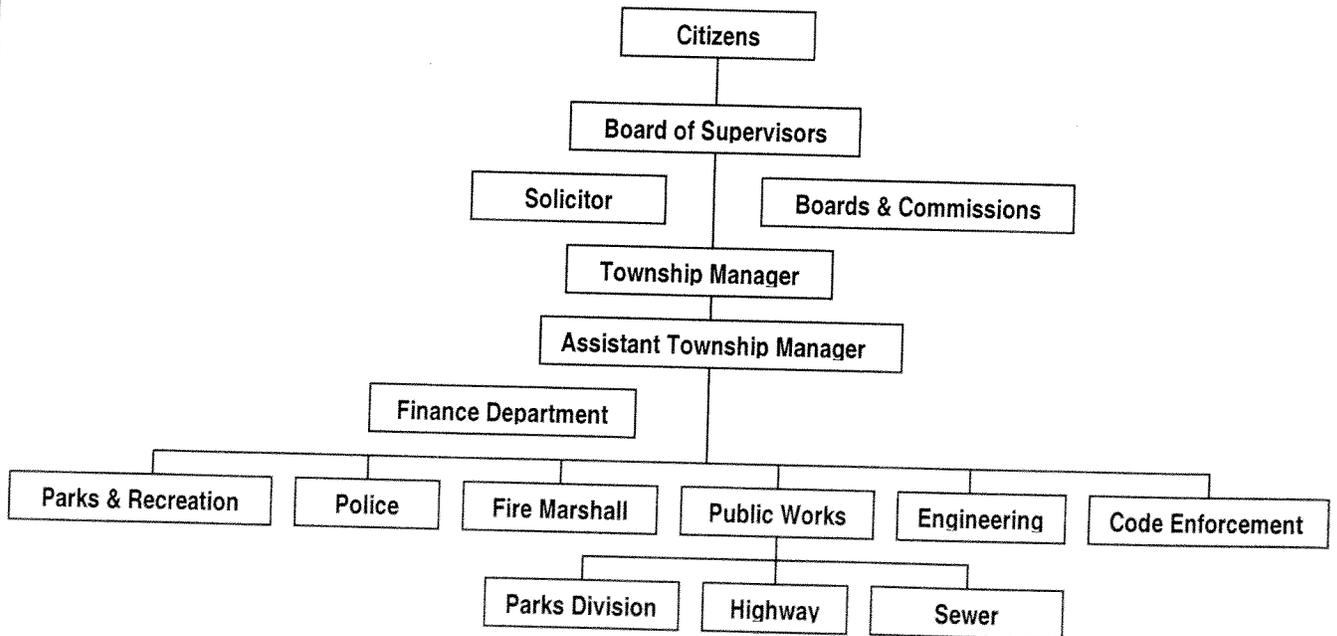
**Type:** Township of the Second Class.

**Elected Officials:** Five member Board of Supervisors serving six year staggered terms.

**Appointed Officials:** Board of Supervisors appoints seven members to the Park and Recreation Board each serving five years. Other boards include: Shade Tree, Planning Commission, and Zoning Hearing Board.

**Township Administration:** Township Manager, Assistant Township Manager, Solicitor, Departments of Parks & Recreation, Police, Public Works, Fire Marshall, Engineering, Code Enforcement, and Finance.

**Figure 1  
Whitpain Township  
Municipal Organization**



## Population Statistics

<b>2000 Population:</b>	18,562, a 19% increase since 1990.
<b>Gender:</b>	51.8% female and 48.2% male.
<b>Race/Ethnicity:</b>	86.3% Caucasian. The Asian population included the largest growth increasing from 5.3% to 7.8% of the population. 4.7% African American. 1.3% Hispanic.
<b>Median Age:</b>	41.1 years.
<b>Projections:</b>	19,860 in 2010. 21,580 in 2020. 22,480 in 2025.

## Households and Housing

<b>Households:</b>	6,960.
<b>Family Households:</b>	5,204 (74.8% of the 6,960 households). In 1990, family households comprised 77.8 % of the total households.
<b>Persons per Household:</b>	2.64, down from 2.80 in 1990.
<b>Owner Occupied Housing Units:</b>	78.4%, an increase from 77.8% in 1990.
<b>Median House Value:</b>	\$248,600 compared with \$213,300 in 2000, the second highest in Montgomery County.

## Socio-Economic Characteristics

<b>1999 Median Income:</b>	<i>Household:</i> \$88,933. Highest in County. <i>Family:</i> \$103,613. Second highest in County. <i>Per Capita:</i> \$41,739. Third highest in County.
<b>Poverty:</b>	1.7% of families, less than Pennsylvania's rate of 11.1%.
<b>Education:</b>	Among those 25 years and older, 94% have at least a high school diploma. About 33.3% of those over 25 have a college degree and 23.5% have a professional or graduate degree.
<b>Employment:</b>	21.3% in health and education. 15.8% professional. 13.5% in manufacturing. 13% in finance.
<b>Grandparents:</b>	In 28 households, the grandparents are responsible as caregivers.

## Community Trends

Whitpain Township is one of the most desirable communities in which to live in the Delaware Valley. **Philadelphia Magazine** consistently rated Whitpain in its top ten list of desirable communities. The U.S. Census of 2000 showed that Whitpain Township was in the top five communities in the five southeastern Pennsylvania counties in terms of income. The Township is second only to Lower Merion in Montgomery County in median household and family incomes out of 62 municipalities. Whitpain is part of the Wissahickon School District, which is regarded as a premiere school district in Pennsylvania.

## Growth

For its first 265 years, Whitpain Township was an agricultural community. In the past 50 years, the Township has become a suburban community mainly serving as a residential community for those who work in employment centers in the surrounding communities and the region. The Township has a mix of single-family homes, retirement communities, townhouses and apartments. The trend is towards more multi-unit housing with single detached homes down from 78 percent in 1982 to 59 percent in 2000. Some large developments such as the 850 unit Blue Bell Country Club and Normandy Farms greatly increased the population living in the northwest quadrant of the Township.

Population growth was highest between 1950 and 1960 with a rate of 139 percent. Thereafter, Whitpain's population increased by about 26 percent each decade until the 1990's when growth slowed to about 18 percent. Although growth slowed, it slowed to a rate that was six times that of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania! Growth trends are projected to slow over the next 20 years with a 6.9 percent increase projected by 2010 and another 8.6 percent increase by 2020. This trend shows a dichotomy: that Whitpain is in the process of completing its development yet a substantial number of people will move into the Township. As townships become more developed and developable land is used up, growth rates decrease.

Because of the tremendous growth and the love of the community for its charming open space that served as a buffer between the more highly developed communities of Montgomery County, the Board of Supervisors took some bold steps in preserving open space. The Township acquired Prophecy Creek Park and the Cook tract, two of the last large parcels remaining in the Township. Both acquisitions were difficult and expensive attesting to the commitment of elected officials and the citizenry to land preservation in Whitpain Township.

## Population Trends

According to the U.S. Census of 2000, the population of Whitpain Township is 18,562. Whitpain experienced rapid population growth in the last twenty years of 58 percent. Growth from 1990 to 2000 was significant at 19 percent. The Township has nearly completed its development and growth is expected to continue but at a slower pace. The major change expected for Whitpain is the aging of its citizenry as the baby boomers head

into retirement and life expectancy continues to increase. This will require an adjustment in recreation planning with a focus on clients of all ages not just youth.

<b>Table 1</b>				
<b>State, County, and Township Population 1980-2000</b>				
	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>% Change 1980-2000</b>
Pennsylvania	11,864,904	11,881,643	12,281,054	3.5%
Montgomery County	643,621	678,193	750,097	16.5%
Whitpain Township	11,772	15,660	18,562	58%

Source: Penn State Data Center and U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000 Census

The population projections show continued growth but to a lesser extent than the past several decades. Through 2010, growth is projected at 6.9 percent followed by 8.6 percent growth in the following decade.

## Age

As interests change throughout one's lifetime, it is important to look at the age groupings in order to target services. Table 2 presents population by major age group changes between 1990 and 2000 as well as comparisons with Montgomery County and Pennsylvania. Trends show that proportionately the younger age groups are decreasing while the older age groups are increasing. Whitpain reflects Pennsylvania as a whole more than it does Montgomery County in terms of age group composition. The age groups of 45 and older are higher in Whitpain than in Montgomery County. The retirement communities in the Township are a contributing factor.

<b>Table 2</b>				
<b>Whitpain Percent of Population by Age Group</b>				
<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Whitpain 1990 Population %</b>	<b>Whitpain 2000 Population %</b>	<b>Montgomery County 2000 %</b>	<b>PA 2000 %</b>
Under 5	6.6	6.1	6.3	5.9
5-19	20.7	20.6	19.9	20.6
20-44	37.0	30.6	35.5	18.8
45-64	22.3	27.9	23.3	29.7
65+	13.2	15.0	14.9	15.6
Median Age	37.0	41.1	38.2	38.0

Source: Penn State Data Center and U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000 Census

## Graying of Whitpain Township

Whitpain Township reflects the “graying of America” trend: the population over the age of 65 increased from 13.2 percent to 14.9 percent of the population. Reporting differences by the U.S. Bureau of the Census in 2000 prevent comparisons with the under 18 age cohorts. The Township’s median age of 41.1 is higher than the median age of both Pennsylvania 38 and Montgomery County at 38.2. People in the middle and pre-retirement age groups moving into the older age groups over the next twenty years are also high proportionately than the county and state as a whole. Based upon educational and income levels, it is likely that these citizens will tend to be a healthy, active, and engaged population well into advanced years.

<b>Table 3</b>														
<b>Detailed Population Groups by Age Group - 2000</b>														
Area	Age Group													Med. Age
	0-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-59	60-64	65-74	75-84	85+	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Pennsylvania	5.9	6.7	7.0	6.9	6.1	12.7	15.9	13.9	5.0	4.2	7.9	5.8	1.9	38.0
Montgomery County	6.3	6.8	7.0	6.1	4.9	13.5	17.1	14.2	5.1	4.0	7.4	5.5	2.0	38.2
Whitpain Township	6.1	7.2	7.6	5.8	3.5	13.5	17.1	16.7	6.7	4.5	7.6	5.3	2.1	41.1

Source: Penn State Data Center and U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000 Census

### Different Generations - Different Views of the World

Longer lives have produced several generations with different views of the world: Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y. Their formative experiences have molded specific preferences and beliefs among these different age groups. Each group has its own attitudes, sensibilities, hot buttons and cultural expectations. Clarifying the needs and desires of all generations is essential in public service. Finding out how to reach and involve different generations of people in everything from programs and services to funding in parks and recreation in a positive manner is complex. For example, one generation alone, Generation Y, has three segments: adults, teens, and children.

For program planning and public outreach, understanding potential client groups is essential. Figure 2 presents information about various generations along with implications for program and service planning and in devising outreach strategies to implement this plan.

## **Figure 2** **Generations<sup>1</sup> and Implications<sup>2</sup>**

**Traditionalists** – *Born before 1946.* Affected by the Great Depression. Hard work. Self-sacrifice. Respect for authority and institutions. Earned their material comforts the good old-fashioned way. **Reaching this group:** Stress frugality & their right to enjoy the fruits of their labor. Use endorsements of well-known people with wisdom of experience.

**Baby Boomers** – *Born 1946 - 1960.* Born into prosperity and affluence. “Permissive” upbringing. Feel special and privileged. Challenge authority. Champion the unconventional. Focused on self-fulfillment. Strong sense of entitlement and self-worth. **Reaching this group:** Stress family and family activity. Supply products and services that make boomers feel like young active winners.

**Gen X** – *Born 1960 - 1980.* Lived with social and economic obstacles that are harder than those faced by Traditionalists and did not exist for Boomers. Technology and media opened them to wider choices in lifestyle than previous generations. Sophisticated and savvy about the world. Skeptical. **Reaching this group:** Use candor, humor, and pragmatic approaches.

**Gen Y (Echo Boomers)** – *Born 1980 - 2000.* Group so large and complex that it is viewed as three distinct groups: adulthood, teens and tweens. Multi-cultural diversity. Broader definition of family. Affected by violence and scandal: Columbine, 9/11, terrorism, and political scandals. More watchful and careful about their personal safety. Mistrustful of the media. Information Age influence: shorter attention spans, boredom, and over-stimulation. **Reaching this group:** Use technology: videos, computers, WEB. Capitalize on hope and optimism. Inclusive multi-cultural programs and services. Participative planning enabling people to be heard through pulling together.

### **Population Target Groups**

The Whitpain Township Parks & Recreation Department can use population figures to target age group planning. Table 4 presents the raw number of citizens by age group. For example, one of the Department’s prime target groups is the age group 5 to 14. This group has 2,747 people suggesting that this is the target audience for departmental programs serving this age group. The family life stage age group of 35 to 54 has over 6,000 people suggesting that family oriented programming is important.

<sup>1</sup> Paul, Pamela. September 2001. *Getting Inside Gen Y, American Demographics*, Volume 23 (9) pp 42-49

<sup>2</sup> Smith, J. Walker and Clurman, Ann. 1997. **Rocking the Ages: The Yankelovich Report on Generational Marketing.** (New York, NY: Harper Business).

<b>Table 4</b> <b>Whitpain 2000 Population</b> <b>Age Group Raw Numbers</b>	
<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Number</b>
Under 5 Years	1,135
5 - 14 Years	2,747
15 - 19 Years	1,074
20 - 34 Years	2,492
35 - 54 Years	6,261
55 - 64 Years	2,089
65 - 84 Years	2,380
85 Years+	384

Source: Penn State Data Center and U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000 Census

## Family Structure

One of the marked changes in Pennsylvania's population in recent years has been the alteration of the family structure. Households have experienced a decline in married couples and households with children. Households with single people, single heads of households, and single parents have increased. Between 1990 and 2000, the:

- Percentage of married-couple householders in Whitpain decreased from 69.1 percent to 66.3 percent.
- Householders living alone increased from 17.1 percent to 21.3 percent.
- Percentage of non-family households increased from 22 percent to 25 percent.
- U.S. Census Bureau began to track the number of grandparents as caregivers. In Whitpain, 28 households indicated that the grandparents were responsible for grandchildren.
- Proportion of households with all working parents is significant. About 58 percent of households with children under the age of six in Whitpain have all parents working.
- About 5 percent of the population works from home.
- Most women work: while 68 percent of the employed population is employed, 58 percent of females over 16 years are in the work force.

## Income

Whitpain Township is one of the top five municipalities in income in the Delaware Valley. The Township ranks among the top three municipalities in Montgomery County according to median income for households, families, and per capita. People with higher income levels tend to participate more in recreational activities and outdoor recreation than other groups. Table 5 presents median per capita income information.

<b>Table 5</b>					
<b>Median Per Capita Income 1999</b>					
<b>Area</b>	<b>Household</b>	<b>% Change 1990-1999</b>	<b>Family</b>	<b>Per-Capita</b>	<b>% Individuals in Poverty</b>
Pennsylvania	\$40,106	37.9	\$49,184	\$20,880	11.0%
Montgomery County	60,829	39.1	72,183	30,898	4.4%
Whitpain	88,933	45.9	103,613	41,739	3.1%

Source: Penn State Data Center and U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000 Census

## Education

Educational attainment is the strongest indicator of an individual's income potential, attitudes, and spending habits. The trend nationally is toward higher levels of education. Overall Whitpain Township has comparatively higher educational level than Montgomery County and Pennsylvania. Table 6 presents educational attainment levels for the Township, County, and the State. Whitpain Township residents have dramatically higher educational attainment than other Pennsylvanians. About three times as many have advanced or professional degrees Citizens with bachelor's degrees or higher outnumber the state as a whole by more than two and a half times. Whitpain Township even outpaces Montgomery County overall. The County itself has a high percentage of high educational attainment.

<b>Table 6</b>			
<b>Educational Attainment of People 25 Years and Older 2000</b>			
	<b>High School Graduate + %</b>	<b>Bachelor's Degree %</b>	<b>Advanced or Professional Degree %</b>
Pennsylvania	38.1	14.0	8.4
Montgomery County	49.7	23.1	15.1
Whitpain Township	37.1	33.3	23.5

Source: Penn State Data Center and U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000 Census

## Race

The face of Whitpain Township is changing as shown in Table 7, Racial Composition. The community is becoming more diversified. The Asian population is higher than the County and the State. Since 1990, the Asian population increased by 47 percent, a much greater rate than the township's overall population growth. While the numbers themselves are not large, the significance is in the growth rate.

<b>Table 7</b>						
<b>Racial* Composition by Percentage of Population</b>						
	<b>Whitpain Township</b>		<b>Montgomery County</b>		<b>Pennsylvania</b>	
	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>
White	89.9%	86.3%	90.6%	86.5%	88.5%	85.4%
African American	4.4	4.7	5.6	7.5	9.1	10.0
Latino – of any race*	1.1	1.3	1.2	2.0	1.8	3.2
American Indian	0.1	0.1	.09	0.1	.1	0.1
Asian	5.3	7.8	2.3	4.0	1.1	1.8

\*Numbers do not total 100% because the Latino group includes multiple races.  
Source: Penn State Data Center and U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000 Census

## Housing

Housing is an indicator of affluence. Generally those who can afford to own their own homes are more affluent than those who rent. The median housing value in Whitpain is higher than the county and the state. It is one of the highest in southeastern Pennsylvania, the most affluent part of Pennsylvania. Whitpain Township has a higher percentage of housing structures with 20 or more units (6.6 percent) compared with 5.4 percent across the state but lower than the county rate of 9.4 percent. Both house value and rents show that this is an expensive community in which to live. About three out of ten renters pay more than 35 percent of their income for rent. Table 8 shows housing information.

<b>Table 8</b>			
<b>Housing Information 2000</b>			
	<b>Whitpain Township</b>	<b>Montgomery County</b>	<b>Pennsylvania</b>
Owner Occupied %	78.0%	73.5%	71.3%
Renter Occupied %	21.6	26.5	28.7
Detached single family homes %	59.6	56.0	55.9
Median House Value	\$248,600	\$160,700	\$97,000
Median Gross Rent	\$1,154	\$757	\$531

Source: Penn State Data Center and U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000 Census

## **Overview of Parks and Recreation in Whitpain Township**

Whitpain Township Parks and Recreation Department began in a traditional fashion familiar to many Pennsylvania communities: volunteers responded to pressing recreational needs in the Township, launched a series of vital community programs, and soon found that the demands required the expertise and time commitment of a full-time professional.

### **Parks and Recreation Evolution**

In 1959, Whitpain Township adopted Ordinance 31, which established the Park and Recreation Board. The Board was given the authority to equip, maintain, and supervise any parks, recreation areas, and other facilities in Whitpain Township, to conduct recreation programs, and to employ leaders, directors, and superintendents as they saw fit. They were charged with establishing standards, qualifications, and salary schedules to be approved by the Supervisors. Another important responsibility was park planning for parks recreation areas and facilities for approval by the Supervisors. The Board consisted of five members, two of the members being members or appointees of the Whitpain Township School Board.

In 1968, Ordinance 31 was amended. Ordinance 31-1 expanded Park and Recreation Board membership from five to seven members.

In 1978, the Township adopted Ordinance 31-2 amending the Park and Recreation Board Ordinance a second time. This change specified that the Board of Supervisors would appoint all seven members of the Park and Recreation Board.

From 1959 until 1994, the Park and Recreation Board planned, managed, directed, controlled, and evaluated all parks and recreation operations in the Township.

In 1994, the Board made a major step forward in establishing a full-time Department of Parks and Recreation for Whitpain Township. The Board recommended hiring a full-time parks and recreation professional to manage parks and recreation functions. The compelling reason for the establishment of the department was to hire the Director to oversee the final stages and construction of Wentz Run Park and to open it. The Board continues to play a vital role as citizen advisors and volunteers for parks and recreation in Whitpain Township.

### **Whitpain Department of Parks and Recreation Today**

Whitpain Township now has an award-winning parks and recreation system that is well respected throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The establishment of a full-time department has resulted in a year round, full-service operation that anticipates and meets community needs.

Officials in all capacities ranging from elected and appointed positions to the dedicated professional staff have worked shoulder-to-shoulder in a litany of decisions and actions that have made Whitpain the quality community it is today. While operating with dedicated fiscal accountability, decision-makers have undertaken bold actions as diverse

2. Direct the process from the perspective of knowledgeable and committed people in the community through the Park and Recreation Board. The Board was able to provide knowledge, perspective, and know-how to the planning process, the foundation for a practical and achievable plan.

## **Park and Recreation Board**

The Park and Recreation Board served as the advisory committee for this plan. The members provided contacts, advice, ideas, and suggestions; presented concerns; and channeled the process to target Whitpain Township's goals.

## **Key Person Interviews**

The Whitpain Township Parks and Recreation Department and the Park and Recreation Board identified about 30 key stakeholders in the community to participate in the interviews. The interviews were tailored to the specific mission or interests of the person being interviewed with respect to the parks and recreation plan. Interviews were conducted both in person as well as via telephone. More than 50 interviews included diverse interests with one or more representative (s) of the following organizations.

The interviews provided information on a variety of issues related to parks, recreation, greenways, trails, financing, partnerships, county and community planning, historic preservation, municipal operations, indoor recreation, and planning. The interviews helped to shape the plan's recommendations by offering a variety of viewpoints on parks, recreation, open space, and township goals regarding quality of life. Those interviewed represented the following:

- Township Supervisors
- Park & Recreation Board
- Planning Commission
- Shade Tree Commission
- Township Staff: Manager, Finance, Engineering
- Parks & Recreation Department: Director, Program Coordinator, Office Manager, Park Superintendent
- Police: Chief, Public Information Officer, DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education)
- Township Planners
- Rotary
- Equestrian Groups: Wissahickon Hunt and Horseways
- Whitpain Recreation Association (WRA)

- Ambler Whitpain Junior Football League (AWYFC)
- Whitpain Aquatics Club
- School District: Superintendent, Facility Manager, Business Manager
- Montgomery County Community College
- Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association
- Historic Groups
- Anniversary Celebration Committee
- Ambler Y
- Cedarbrook Country Club
- Woman's' Club of Whitpain
- St. Helena's CYO

## **Findings of Public Participation Process**

Overall the public participation process revealed a great deal of pride and enthusiasm for Whitpain Township Parks & Recreation. Those interviewed made the following points:

1. **Appreciation for Land Acquired and Preserved** - People expressed appreciation for the township's efforts in preserving Prophecy Creek and for purchasing all of the lands that make up the community park system.
2. **Find Ways of Making the Best Use of What We Have** - The comment to make the best use of what we have was the over-riding theme of the comments. People are satisfied that the Township has been doing all the right things in terms of land acquisition, development services and so on. It is now time to settle in and look at the future to determine how Whitpain Township can achieve an efficient and effective balance for citizens of all ages and interests while conserving precious natural resources and responsible use of public lands.
3. **Achieve Balance** - While sports are important, people want to see current level of effort continue but that other opportunities for those not involved in sports be established. The goal should be to achieve a balance of opportunities for people throughout their lifetime. Activities such as the arts and culture need to be added to balance the good work that has been done in youth sports. Providing greenways and trails, places to walk and bike are important.
4. **Year-Round Recreation is a Priority** - Focus has been on outdoor recreation. There is a need for indoor facilities for a variety of activities ranging from gyms for youth sports to fitness and wellness facilities for the aging population and facilities and services in the arts, culture, and family recreation. School facilities are used but are very limited in terms of times available and the high demand.

5. **Top Outdoor Recreation Preferences** - Pathways for walking and biking emerged at the top of the list for facility preferences in the Township. Safe places for children to bike are especially important.
6. **Expand Service to All Ages** - Facilities and services are needed for the township citizenry as a whole for people of all ages and interests to serve the young and the young at heart, families, and people with interests other than sports. Special focus should be on wellness and family opportunities.
7. **Financial Concerns** - Given the challenging economic times and the tight fiscal climate within the Township, citizens are concerned about paying for everything. The fact that most of the local tax dollar supports the School District and many municipalities instituted their own earned income tax have produced concern about financing to develop and maintain the park system in a quality fashion.
8. **Environmental Protection** - With the great development that has occurred, the citizens are very concerned with the protection of the existing resources. Protection of natural areas is important.
9. **Partnerships are Important** - Citizens recognize that the Township cannot accomplish everything in parks and recreation on its own. Partnerships with a host of community organizations are crucial. These include groups such as Montgomery County Community College (MCCC), Whitpain Recreation Association (WRA), Wissahickon School District, the equestrians, the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association (WVWA), service clubs such as the Blue Bell Rotary and the Woman's Club, and private citizens.
10. **Promotion of Opportunities is Necessary** - Many people do not know what is available. Developing an orchestrated marketing program would be important. The Township already has methods and regularly provides information to the public. The dilemma of not only disseminating information but also finding ways of making the information recognizable is the challenge of today's park systems.

## Analysis

Whitpain Township is a highly desirable community in which to live, raise a family, and retire. An affluent, highly educated community, Whitpain is beginning to see the diversification of the community with increasing percentage of the Asian population especially. *The most significant demographic factor related to planning for parks and recreation is the "graying" of the citizenry. The fastest growing segment of the population is the age group over 55. This shift in population will require a fundamental re-thinking in the design and type of recreation facilities in Whitpain Township.*

Whitpain Township will continue to see growth but at lower level in the future compared the double-digit growth experienced in the past. Growth is projected to be at about six to eight percent over each of the next two decades.

The groups of most concern to the community regarding parks and recreation services are teens, seniors, and families. There is consensus that children ages 6 to 12 are well served

and that sports are effectively provided through partnerships between the Township and community organizations.

The public opinion process found that the public has positive regard for Whitpain's Parks and Recreation Department. The public appreciates the quality of services, the appearance of the parks, and the responsiveness of the Department. There is a need for all providers to work closely together in order to assure that the public as a whole is served through the public estate.

While the public has a favorable public perception of the township's system, they want to see the best use made of all land and facilities. They indicated that the Township has accomplished significant preservation of land and focus should now be directed towards developing and improving existing properties.

Facilities that the public sees the Township lacking include indoor recreation facilities, trails and paths, and place for teens to hang out. The public would like to see services expanded beyond sports and beyond the focus on children and youth ages 5 to 14.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

1. **Focus on Planning for an Active Aging Population.** Since growth has slowed in Whitpain, the Township needs to focus planning efforts on the changing composition of the population: primarily towards an active aging population and families.
2. **Make the Best Use of Existing Parkland – and Add to It Where Possible.** Although the public wants to make the best use of what the Township already has, it is essential not to be shortsighted in this regard. The danger here is that the Township might forego important lands that could forever be lost to development. While recreation facilities could be developed in the future as resources become available, land is a scarce and ever depleting commodity with only a short time left for preservation from development in Whitpain. Acquiring land contiguous to parks and public properties and as linkages for trails, pathways and resource protection is important.
3. **Prioritize Services to Senior Active Adults, Families, and Teens.**
4. **Assist Those in Need.** The affluence of the community shows that fees and charges are a reasonable financial tool. It is important that the Township make provisions for those who cannot afford to pay for programs and services. The high rents show that people are paying a high percentage of their income for housing. Public recreation needs to be accessible and equitable.
5. **Maximize Use of All Facilities.** Park improvements should be directed towards developing plans to make the best use of all public facilities including school facilities.
6. **Explore the Establishment of an Indoor Recreation Center.** Consideration should be given to establishing a community recreation center for people of all ages, interests, and abilities. The citizens should be able to use the center

throughout their lifetime and on an expanded basis upon retirement. It should provide space for a variety of interests including fitness and wellness, sports, the arts, family activities, teens, seniors, public meeting space and others as determined in a building program to be established in the facility planning and public participation process. Public opinion shows that the door is open for discussions about an indoor recreation center. The citizens need to know more about the nature of the center, facilities that could be included, and financing of capital and operating costs. A strategy should be established about the timing and level of further exploration of this issue.

7. **Establish Forums to Generate Public Input.** The Department should consider establishing a program of forums related to topics such as the summer program, Parent Teacher Organizations (PTO's), senior adults, and park visitors in identified parks.
8. **Be Aware of Public Opinion about Taxes.** Public sentiment opinions about spending are strong factors here. The large price tags on the recent acquisitions are fresh in the publics' mind and may impact future financing needs. The challenge is to create a vision for the community through parks and recreation and then to figure out how to pursue different strategies to achieve the vision. If the anti-tax sentiment drives the planning alone, the result will be maintaining the status quo in the community. The risk in maintaining the status quo is that community may not reach its potential nor respond to changing citizen needs.
9. **Balance Facility Development for Lifetime and Self-Directed Recreation.** The Parks and Recreation Department needs to achieve balance in its facilities and services: continue in providing the excellent services to children and youth, begin to focus on teens, families, and the aging population, continue to provide facilities for sports while improving the parks to be more useable and attractive for drop-in recreation for individuals, families, and friends. Shifting from facility development supporting organized athletic programs to facilities for walking, biking, and lifetime wellness is crucial.

## **Chapter 3: Parks, Recreation Facilities, and Greenways**

<b>Park Definitions</b> .....	<b>25</b>
Open Space Designations.....	27
<b>Seven Factor Assessment</b> .....	<b>31</b>
Amount of Parkland.....	31
Park Configuration.....	32
Park Location.....	34
Connections Between Parks.....	35
Recreation Facilities.....	42
Park Conditions.....	45
Wentz Run Park.....	45
Stony Creek Sports Park.....	46
Erbs Mill Park.....	46
West Side Park.....	47
West Side Court.....	48
Armentrout Preserve.....	48
Prophecy Creek Park.....	49
Cook Tract.....	51
St. Helena's Tract.....	51
Wissahickon Park.....	52
Park and Recreation Facility Trends.....	53
<b>Analysis of Parks, Facilities, and Greenways</b> .....	<b>54</b>
<b>Conclusions and Recommendations</b> .....	<b>55</b>

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# Parks, Recreation Facilities, and Greenways

The purpose of undertaking the parks and recreation facility assessment was to determine if recreation needs are being met in Whitpain Township and to project how the system should continue to evolve to meet present and future recreation needs. Existing public facilities throughout the Township have been assessed to determine how they could be improved or expanded and what changes must be made to comply with safety and accessibility standards. Service areas were reviewed to determine if citizens have access to parks. Connections between parks, schools, communities and other destinations were explored. The analysis of parks and recreation facilities was based on seasonal fieldwork, evaluation of existing conditions and service areas, and community needs and interests.

## Park Definitions

Table 9 presents Whitpain Township Parks and Recreation Department's definitions of open space along with their characteristics regarding size, service area, and facilities. These definitions were adopted from the Whitpain Township Planning Commission's designations of open space.

The Planning Commission Open Space Designations are in conformance with the township's **Comprehensive Plan** and **Open Space Plan**. Table 9 presents the Planning Commission designations along with the township park lands to which the designations apply. The definitions of the open space designations are shown on pages 27 and 28.

**Table 9  
Whitpain Township Parks**

Park Name	Address	Designation*	Characteristics/Facilities	Planning District
Wentz Run Park	1000 Anvil Lane	Active	Soccer fields (3), softball field, youth baseball field, adult baseball field, multi-purpose field, tot lot & youth playground, sand volleyball court, basketball courts (2), batting cage, soccer wall, tennis courts (4), pavilion, pavilion/restrooms/concession, band stand, trail, horseshoe pits (2), tetherball	#4
Stony Creek Park	500 North Wales Road	Active	In-line hockey court, football field, parking	#2
West Side Park	Maple Avenue and Oak Street	Active	Playground	#3
West Side Court	Mt. Pleasant & Maple Avenue	Active	Basketball court	#3
Erbs Mill Park	Erbs Mill Road & Talbot Road	Passive	Undeveloped, open field	#1
Armentrout Preserve	Beale Road	Passive & Conservation	Trails, parking area, trail markers	#3
Prophecy Creek Park	295 Skippack Pike	Passive & Conservation	Undeveloped, residential estate, open fields, woods, hedgerows, ponds, stream. Available for self-directed recreation.	#3
Cook Tract	Yost Road	Passive & Conservation	Undeveloped, open fields, hedgerows	#1
St. Helena's Tract	Yost Road and Dekalb Street	Passive, Active, & Conservation	Undeveloped, woods, open fields	#1
Wissahickon Park	Oak Street	Conservation	Closed, asbestos contamination	#3
<b>Other Lands/Parks</b>				
PECO Ballfield	PECO	Active	Youth baseball field, parking	#1
Misc. Open Space & Detention Basins	Whitpain Township	Conservation	Detention basins, municipal lands, etc.	#1, #2, #3, #4

\*See Designations on pages 27 and 28.

## **Open Space Designations**

### **Conservation**

The conservation designation includes environmentally sensitive areas with characteristics such as steep slopes, wetlands, floodplains, riparian corridors, woodland areas, and endangered species habitats. This designation would be the least active and most protective, includes agricultural preservation. Permitted activities would be limited to:

- a. Limited walking trails in a natural setting.
- b. Protection of environmentally sensitive areas such as a wildlife sanctuary or preserve.
- c. Environmental education programs.
- d. Limited access with parking limited to pervious surfaces only.
- e. Park areas limited from dawn to dusk.
- f. Function as natural buffers where deemed appropriate.
- g. Buildings/structures not permitted.

### **Passive Recreation**

The passive recreation designation covers areas to be maintained in a natural setting with minimal grading or construction activities. Significant natural features such as landmark trees, historic buildings or sites, meadows, and features characteristic of conservation would be preserved. Permitted activities would include:

- a. Less energetic activities such as walking, sitting, picnicking, and horseback riding.
- b. Structures limited to gazebos, bridges, picnic pavilions, and similar uses.
- c. Hours limited from dawn to dusk.

### **Active Recreation**

The active recreation designation includes areas that provide opportunity for prescribed outdoor recreation including sports fields and spectator facilities, playground equipment, tot lots, service buildings, and hard surface parking lots (lighting facilities optional depending upon township policy). More intensive than passive recreation, extensive earth movement, grading and drainage facilities are often required. Natural features such as hedgerows and ponds are preserved where practical in a park setting. Activities include:

- a. Baseball fields.
- b. Field sports such as soccer, football, and field hockey.

- c. Court games such as volleyball, tennis, and basketball.
- d. Activity areas for group events.
- e. Buildings such as picnic pavilions and gazebos (usually not fully enclosed) and storage sheds.
- f. Track, walking trails.
- g. Swimming pools.
- h. Ice-skating and ice hockey.

### **Active with Indoor Recreation Facilities**

This designation includes areas that provide the opportunity for prescribed indoor and outdoor recreation. This includes buildings for recreational, social, educational or cultural activities, open to the public or designated groups, usually owned and operated by a public agency or non-profit group or agency. Depending upon its size and the nature of activities programmed within the building, the community center could result in significant visual and physical impact on the park and its immediate surroundings. Such a facility would have limited application in Whitpain Township. Wentz Run Park or an adjacent property should be the primary location for this type of activity. In the alternative, look to acquire land with existing facilities in place. This designation would also include all of the opportunities and activities covered under the Active Recreation designation.

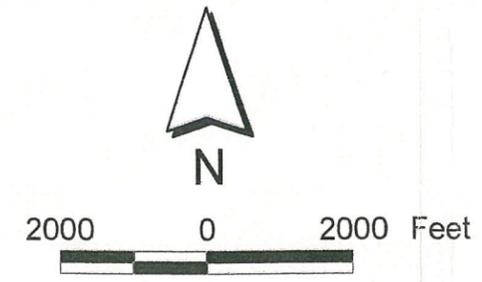
# Whitpain Township

## Facility Inventory Map



### Legend

- Parks
- Open Space/ Detention Basins
- Schools
- Flood Plain
- Roads
- Parcels
- Township Line
- Planning District



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## Six Factor Assessment

The Inventory Map on page 29 presents the locations of the parks in the Township. Seven factors guided the park and recreation facility assessment in Whitpain Township. They included:

1. Amount of parkland
2. Configuration of parks
3. Location
4. Connection between parks
5. Recreation facilities
6. Conditions

### Park Factor 1: Amount of Parkland

*Over the past 30 years, it has been the accepted practice within the recreation and park profession to adopt a uniform national active recreation land standard such as 10 acres per 1,000 population.*

National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), Park, Recreation, and Open Space Guidelines - 1995

Whitpain Township has ten parks of varying sizes, configuration, and level of development. Determining if the existing parks provide sufficient parkland is typically completed using the national standard. For discussion purposes the 10-acre standard has been used to evaluate Whitpain Township. The 10 acres per 1,000 population is a point of departure for evaluation of active parkland acreage and determining what the standard for parkland acreage in the municipality should be. This acreage analysis only addresses active parkland. The anticipated development of Prophecy Creek Park will include only small areas of low-impact active recreation located adjacent to Shady Grove Elementary School. This area has been calculated at approximately eight acres in size and only the eight acres has been included for Prophecy Creek Park in the parkland acreage analysis.

When Whitpain Township's parkland acreages are compared to the 10-acres/1,000 population standards the following conclusions can be drawn:

- Whitpain Township is currently meeting the overall acreage requirement with the existing parkland holdings of the municipality. As the population grows additional parkland will be necessary to meet recreation needs.
- Whitpain Township currently has 194 acres of active parkland, distributed in seven parks. Of this total acreage, 109 acres is currently undeveloped with recreation facilities or activity areas. When the undeveloped acreage is subtracted, 85 acres of active recreation land is available in Whitpain Township.

- The undeveloped parkland acreage is necessary to meet the parkland acreage standard. Future development of these sites with recreation facilities may be needed to address recreation needs.

## **Park Factor 2: Configuration of Parks**

Table 10 presents the Whitpain Township Park Classification System. It shows the range of park types, their benefits, appropriate facilities, and the maintenance levels appropriate for the type of park and resources available. Just as the amount of park acreage is important, so is the type of parks available for public use. Different types of parks provide different recreation opportunities for people who live, work, and play in Whitpain Township.

The public participation process provided insight into citizens' preference for preserving open space, incorporating open space with natural features within parks, and achieving a balance between open space protection and having public parks.

When the park sizes, functions, and designations are compared to the 1995 NRPA classification categories, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- Wentz Run Park, Prophecy Creek Park, and the Cook Tract contain the recommended acreage for community parks.
  - Wentz Run Park is developed as a prototypical community park with facilities for the broad community (*active recreation*).
  - Cook Tract is undeveloped. The site contains open, relatively flat fields separated by hedgerows (*passive recreation & conservation*).
  - Prophecy Creek Park is currently available for informal passive recreation use but the site has not been master planned or developed for specific park uses (*passive & active recreation and conservation*).
- Stony Creek Sports Park is a sports complex (*active recreation*).
- St. Helena's Tract is an Open Space parcel. Currently undeveloped. It has a convenient location and easy access along DeKalb Pike that is contiguous with the Cook Tract (*active recreation*).
- West Side Court and West Side Park are mini parks; each offers a single recreation facility (*active recreation*).
- Erbs Mill Park would be classified as a mini park once it is developed and available for public recreation (*passive & active*).
- Armentrout Preserve is a nature preserve that connects to lands of the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association via other protected lands in the municipality (*conservation*).

**Table 0**  
**Park Definitions According to the National Recreation and Park Association**

Type/Size/Service Radius	Definition	Benefits	Appropriate Facilities	Maintenance Level
Mini Park 0-5 acres ¼-mile service radius	Smallest park type, addresses limited recreation need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides close to home recreation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Playground</li> <li>Benches, seating area</li> </ul>	High level of maintenance associated with well developed park and playground and reasonably high visitation
Neighborhood Park 5-15 acres minimum ½-mile service radius	Focus of neighborhood; in walking/biking distance of visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides access to basic recreation opportunities</li> <li>Contributes to neighborhood identity</li> <li>Establishes sense of community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Play areas</li> <li>Ballfields</li> <li>Game Courts</li> <li>Picnic/Seating</li> <li>Pathways</li> <li>Community gardens</li> </ul>	High level of maintenance associated with well-developed park and reasonably high visitation.
Community Park 75+ acres 2-mile service radius	Large park for active & passive recreation; serves residents city-wide. Accommodates large groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Variety of recreation opportunities for all ages and interests</li> <li>Space for organized, large scale, high participation events</li> <li>Family destination</li> <li>Fitness and wellness opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Play areas</li> <li>Organized sports facilities</li> <li>Pavilions</li> <li>Permanent restrooms</li> <li>Lighting</li> <li>Amphitheaters</li> <li>Pools, Rinks</li> <li>Parking</li> </ul>	Moderate level of maintenance associated with moderate level of development, budget restrictions, inability to perform higher levels of maintenance. Try to get park friends or establish adopt-a-park.
School/Community Park 2-mile service area	Parkland adjoining a school used for both recreation and education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Combines two public entities for expanded year round recreation.</li> <li>Maximizes public resources</li> <li>Expands recreation opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth-oriented game courts and ball fields</li> <li>Play areas</li> <li>Seating</li> <li>Pathways</li> <li>Lighting</li> </ul>	Moderate level of maintenance associated with moderate level of development, budget restrictions, Try to get cooperative agreement with school.
Sports Complex/Regional Park 50+ Acres	Consolidates sports fields and related facilities in a centralized location.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Economy of scale</li> <li>Improved management</li> <li>Showcase facility</li> <li>Attracts visitors who stimulate local economy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ball fields</li> <li>Lighting</li> <li>Spectator Areas</li> <li>Restrooms, Concessions</li> <li>Landscaping</li> <li>Parking</li> </ul>	State of the art maintenance applied to high quality facilities. Associated with high visitation; revenue generating facilities, tourism.
Special Use Facility Varies	Facility for a single purpose use.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides special focus recreation opportunities</li> <li>Contributes to community identity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Depends on purpose</li> </ul>	High level of maintenance associated with well-developed park and reasonably high visitation.
Greenways and Trails	Tie park areas together to form a contiguous park environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Connects community</li> <li>Reduces auto dependency</li> <li>Improves air quality</li> <li>Contributes most desired recreation facility for people throughout their lifetime</li> <li>Attracts visitors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pathways – multipurpose</li> <li>Trailheads</li> <li>Support facilities</li> <li>Signage</li> </ul>	Lowest level of maintenance. Focus on trailheads and trail safety.
Natural Resource Areas/ Preserve	Natural areas for the protect and management of natural environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protect resources</li> <li>Provide wildlife habitat</li> <li>Offer opportunities for environmental education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trails</li> <li>Signage</li> <li>Support facilities</li> </ul>	Lower level of maintenance.

- Prophecy Creek Park includes diverse natural resources including woods, meadows, a stream, ponds, wetlands, and hedgerows as well as historic structures. Input gathered during the planning process promotes the protection of the resources at the site and development of compatible, low impact active recreation facilities and community/special events and cultural arts areas (*passive & active recreation and conservation*).
- The Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association (WVWA) greenway initiatives in the Township include corridors along Wissahickon Creek and Prophecy Creek. WVWA is currently undertaking stream bank stabilization along Prophecy Creek.
- Other natural and manmade linear resources in the community could be used to develop greenways and trails. These resources include Stony Creek and its tributaries and the PECO rights-of-ways.
- There are currently no school/community parks, athletic complexes, or special purpose facilities in the municipality.

### **Park Factor 3: Location of Parks**

Whitpain Township is a highly developed municipality with numerous established neighborhoods and a heavily traveled roadway network. To analyze the accessibility to parkland throughout the municipality, a distribution analysis was completed which considered the barriers to easy convenient access. To a great degree the transportation routes that divide the community fall along the census tract boundaries. To allow the further evaluation of parkland by generalized area the census tracts were used which divide the municipality into four Planning Districts. Using the census tracts as the boundary for the Planning Districts allows the observations and recommendations of this planning effort to correspond with **The Whitpain Township Open Space Plan** of 1995. The Facility Inventory Map illustrates the planning district boundaries. Findings and conclusions based on the parkland distribution analysis include:

- There are areas of the municipality that are not served by parkland.
- Roadways, utility easements, and railroad rights-of-way create barriers to convenient access.
- Planning District #1 contains land designated as parkland that is currently undeveloped. The Pennsylvania Turnpike Northeast Extension creates a barrier to pedestrian and vehicular movement to other parts of the municipality. Only four roadways provide access across the Turnpike: North Wales Road, U.S. Route 202 (DeKalb Pike), Wentz Road, and Jolly Road.
- When master planned, the Cook Tract and St. Helena's Tract will provide recreation opportunities to Planning District #1.
- Planning District #2 includes the municipality's only sports complex but does not have convenient access to community parkland or nature preserves. DeKalb Pike and railroad and utility rights-of-way traverse this district.

- Planning District #3 contains a mixture of park types: mini parks, nature reserve, and Prophecy Creek Park. Morris Road traverses this district.
- Planning District #4 contains Wentz Run Park, a fully developed community park. Several major roads traverse this district to include Penllyn – Blue Bell Pike, Walton Road, Skippack Pike, and Gwynedd Road.
- The southern portion of the municipality in Planning District #4 is not served by parkland.

#### **Park Factor 4: Connections between Parks**

##### **Definition of Greenways**

*Greenways are corridors of protected public and private land established along rivers, stream valleys, ridges, abandoned rail corridors, utility rights-of-way, canals, scenic roads, or other linear features. They link recreational, cultural, and natural features; provide pathways for people and wildlife; protect forests, wetlands, and grasslands; and improve the quality of life for everyone.*

##### **Benefits of Greenways**

Creating a comprehensive network of green corridors and trails throughout Whitpain Township is one means of protecting the character, landscape, and natural resources of the municipality while providing facilities that provide recreation benefits to the broad population. Greenways provide an array of direct and indirect benefits that add to the quality of life of a community and region. Protection of green corridors and open spaces provides numerous economic, social, transportation, recreation, and ecological benefits. Easy access to trails promotes exercise and fitness, as well as, safe linkage to connected locales. Connecting parks, schools, businesses, and community destinations with trails and greenways will add to the livability and quality of life for citizens of all ages. Understanding the benefits of greenway creation and protection will promote and sustain the initiative to develop a comprehensive network of greenways throughout Whitpain Township. The benefits of greenways are identified below:

##### **Economic Benefits**

- Increase nearby property values.
- Precipitate new and expanded businesses related to greenway and trail use. New businesses will provide employment opportunities and revenues.
- Create tourist destinations that will generate expenditures on food, services, and lodging.
- Reduce damage and financial loss from flooding by providing buffer areas along stream and river corridors.

### **Social Benefits**

- Provide access to historically and culturally significant features in our communities.
- Provide opportunities to reconnect with the natural environment and urban fabric of our communities.
- Help to preserve the character and aesthetic appeal of a place or landscape.
- Provide significant new public places that can help to connect people and communities.
- Increase quality of life.
- Improve health and wellness of greenway and trail recreation users.
- Heighten sensitivity to the natural environment by providing for interaction between people and nature.

### **Transportation Benefits**

- Promote non-motorized transportation for cleaner air.
- Provide safe, alternative transportation routes for pedestrians and bicyclists that will lessen our dependency on automobiles.
- Provide emergency access via trails to undeveloped areas.
- Reduce roadway congestion through redistribution of users to alternative transportation routes.

### **Ecological Benefits**

- Promote plant and animal species diversity.
- Serve as a filtering zone; wetlands absorb pollutants and nutrients and slow run-off.
- Provide corridors for wildlife migration and movement.
- Preserve and protect vital wildlife, plant, and aquatic habitats.
- Improve air quality and reduce noise.
- Reduce storm water damage and promote flood mitigation within protected floodplains.
- Protect natural areas.

- Connect fragmented landscapes.
- Store and convey floodwaters.
- Clean up abandoned corridors.

### **Recreation Benefits**

- Provide areas to jog, walk, bike, ride horses, and canoe.
- Serve as sites for passive pursuits such as picnicking, fishing, and enjoying nature.
- Connect existing and planned trails.
- Encourage ecotourism.
- Provide landscapes for environmental education.
- Provide connections between parks and other protected lands.

### **Greenway Network**

Greenways are made up of corridors that link to areas of origin and destination. Potential linkage corridors of the greenway network in Whitpain Township include the stream corridors and associated floodplain areas and utility corridors. Trails exist in parks such as Wentz Run Park and Armentrout Preserve but an extensive trail system has not been developed throughout the Township. Areas of origin and destination, often called hubs, contribute to a greenway network.

### **Linear Resources**

Natural and manmade linear corridors can facilitate connections between parks and may offer long-distance trail opportunities. Resources exist in Whitpain Township that could be utilized in the development of a comprehensive network of greenways and trails throughout the community. Resources include the Wissahickon Creek, Prophecy Creek, Stony Creek, PECO rights-of-way, and rail and transit line rights-of-way.

### **Hubs**

In Whitpain Township parks and other protected lands, schools, commercial areas, and residential areas create potential hubs throughout the community. When greenways and trails connect to community places of origin and destination a network of protected open space and access ways is created. The existing parks in Whitpain Township are destinations that should be incorporated into a greenway network. Several of Whitpain's existing park fall within or near the corridors of streams or utility rights-of-way. These parks include Wentz Run Park, Prophecy Creek Park, Armentrout Preserve, Cook Tract,

St. Helena's Tract, and the PECO ball field. School hubs include Shady Grove Elementary School and Stony Creek Elementary School.

Citizens have expressed their desire for trails for long distance walking, hiking, mountain biking, and horseback riding. Trails are also desired to provide safe access to park sites. There are two active equestrian groups in the municipality: Horseyways and Wissahickon Hunt. The Horseyways group has an extensive network of trails throughout Montgomery County on private and public property.

The Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association (WVWA) has a 140-year history of developing a greenway along the Wissahickon Creek and its tributary. The WVWA continues to buy land and acquire access easements to expand their efforts. In Whitpain Township, WVWA greenway initiatives include corridors along Wissahickon Creek and Prophecy Creek. WVWA is currently undertaking stream bank stabilization along Prophecy Creek within Prophecy Creek Park. There are 12 municipalities included in the WVWA greenway as well as lands of the state, County, the Natural Lands Trust, and other entities, extending the greenway regionally. The WVWA has a professional staff and is available for community outreach programs on environmental education.

Montgomery County identifies the Wissahickon Greenway as a primary greenway corridor and Stony Creek Greenway as a secondary greenway in their **Creating an Open Space Legacy** plan of 1996. The secondary greenways rely more heavily on the involvement of the municipalities through which they pass. This plan also plans for the Liberty Bell Trail to interpret the route of the historic Liberty Bell Trolley, which linked Philadelphia to Allentown. The trail traverses Whitpain Township entering from the south in the area of the DeKalb Pike and following the right-of-way of the Lehigh Valley Transit Company, which still appears to be intact.

The Greenway/Trail Map on page 39 illustrates the conceptual greenway network for a township-wide greenway system. The **Whitpain Township Open Space Plan** identifies three areas of greenway corridors in the Township: along the Wissahickon Creek and Prophecy Creek corridors and in the south central and southwestern portion of the municipality connecting Wentz Run Park and the Cook Tract.

### **Barriers to Greenway Development**

Barriers to greenway development in Whitpain Township include several transportation routes that traverse the municipality. The Pennsylvania Turnpike Northeast Extension is the most significant of these barriers. Additionally, roads with high volumes of traffic such as Skippack Pike, DeKalb Pike, and Morris Road present connectivity and safety concerns when developing a greenway network. Alternative routes or engineering solutions such as bridges or underpasses must be incorporated to provide a connected network across these barriers. The natural functions of greenways are not as adaptable. These major transportation routes bisect and interrupt the continuity of the greenway corridor for wildlife movement while fragmenting natural communities. To create a comprehensive greenway system that provides the maximum benefit to the community, it is important to find linkages across these barriers. This strategy must be coupled with obtaining access easements from adjacent landowners. Working with PennDOT to incorporate pedestrian and bicycle friendly linkage solutions when bridges and underpasses are upgraded is another strategy.

## Regional Linkages

Whitpain Township should work with adjacent municipalities to develop regional connections that extend beyond the borders of the Township. Upper and Lower Gwynedd Townships and Upper Dublin Township will continue to be important partners as the Wissahickon Greenway is developed. Worcester Township is a key partner as the Stony Creek Greenway is developed.

The Pennsylvania Greenways Partnership Commission and the Greenways Partnership Advisory Committee recently developed a statewide view for Pennsylvania Greenways titled **An Action Plan for Creating Connections**. The plan's four goals for Pennsylvania's greenways program include:

- Plan and Build Greenway Connections
- Create a Greenways Organizational Framework
- Provide Greenways Funding
- Provide Technical Assistance and Outreach

In keeping with this plan, opportunities for regional linkages will help advance the four goals for Pennsylvania's greenways program as well as support the development of a greenway network for Whitpain Township. Potential regional linkages and funding opportunities may be realized through partnering with other municipalities.

## Bicycle/Pedestrian Friendly Communities

The existing street and roadway system should be bicycle and pedestrian friendly, as much as possible, throughout the municipality to create a community oriented to a human scale rather than to just that of the automobile. The lack of safe places for people to walk and bike is a major deficiency in Whitpain Township. The City of Philadelphia has shown that this can be done even in an urbanized, high volume traffic environment. Roadways provide opportunities to round out a greenway system by providing trail connections around environmentally sensitive greenway corridors and other obstacles and to create loops in a greenway network. According to the **Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan**, an element of the state transportation plan, the vision for the state is as follows:

*"Pennsylvania is a place where residents and visitors of all ages can choose to bicycle and walk. People are able to bicycle and walk with confidence, safety and security in every community, both for daily transportation and to experience and enjoy the remarkable natural resources of the state."*

## **Park Factor 5: Recreation Facilities**

Recreation facilities should be provided within a community to meet the use demand of individuals, community groups, and organized leagues. The appropriate number of park facilities in a community should be based on need as defined by current facility usage and local trends in recreation and leisure activities

An analysis of facilities must consider the context of the municipality and the trends and popularity of the sport that the facility serves. Facility trends and observations in Whitpain Township further illustrate the need for additional recreation facilities. Consider the following findings from the key person interview process and ongoing recreation research.

- Whitpain Recreation Association (WRA) provides athletic recreation programming for the Township, contributing a valued service that complements the programs offered by the Whitpain Township Parks & Recreation Department.
- The Wissahickon School District cooperates with the Township and WRA by providing access to athletic facilities at elementary schools in the municipality.
- The Montgomery County Community College cooperates with Whitpain Township, hosting special events and providing facilities for public use.
- Support facilities such as restrooms, parking, nearby benches, and landscaping are important features and add to the function and quality of recreation facilities.
- Soccer fields and other sports fields need time to rest from use for practices and games so that a safe serviceable playing surface can be maintained. There are only three soccer fields in municipal parks. Other fields are available at the elementary schools.
- Facilities such as tennis courts, volleyball courts, and swimming pools are important in a community because they serve the broad population and provide for lifetime recreation pursuits.
- Basketball has seen national growth in the last decade.
- Girls' softball has grown in popularity throughout Pennsylvania.
- Seniors in Whitpain Township are typically well educated and active. They want convenient access to a wide variety of recreation activities indoors and outdoors, year-round.
- Generally seniors are more active and are requesting facilities for recreation and fitness and wellness activities.
- Emerging sports in the municipality include lacrosse, field hockey, and in-line hockey that require dedicated fields and courts for practice and games.

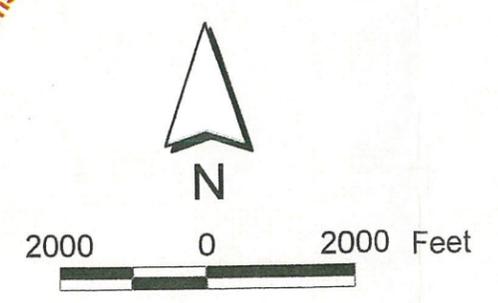
# Whitpain Township

## Greenway / Trail Corridor Map



**Legend**

- Parks
- Open Space/ Detention Basin
- Schools
- Flood Plain
- Potential Greenway/ Trail Corridors
- Greenway/Trail Link
- Roads
- Parcels
- Township Line



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- Interviews indicate that adults, families, seniors, teens, and youth desire additional/expanded facilities for appreciation of the arts and culture, fitness, and indoor activities.
- Non-traditional sports such as in-line hockey and skateboarding require specialty facilities. The in-line hockey court in Stony Creek Park is extremely popular with youth in the community.
- There is no pool in the municipality and swimming is an important activity enjoyed by all age groups especially seniors for health and wellness.
- Trails are important and desired.
- Golf is growing in popularity in the community and throughout the region.
- There are no indoor recreation facilities in the community. Indoor recreation facilities are important because they serve the entire community year-round. Interviews have indicated that residents desire an indoor recreation center with a swimming pool but they also indicate that nearby Plymouth Township is not necessarily the model that Whitpain Township should follow.
- The need for an ice rink was mentioned.
- Equestrian's desire trails in Armentrout Preserve and Prophecy Creek Park as well as protection of Horseways trails.

### **Assessment of Whitpain Municipal Recreation Facilities**

**Softball** - There is one softball field in Wentz Run Park. Girl's softball is popular in the region. There is a co-ed softball league that is limited to 14 teams. This league can only use the field in Wentz Run Park after the WRA season is finalized. Additional fields are necessary for adult leagues, play during traditional seasons, and expanding rosters.

**Baseball** - There is one youth baseball field and one adult baseball field in Wentz Run Park. The WRA league served over 650 players in 2002 using fields at Wentz Run Park, and the elementary schools. The PECO field serves American Legion baseball. Additional baseball fields, especially youth fields would enhance the program and allow expansion for all age groups.

**Field Hockey** - Wentz Run once served as the field hockey location. Due to growth in this sport and demands for fields overall, the field hockey fields were moved to Montgomery County Community College. Through the generosity of the college, girls' field hockey has access to four fields there. While this is a great partnership, the use of these fields is not guaranteed in perpetuity.

**Lacrosse** - There are no lacrosse fields. The Wissahickon School District has reported that they are unable to fulfill the lacrosse group's request for lacrosse fields.

**Basketball** - There are two outdoor basketball courts at Wentz Run Park. There are no municipal gymnasiums available for indoor basketball. Each of the elementary schools provides a gymnasium. The basketball program is popular serving over 900 children in

2002. Although the school gymnasiums at the schools provide facilities for WRA no time is available for young adult and adult programs. Overall basketball is popular in Whitpain Township and additional courts are recommended in community parks. Courts should be located in banks of at least two courts and near parking areas if possible. There is a need for both indoor and outdoor courts.

**Soccer** - There are two soccer fields in Wentz Run Park and at the elementary schools. Soccer is a growing sport nationally and continues to grow in Whitpain Township. Soccer is played year round and in 2002 WRA programs served over 1,775 children on recreation and travel teams. There is a need for additional fields in community parks.

**Football** - One football field has recently been developed in Stony Creek Park. Multi-purpose fields should be provided in parks for emerging sports such as lacrosse, field hockey, and rugby. The multi-purpose fields should be sized to accommodate each of these sports as well as football.

**Volleyball** - There is one sand volleyball court in Whitpain Township in Wentz Run Park. Volleyball is a popular sport with teens, young adults, and families and courts should be incorporated as new parks are developed. Volleyball should accompany picnic pavilions where room permits and developed in banks of two or more in community parks for league play.

**Tennis** - There are four tennis courts in Wentz Run Park. Tennis popularity has waned in recent years although the courts at Wentz Run Park appear to be well used. Tennis is a lifetime recreation activity making courts important recreation facilities to include in the mix of facilities offered at community parks. Additional courts are proposed in new parks. Tennis courts should be developed in banks of two or more and located near parking.

**Swimming Pools** - Whitpain Township does not have a municipal swimming pool. Residents use private clubs, the Plymouth Township Community Center and Ambler Y. Swimming is a lifetime recreation activity and has important health and wellness attributes. The Wissahickon Aquatics Club is seeking a competitive swimming pool. If a swimming pool is promoted in the future, the potential for developing one should be explored through a feasibility study.

**Playgrounds** - Playgrounds are provided at Wentz Run Park and West Side Playground. A playground is planned for Stony Creek Sports Park. The playgrounds provide newer modular play equipment that appears to meet the latest safety standards.

Playgrounds should be designed to stimulate imaginative play as well as physical activity. Playgrounds should be bright, stimulating environments that engage children while providing convenience facilities for adults such as benches and shade. Playgrounds must meet the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) guidelines for public playground safety and be developed with surfacing material that meets safety criteria. Playgrounds must also meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) which requires that an accessible route be provided from the walkways/parking areas to the playground equipment and that a portion of the equipment offer activities that can be utilized by physically challenged children. Options included retrofitting the existing structures to comply with the guidelines, adding additional equipment as appropriate and/or installing signage that directs use by specific age groups. Develop accessible walkways to link sidewalks, trails, and parking areas to playground areas.

Locate playgrounds for safety. Provide adequate separation from parking areas, ball field foul ball and home run territory, and drives/roadways. Develop playgrounds in community parks.

**Pathways** - The public participation process found that walking is an activity that citizens feel is important to have in the community. Residents enjoy walking at Prophecy Creek Park, Wentz Run Park, and Armentrout Preserve. Pathways should be provided in every park for recreation purposes and to meet the requirements of the ADA. ADA requires an accessible route from parking areas and drop off to recreation facilities. Additionally, viewing areas for physically impaired spectators must be provided at sports fields and courts. In community parks where space allows development of at least an eight-foot wide trail, pave a portion (loop) or all of the trail(s) to provide multiple recreational opportunities such as bike riding, in-line skating, jogging, and walking. Walking is an activity widely enjoyed by all segments of the population and where space requirements can be satisfied walking trails should be developed in each municipal park.

In natural areas a stone dust trail or earthen trail may be more appropriate than a paved trail. Trails should provide access to and in-themselves serve as facilities that provide “like opportunities” to meet the intent of the ADA.

## **Park Factor 6: Conditions**

Each park site and many of the school sites and other recreation sites were viewed during the tour of facilities and subsequent fieldwork. Specific findings of site observations and recreation opportunities include the following:

### **Wentz Run Park**

*Park Description:*

A community park that provides both passive and active recreation facilities. It is centrally located in the municipality and adjacent to the municipal administrative, police, and public works facilities. The southwestern portion of the site is wooded and informal trails exist. The site is graded with terraces to accommodate facilities and trails encircle the active area of the site and connect facilities.

*Active Recreation Facilities:*

Two basketball courts, one youth baseball field, one senior baseball field, one softball field, three soccer fields, a multi-purpose field, tot lot and youth playground, one sand volleyball court, four tennis courts, two horseshoe pits, and tetherball.

*Passive Recreation Facilities:*

Trails, picnic pavilions and gazebo.

*Support Facilities:* Parking, restrooms/concession associated with one pavilion, batting cage, and soccer wall.

*General Site Observations:* The site is well developed with both active and passive facilities as well as areas and facilities for community special events. The park is well maintained.

*Opportunities:* The site is well developed with popular facilities and has limited opportunity within the active area of the site to introduce new facilities. The wooded area of the site could be developed with trails for nature study and exercise. Support facilities such as benches and interpretative signs would enhance this area. Trails could connect to open space to the southwest beyond the site.

### **Stony Creek Sports Park**

*Park Description:* This park was recently developed with the first phase of improvements and focuses on athletic facilities.

*Active Recreation Facilities:* One full-size in-line hockey rink, and one football field. Future facilities planned include a second full-size in-line hockey rink a small in-line hockey rink, and a playground.

*Passive Recreation Facilities:* Pavilion/entry area. A trail is planned in subsequent phases.

*Support Facilities:* Storage building with vending machines, gravel parking area, and park sign.

*General Site Observations:* The park is small and when developed with facilities as planned will be maximized.

*Opportunities:* Improvements should consist of incidental facilities that add to the convenience and enjoyment of using the park. Consider adding bleachers/viewing areas for the activities, lights, benches, restrooms, and a drinking fountain. The future playground should be age-segregated.

### **Erbs Mill Park**

*Park Description:* This park consists of undeveloped open space. The site is small (1.28 acres) and located within a residential neighborhood. The open area is relatively flat.

<i>Active Recreation Facilities:</i>	None.
<i>Passive Recreation Facilities:</i>	None.
<i>Support Facilities:</i>	A paved access drive exists along one park boundary.
<i>General Site Observations:</i>	The site is open with the exception of evergreen trees located adjacent to the drive and scattered along the parcel boundary. A wood fence separates the open lawn from a storm water detention basin. The fence is in disrepair.
<i>Opportunities:</i>	Develop the open field for informal recreation use. Consider adding a small age-segregated playground, a small pavilion, and trail to encircle the open area. Provide landscaping for shade and to buffer adjacent residences, benches, and a park identification sign.

### **West Side Park**

<i>Park Description:</i>	This pocket park is 0.13 acres in size and offers a playground for neighborhood children.
<i>Active Recreation Facilities:</i>	Playground and painted pavement games.
<i>Passive Recreation Facilities:</i>	None.
<i>Support Facilities:</i>	Three benches and park sign.
<i>General Site Observations:</i>	There was evidence of ongoing vandalism in the park. Each physical element of the site was vandalized in some way. The site is small and enclosed on two sides by a wall, which makes visual access difficult.
<i>Opportunities:</i>	The ongoing vandalism and damage to the play equipment, site amenities, and landscaping should be addressed, either by repairing the park or eliminating it. The Township should consider eliminating the West Side Playground at its present location and reestablish it at the eight vacant properties on Maple Street, just east of the site. This concept should be explored with input from residents of the neighborhood and a corresponding commitment to the upkeep and monitoring of the new park. The neighbors should help to design the new park and a neighborhood based adopt-a-park program should be created to maintain and monitor the park.

The existing playground site should be converted to an open lot with lawn and shade trees.

### **West Side Court**

- Park Description:* This park offers a small basketball court.
- Active Recreation Facilities:* Basketball court.
- Passive Recreation Facilities:* None.
- Support Facilities:* None.
- General Site Observations:* This small court appears to receive significant use. The site is small and there is limited space to enhance the facility.
- Opportunities:* Add benches for players and spectators and a drinking fountain.

### **Armentrout Preserve**

- Park Description:* This 37 acre nature preserve is located adjacent to lands of the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association (WVWA). The site contains meadows and woodlands and is used for passive recreation purposes. People who enjoy walking, exploring nature, and spending time outdoors, and equestrian use.
- Active Recreation Facilities:* None.
- Passive Recreation Facilities:* Two picnic tables and trails.
- Support Facilities:* Gravel parking area, trail signs, and park and WVWA identification sign.
- General Site Observations:* This appropriately developed within the natural setting with low impact facilities for self-directed use.
- Opportunities:* Facilities could be added to enhance use of the park if desired by users. Consider adding hitching posts for horses, drinking water for people and horses, and a small pavilion near the parking area. School groups could use the pavilion as an outdoor classroom. The tract does connect to municipal and WVWA lands and is included as part of WVWA greenway.

Protection and preservation of the site's natural resources is of primary importance. Trail may need to be realigned periodically due to erosion and overuse and should be monitored on a regular schedule. The presence of invasive species will need to be monitored as well so that they do not claim a foothold at the site.

## **Prophecy Creek Park**

### *Park Description:*

This unique park site offers a diverse landscape for recreation pursuits. The 82-acre property offers open meadows, stream and riparian corridor, woodlands, wetlands, ponds, hedgerows, and successional areas. The property contains a stone house, barn, and various outbuildings. The park was acquired as part of the municipal Open Space and Recreation Land Initiative and was dedicated in 2000. Since the acquisition of the site, the Township has developed a parking area. Currently recreation opportunities are passive.

*Active Recreation Facilities:* None.

*Passive Recreation Facilities:* Mowed walking trails.

*Support Facilities:* Portable restrooms, parking, and benches.

*General Site Observations:* The site offers a diverse landscape for environmental education and enjoying nature. The former estate mansion and accessory buildings offer opportunities for meetings and other events that could support the park. The property is adjacent to the Shady Grove Elementary School. The size of the site allows visitors to explore and enjoy areas that are secluded and separated from everyday activities of modern life.

### *Opportunities:*

The master planning process should include public participation as gleaned at official Township meetings of the Park and Recreation Board, Planning Commission, and Board of Supervisors to gain insight of citizens, and target recreation needs. The master plan for the park must be based on community input with a strong emphasis on achieving a balance of resource protection, recreational use, and environmental concerns that meet community needs.

Throughout the planning process citizens voiced their desire to preserve the site's open space. The

idea of developing the site for environmental education was promoted by many citizens. The master plan will guide the development of the park and address issues such as ADA compliance. The master planning process should include public participation to gain insight of citizens and target recreation needs. Park development concepts and ideas discussed during the planning process for consideration during the master planning process include the following:

- Provide areas and facilities for passive recreation such as picnicking, nature study, and walking.
- Provide facilities and areas to host community-wide special/cultural events. Consider an amphitheater with lawn seating located on the north side of the barn. This location is near the parking for convenient access and has a natural slope to the lower area where the stage can be located in the east.
- Develop the park as the center of arts and culture in the municipality. Provide facilities for arts and cultural programming. Consider using the mansion and/or barn for classrooms. An alternative concept would be to develop individual classrooms (sculpture, painting, music, theater, etc. studios) developed in the image of vernacular farm structures. Consider developing an outdoor sculpture garden along trails in close proximity to the mansion and ponds.
- Provide trails, interpretative signage, and remote and centralized learning areas for environmental education. The trails should explore the various eco-systems of the site. Partner with the Wissahickon School District on this initiative so that it can meet the curriculum requirements of the School District environmental education program.
- Develop trails throughout the site to make it a walking/jogging/equestrian destination. Connect trails to lands of Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association.
- Develop a partnership with the School District on facilities. If active recreation facilities are desired based on the Master Plan, locate the

active facilities in close proximity to the school property. Consider shared facility opportunities such as parking.

- Buffer the surrounding residential properties with vegetative screens.

### **Cook Tract**

*Park Description:*

This 62-acre tract is undeveloped. The site consists of open fields of gentle slopes, hedgerows, and a small stream. The site is adjacent to a municipal maintenance building, a cell tower, and rights-of-way for the Pennsylvania Turnpike Northeast Extension and PECO. Access to the site is limited to two small areas of frontage on Yost Road or via an easement parallel to the Pennsylvania Turnpike right-of-way. The recent acquisition of the St. Helena's Tract could also provide access to the site. The site is in close proximity to Stony Creek Elementary School.

*Active Recreation Facilities:* None.

*Passive Recreation Facilities:* None.

*Support Facilities:* None.

*General Site Observations:* The site's character, topography, and location provide an appropriate site for recreation facility development consistent with the designations identified in Table 9.

*Opportunities:* The master planning process should include public participation as gleaned at official Township meetings of the Park and Recreation Board, Planning Commission, and Board of Supervisors to gain insight of citizens and target recreation needs. The master plan for the park must be based on community input with a strong emphasis on achieving a balance of resource protection, recreational use, and environmental concerns that meet community needs.

### **St. Helena's Tract**

*Park Description:*

This 37 acre tract was recently acquired by Whitpain Township. The site consists of woods and open fields. The site is adjacent to the Cook Tract and the right-of-way for the Pennsylvania Turnpike Northeast Extension. Access to the site is from

DeKalb Pike or Yost Road. The site is currently undeveloped with recreation facilities with the exception of a small field used by St. Helena's for soccer near the frontage of DeKalb Pike.

*Active Recreation Facilities:* None.

*Passive Recreation Facilities:* None.

*Support Facilities:* None.

*General Site Observations:* The site's character, topography, and location provide an appropriate site for a park

*Opportunities:* The master planning process should include public participation as gleaned at official Township meetings of the Park and Recreation Board, Planning Commission, and Board of Supervisors to gain insight of citizens and target recreation needs. The master plan for the park must be based on community input with a strong emphasis on achieving a balance of resource protection, recreational use, and environmental concerns that meet community needs.

## **Wissahickon Park**

Wissahickon Park is a former community park that has been closed due to asbestos contamination. The site has been investigated in the past for potential clean up with the finding that it would be cost prohibitive. The Township should continue to monitor state and federal programs regarding cleaning up of brownfields in order to pursue grant funding. It is unlikely that Whitpain Township could undertake a clean up of this site with its own resources alone.

### **Parks and Facility Assessment**

The parkland, schools, and recreation facilities located in Whitpain Township were field viewed to assess opportunities and concerns. Following are preliminary findings:

- Facilities are well maintained and built with quality materials.
- The community has aggressively purchased parkland to provide a comprehensive park system.
- Recreation facilities are needed for people throughout their lifetime.
- For the most part facility layout considers the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Viewing areas should be provided at courts, rinks, and fields. Curb cuts should be conveniently located for all users, and trails should access all facilities.

- Additional picnic areas should be provided to include large picnic pavilions for groups and families.
- There are no special use facilities such as a municipal swimming pool, golf course, ice rink, or indoor community center.
- The southern portion of Planning District #4 does not have easy access to parkland.
- Partnership opportunities exist with the Wissahickon School District, Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association, Montgomery County Community College, and the Borough of Ambler (multi-municipal).
- Develop a network of greenways and trails to link the community.
- Coordinate with ongoing efforts of the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association, Natural Lands Trust, and Montgomery County.
- Preserve and protect natural resources. Develop parks that are designed with nature.
- Keep in-tune to changing environmental regulations with regards to Wissahickon Park.
- Consideration should be given to acquiring gateway parks to define the entry points to the municipality on main roadways, provide a sense of arrival, and create a positive image that projects the aesthetics and quality of life of the community.

### **Park Factor 7: Park and Recreation Facility Trends**

The way we spend our leisure time and the activities we enjoy changes over time. Trends emerge that impact parks and recreation facilities that we need in our communities. The following findings emerged as part of the analysis of parks and recreation facilities in Whitpain Township:

- New sports are emerging that have an impact on facilities. These include: in-line hockey, ice hockey, skateboarding, in-line skating, and lacrosse.
- Expanding sports seasons, tournament schedules, and high use demands make the use of overlapping facilities difficult. Additional dedicated fields are desired for specific sports.
- Adult recreation opportunities and off-season sports activities are limited in the community due to lack of available facilities.
- Facilities that enhance the convenience of using parks are desired.
- Trails are very popular among all age groups.

- The importance of protecting green infrastructure is being promoted and recognized statewide.
- Senior adults are more active than ever. Facilities and activity areas are needed for fitness and wellness activities. Lifetime recreation activities such as golf, tennis, walking, and bicycling will remain popular.
- There is great interest among citizens in the arts and cultural activities. Mental and linguistic activities help to strengthen cognitive functioning as people age thereby enhancing the quality of life for those in older age groups.

## Analysis of Parks and Recreation Facilities

Citizens of Whitpain Township enjoy first class recreation facilities offered at Wentz Run Park and Stony Creek Park. The township's Parks and Recreation Department provides recreation programs, field trips, and special events and WRA offers extensive youth sports programming. Prophecy Creek Park and Armentrout Preserve offer an oasis within the municipality for enjoying passive recreation pursuits and exploring the sites natural settings. Together the parks, recreation programming, special events, and natural areas and preserves provide the elements that residents' value in the park and recreation system. Throughout the planning process citizens expressed their support of the Township acquiring Prophecy Creek Park and the importance of protecting open space and incorporating open space and passive recreation areas within the park system.

Whitpain Township's park and recreation system currently offers one community park, Wentz Run Park. With the exception of Stony Creek Park, West Side Playground, and West Side Court, all the active municipal recreation facilities are located at this single site. Partnerships are the key to meeting the extensive needs of the organized youth sports leagues. Through cooperation with the Wissahickon School District and Montgomery County Community College and the coordination of the WRA, youth sports are accommodated. Unfortunately, recreation opportunities for young adults, adults, seniors, and youth who are not involved in athletics are limited.

The good news is that Whitpain Township has, in the past and more recently, made wise investments in additional parkland acreage including Prophecy Creek, the Cook tract, and St. Helena's.

The following are findings of the parkland and recreation facilities analysis:

- Citizens have stated a preference for a park system with a balance between open space protection and public parkland for active and passive recreation pursuits.
- Citizens want community parks that provide both active recreation areas and open space.
- An indoor recreation facility is desired to provide year-round recreation opportunities for all citizens with varying interests.
- Facilities desired by citizens include trails, places to gather with family and friends, sports fields, and gymnasiums.

- Nature based recreation especially walking, horseback riding, and nature study are activities enjoyed by many residents and should be incorporated into parkland if feasible.
- Teens and adults are underserved with recreation facilities and activity areas. Target facilities for these users in new parks.
- Resources exist in Whitpain Township and through a partnership with WVWA to continue creating a connected community.
- Additional parks with active and passive recreation opportunities are needed to meet the current and future needs of Whitpain residents. Facilities are needed to meet the expanding programs of the WRA, young adult and adult programs, and programs for youth not involved in athletics. Additional parkland is needed to lessen the dependency on partnerships. The existing partnerships with the Wissahickon School District and Montgomery County Community College (MCCC) are positive relationships that should be fostered. Unfortunately, management scenarios change, personnel change, and opportunities change. The land used for fields on MCCC grounds are not permanently protected and are subject to college policies. Should the college need that land for another reason, Whitpain Township could be left with the lack of land for the ball fields. Whitpain Township should continue to strengthen these partnerships while developing parkland with needed facilities to insure that field space is adequate for present and future generations.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

1. **Target acquisition and development of parkland to meet current and future needs for expanded facilities.**
  - **Parkland Acreage:** Whitpain Township has invested in parkland over the years and currently has holdings that meet the municipal standard of 10 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. This wise investment in open space will allow recreational facilities to be built as needed in the community. The municipality should continue to look to the future and acquire land in anticipation of forecast population growth. Land acquisition should be held in reserve to meet future needs.
  - **Priorities:** Continue to pursue the priority properties as identified in the 1995 **Whitpain Township Open Space Plan** through acquisition or preservation through non-acquisition methods.
  - **Contiguity:** Acquire lands that are contiguous to existing parklands wherever practicable to provide for greatest efficiency of future use of park sites and extend trails and protected greenways throughout the municipality. This action was also recommended in the 1995 Whitpain Township Open Space Plan. This strategy is recommended for Stony Creek Park and Wentz Run Park in particular.
  - **Unprotected Recreation Land:** Strive to protect land that houses community recreation facilities permanently. Explore long-term leases for land not owned by

the Township where community recreation facilities are located such as MCCC and the Wissahickon School District. If it is not possible to secure such leases, the Township should consider exploring land elsewhere as a fall back plan should the field space be lost due to policy changes outside the township's control.

- **Parkland Configuration:** Based on the parkland classification for Whitpain Township the following park development scenarios are recommended:
  - ***Plan Prophecy Creek Park as a community park that emphasizes passive recreation opportunities.*** Focus on protecting the natural beauty of the site and its diverse resources while providing recreational opportunities for citizens. The theme of this park should be two-fold: environmental education and arts and culture. Master plan the park to guide future actions, provide a blueprint for facility development, and address operation and management from the outset.
  - ***Master plan the Cook Tract through a solid public participation process.*** Root the design in protection of open space and resource protection balanced with recreational elements designed to meet public recreation needs.
  - ***Complete the phased development of Stony Creek Park.***
  - ***Keep abreast of brownfield regulations and programs that could be used to mitigate the environmental hazards of Wissahickon Park.***
  - ***Establish a new playground on the eight parcels owned by the Township east of West Side Playground.*** Explore this concept with input from residents of the neighborhood and a corresponding commitment to the upkeep and monitoring of the new park. Work with neighbors to design the new park and create a neighborhood based adopt-a-park program. The existing playground site should be converted to an open lot with lawn and shade trees.
  - ***Address and/or renovate existing parks as recommended in Park Factor 6: Conditions of this plan.***
  - ***Provide passive recreation opportunities based on the natural resources of each site.*** Citizens have expressed a desire for a balance of both passive and active recreation opportunities.
  - ***Open areas should be developed to accommodate community and special events.***
  - ***Preserve stream corridors and wooded lots through conservation easements, ordinance provisions, and other means.***
  - ***Explore an indoor recreation facility.*** The public participation process indicated support for an indoor community recreation facility. A center is desired that would be intergenerational, serving youth, teens, adults, and seniors in one location, year-round. A center should offer diverse programs that will capture the varied interests of citizens to include arts and cultural programs, fitness and wellness programs, sports programs, drop-in activities,

etc. Develop a business plan for how a center will be operated and managed. The plan should provide recommendations on facility configuration/ program, size, cost, financing, potential partners, and other aspects of undertaking this project. A firm experienced in state-of-the-art community center planning, financing, operating, and development should complete the study. Potential indoor recreation center sites should be investigated in various locations in the Township.

**2. Develop future park sites to maximize recreation opportunities; respond to expanding needs and interests; and provide safe, functional, convenient, and aesthetics of park sites through the following initiatives:**

- ***Complete master plans for each park and greenway incorporating public participation as part of the planning process.*** The master plans should provide a blueprint for phased development of the facility. The plan should respond to recreation need, site conditions and configuration, and user function. Master planning is an important means to address management issues through park design and aligning facilities with recreation trends and current and projected community needs. Design park sites to provide order to facilities and activity areas.
- ***Incorporate opportunities to display, explore, and participate in art and cultural activities in parks.*** Ideas such as a sculpture garden or band shell for concerts and performances may be appropriate.
- ***Incorporate opportunities to interpret, explore, and learn about the local history, culture, and the environment.***
- ***Provide walking trails within parks and to park facilities.*** Trails are enjoyed by all segments of the population and are highly desired recreation facilities. The ADA requires access to recreation facilities and activity areas via an accessible route.
- ***Connect park sites to designated greenways and trails as possible.*** Extend sidewalks to park locations within neighborhoods.
- ***Create park sites that are comfortable and convenient to use.*** Include benches, trash receptacles, drinking fountains, grills, bike racks, restrooms, and other convenient facilities as appropriate. Provide benches near playgrounds, in shaded locations, and at other activity areas for caregivers to sit and watch park activities.
- ***Provide athletic fields and courts to meet the expanding needs of youth and adult leagues, recreation programs, and individuals.***
- ***Provide facilities for teens.*** Facilities could include trails for in-line skating and bicycling, sand volleyball courts, in-line hockey rinks, skate parks, and basketball courts.
- ***Provide facilities for lifetime recreation/leisure pursuits such as trails, volleyball courts, tennis courts, and picnic pavilions.***

- ***Consider the needs of the senior adult population.*** Make facilities pedestrian friendly, convenient to use, and provide sitting areas in the shade conveniently space along trails and near activity area. Provide pavilions near parking areas.

### 3. **Create great public places.**

Parks are the public spaces of our communities. The care and dedication we commit to their design, development, operations, and ongoing maintenance speaks volumes about a community. Commit to great design of new parks and sensitive, thoughtful master planning of existing parks.

- ***Establish a readily identifiable image for public parks throughout the Township.***
  - ***Continue to use the park identification signs found at existing parks as new parks are developed.*** The consistency of design and material conveys the image of a premiere public park system.
  - ***Establish design standards through the master planning process.*** The goal of the standards would be to provide a consistent quality design and construction features in all facilities. This would include quality materials, harmonious colors, and prime consideration of the natural environment.
- ***Provide support and accessory facilities that create a premiere recreation facility.*** Include dugouts for baseball fields; picnic areas designed as a unit with grills, picnic tables, horseshoe pits, shaded areas, and water; restrooms in each community park, special use facility, and trailhead; and benches outside tennis courts.
- ***Create great playgrounds that promote fun, socialization, learning, and creativity.***
- ***Design with nature.***
  - Protect and enhance natural resources of the park sites.
  - Provide buffer areas around sensitive natural resources that should have limited or no public access.
  - Locate facilities with consideration of prevailing wind and solar orientation.
  - Use native plant material to enhance wildlife habitats, minimize maintenance, and aesthetically enhance park sites.
  - Consider the site soils, underlying geology, and ground water during the planning and development phase. Soil, geology, and depth of ground water directly affect facility constructability, drainage, and long-term maintenance.
  - Incorporate wetlands, rock outcrops, and hedgerows sensitively into park designs.

- Develop park sites using Best Management Practices for erosion control and storm water management.
- ***Design with consideration of safety and security of the parks for users.***
  - Provide visual access into the parks from surrounding roadways. Avoid designs that create “hidden” areas.
  - Provide adequate safety zones around sports facilities and play equipment.
  - Provide physical barriers between adjacent roadways and parking areas.
  - Incorporate traffic calming measures to promote safe road crossing near park sites and within park parking areas.
  - Where applicable limit the extent of vehicle penetration into the site and vehicular/pedestrian conflict areas.
  - Provide trails of adequate width for the intended user groups.

**4. Develop a greenway network that connects park sites, open space, residential neighborhoods, schools, and community destinations.**

Greenways should be developed to connect community places and accommodate opportunities for hiking, bicycling, and walking appropriate. Greenways along natural corridors should emphasize resource protection. Greenways should be developed in Whitpain Township as follows:

- ***Create greenway connections.*** The network should be composed of hubs (important destinations and origins for people and wildlife), and linkage corridors, which maintain the “green infrastructure” of the municipality and provide trail opportunities for recreation, transportation, environmental education, and the movement of wildlife.
- ***Prioritize the development and protection of greenways and trails.*** Formulate priorities based on the Greenways/Trails Map of this plan and as defined in the 1995 Whitpain Township Open Space Plan.
- ***Continue to partner with the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association (WVWA) on greenway initiatives along the Wissahickon Creek and Prophecy Creek.*** Create partnerships with adjoining municipalities to promote the Liberty Bell Trail, Stony Creek Greenway, and Wissahickon Greenway.
- ***Evaluate local roads in terms of bicycle and pedestrian compatibility.***
  - Work with PennDOT, the township Public Works Department, and the Township public safety personnel to provide bicycle and pedestrian friendly facilities when upgrades are undertaken for public roads.
  - Evaluate the trail opportunities of existing rights-of-way in the Township.

- Communicate with adjacent municipalities and Montgomery County regarding regional greenway opportunities and initiatives.
  - Explore creation of greenways and trails through land acquisition, easements, and use of existing rail, road, and utility rights-of-way.
5. **Provide facilities for public uses that comply with accessibility and safety regulations and guidelines.**
- ***Evaluate the existing park sites and recreation facilities to determine if the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations are being met.*** Walkways must be developed to provide an accessible route from handicap parking spaces to recreation facilities and between recreation facilities. Playgrounds must offer play equipment that provides play options for the physically challenged. Trails and walkways must be developed so that they do not exceed specific slopes. Athletic fields and courts should be accessible and provided with accessible viewing areas. Fences surrounding game courts should have gates with clear opening widths that meet or exceed the ADA requirements. Picnic areas should offer accessible picnic table.
  - ***Provide play equipment that meets the safety criteria and age-segregation criteria of the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) Guidelines for Public Playground Safety.*** Remove all equipment that does not meet the CPSC Guidelines. Conduct ongoing safety inspections of playgrounds. Provide adequate safety zones around each piece of play equipment with safety surfacing material that meets the test requirements of the CPSC and the latest American Society of Testing and Materials (ASTM) criteria.
  - ***Identify and prioritize improvements needed to bring existing facilities into compliance with the ADA and CPSC.*** A phased implementation schedule should be developed and improvements should be included in the capital improvement program budget.

## What is a Good Playground?

Play is the work of children. Through play, children learn skills to develop into happy and well-adjusted human beings. Playgrounds provide a valuable resource for this process. Playgrounds typically focus on the narrow gross motor skills: running, climbing, and swinging. Important skills such as socialization, language, creativity, and conceptualization are less likely to be developed on play equipment typically available such as swings, climbers, seesaws, and merry-go-rounds.

**Elements of a Good Playground** - Play areas designed according to the development needs of specific age groups: (2-5 year olds, 6-12 year olds). Playground equipment must conform to the Consumer Product Safety Commission guidelines. This includes safe equipment, design for safety through proper layout, and safe surfaces. Playgrounds should be designed according to the Americans with Disabilities Act.

**Superstructure** - A play superstructure provides a wide range of experiences not possible in traditional equipment with a singular purpose. Every time a child steps onto a superstructure, a variety of choices are presented. Components of superstructures include decks, bridges, ladders, and climbers. Superstructures are sized to accommodate numerous children at once.

**Tire Swing** - In contrast to the traditional belt swing, tire swings can accommodate up to three children at once. This encourages children to develop a sense of cooperation and teamwork.

**Sand Area** - Children love to play in sandboxes. Sand play fosters cooperative and creative play.

**Dramatic Play Structures** - Structures that resemble items such as houses, town buildings, trains, cars, etc., provide the vehicle for children to develop linguistic and conceptual skills. These structures encourage imagination and social skills. They become props for adventures and activities.

**Paths and Walkways** - Paths for tricycles, in-line skates, or wheelchairs provide a way for children to experience independence. Paths with curves provide physical and cognitive challenges for balancing, steering, and turning, and a sense of the body in motion.

**Trees and Gardens** - Trees and shade are essential components of a playground. Relief from the hot summer sun is important. The outdoors provides learning landscapes for appreciation of the environment.

**Sitting Areas** - Benches and shade are necessary for people using a playground. Adults supervising children need a relaxing place to sit. Sitting areas provide a gathering place for socialization and story telling. Seating can be imaginative with cutouts in hills, walls designed for seating, etc.

**Amenities and Support Facilities** - Playgrounds should have drinking fountains, trash receptacles, and nearby bike racks. If the playground is to have a supervised recreation program longer than three hours, it should be located with convenient access to restrooms.

**Water Play Features** - Water play is a favorite activity of pre-schoolers. Where supervision is provided, a water play area would be an asset. Water spray fountains near sand play areas add to the imaginative play opportunities.

**Storage Facilities** - Storage facilities are necessary for recreation leaders to store equipment on site.

## **Chapter 4: Programs and Services**

<b>Recreation Trends</b> .....	<b>63</b>
Challenges of the Times.....	64
Local Recreation Trends and Issues.....	65
<b>Community Recreation Services</b> .....	<b>66</b>
Successful Programs and Innovation.....	66
Parks and Recreation Department Program Inventory.....	66
Facility Rentals.....	69
Program Growth.....	69
Other Recreation Providers.....	69
<b>Program Analysis</b> .....	<b>73</b>
Programming for Diverse Age Groups.....	73
Programming by Gender.....	73
Program Structure.....	74
Program Fees.....	74
Program Schedule.....	74
Year-Round Recreation.....	74
Good Service/Good Will.....	74
Program Planning.....	74
Program Registration.....	75
Program Promotion.....	75
Self-Directed Programs.....	75
Program Summary.....	75
<b>Conclusions and Recommendations</b> .....	<b>76</b>

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## Programs and Services

The citizens of Whitpain Township are fortunate in having a range of recreation opportunities available to them. This region of southeastern Pennsylvania has a plethora of leisure time activities available to people of all ages and interests. Located within several hours drive of the mountains, seashore, and metropolitan sports, arts, cultural and special events venues afford the citizenry here the opportunity to lead a rich and fulfilling life.

The Whitpain Township Parks and Recreation Department has the challenge of providing the day-to-day close-to-home recreation and park services for the public. The focus of this chapter is on public recreation in Whitpain Township.

The Park & Recreation Board was the catalyst for the current range of services available in Whitpain. The Board laid the foundation for the establishment and growth of municipal park and recreation programs. The Board provided the ideas, energy, expertise, skill and time required to launch public recreation in Whitpain. The Board continues to serve in an advisory capacity for the Department and contributes not only program ideas but also volunteer time and expertise in community recreation.

Today, Whitpain Township has a multitude of service providers including the Parks and Recreation Department, community sports organizations, service clubs, Montgomery County Community College, and the Wissahickon School District. Municipal parks and recreation has grown from humble beginnings to the caliber of programs such as the yearlong 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration culminating in the Revolutionary War battle re-enactment. The Whitpain Township Parks and Recreation Department has won statewide awards in recognition of the fine quality programs they provide. The Department generates about 60 percent of its budget from non-tax sources including user fees & charges.

### Recreation Trends

As part of the assessment of Whitpain's programs and services, it is important to look at trends elsewhere. Consideration of such trends will enable Whitpain Township to plan for trends that have not yet emerged here as well as ideas for opportunities and methods of delivering services the community might desire.

From businesses booming in commercial recreation to the cutting edge recreation operations in the public sector, understanding the public's underlying motivation for recreation will keep businesses profitable and the municipalities responsive to community needs. The following point illustrates how important outdoor recreation is in America: the

American Recreation Coalition reports that sales of outdoor recreation apparel and gear have reached \$80 billion annually.

Fun, fitness, and family are the three F's of recreation. This is evident in recreation trends and spending patterns. The concept applies in particular to Whitpain Township, a family-oriented community. Important recreation trends, *based upon the most current information available*, include the following:

- Nearly half of all Americans say they spend time together outdoors at least once a month. Recreation is important to families with young children.
- Customers are demanding quality service: They want to be "hassle-free."
- People want information and education about recreation opportunities.
- In 1994, seven out of ten Americans participated in outdoor recreation at least once annually. By 2000, participation had increased to eight out of ten.
- Today, two thirds of all Americans recreated outdoors monthly while in 1994 only half did.
- In 1971, fewer than one out of 27 girls participated in high school sports. By 1994 that figure increased to one out of three.
- Sports are played year round instead of only in a single season such as spring baseball and fall soccer.
- Today's seniors with extensive free time, unprecedented good health and solid retirement plans, are indulging in active lifestyles that are well beyond rocking chairs, front porches, and bingo. There is a mismatch between what retirees are looking for and what society provides.
- Generation X'ers have launched the development of new activities such as in-line skating and snowboarding.

## Challenges of the Times

Despite these changes demonstrating increasing participation in recreation, new sports and activities, and a broadening of the participation base from younger males to both males and females of all ages, there is a conundrum regarding recreation. The conundrum is that obesity and the lack of physical activity in the United States is at an all-time high.<sup>3</sup> The United States Surgeon General issued a report in 1996 that physical inactivity among Americans is the number one public health issue.<sup>4</sup> Obesity costs the United States \$238 billion annually in expenses associated with diseases such as diabetes stroke and heart disease not including the cost of treating the obesity itself.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Center for Disease Control. (1999). CDC's Guidelines for School and Community Programs Promoting Lifelong Physical Activity. <<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/phactag.htm>>.

<sup>4</sup> Surgeon General. (1996). Physical Activity and Health. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Public Health Service, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. <<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/sgr/npai.htm>>.

<sup>5</sup> Fox, Maggie. (1999). Obesity costs U.S. \$238 Billion A Year – Survey. Reuters: Science Headlines. <[http://daily.news.yahoo.com/h/nm/19990916/sc/halth\\_obesity\\_2.html](http://daily.news.yahoo.com/h/nm/19990916/sc/halth_obesity_2.html)>.

The Center for Disease Control has stated that public park and recreation departments have a primary role in addressing this issue. They can provide attractive and safe places for people to walk, hike, bike, and enjoy other active pursuits.

Another challenge facing both private enterprise and all arenas of public recreation is that the rapid demand for facilities is outpacing availability and the resources to develop and manage new ones. Combined with rapid development in the metropolitan areas of Pennsylvania, the available open space is dwindling and land costs are escalating. There is an ever-present danger that recreation opportunities for the public in the future may succumb to a large demand and/or tight budget constraints.

It will become increasingly important to find creative ways of bringing recreation opportunities and facilitating healthy active lifestyles of the citizens in the future.

### **Local Recreation Trends and Issues**

Based upon key person interviews, work sessions with township officials, and visits to the parks, the following trends are apparent in Whitpain Township:

- There are many choices and recreation opportunities for the people of Whitpain.
- Special events are of great interest in the community. The anniversary celebration events were a resounding success and helped to provide a sense of community that citizens recognized as important.
- Youth sports participation is expanding. Pressure for field time is intense leading the Whitpain Recreation Association to locate its field hockey fields on Montgomery County Community College grounds. Every available space on school and existing township parks is used for team sports.
- New sports leagues are emerging including lacrosse.
- Traditional one-season sports are now played year round.
- Interest in self-directed types of facilities such as trails, in-line skating, scenic areas, and access to nature is emerging.
- People want recreation opportunities year round, including indoor recreation.
- Whitpain Township's program offerings are limited by the lack of indoor recreation space. School fields and gyms are used for team sports. The Township does not use school facilities because of costs and recently transferred a major summer program location to the Community College for that reason.
- Public sentiment is that the community is well served in terms of programs and services for children and youth and in sports.
- On the other hand, the public appears to feel that programs for active senior adults, families, teens as well as in the arts, culture, nature, and wellness need to be expanded.

- The Ambler/Whitpain Youth Football and Cheerleading program emerged in the last five years and is growing.
- The Wissahickon Aquatics Club is seeking an indoor competitive pool.
- With a tight Township budget, the Parks and Recreation Department has a good base of support for community recreation as shown in the collaborative relationship the sponsorship of township recreation programs such as the Anniversary and the concert series, volunteer organizations for youth sports and service clubs. The Department works towards cost recovery on its programs and generates about 60 percent of the budget from its programs and services.

## Community Recreation Services in Whitpain

In Montgomery County, Whitpain Township is one of the top providers of public recreation opportunities. In addition to providing programs directly to the public, the Department also facilitates the provision of recreation programs by other groups. This includes organized sports and events sponsored by community groups. By supporting other groups, the Township greatly expands its capacity to offer public recreation that it could not provide independently.

### Successful Programs and Innovation

Whitpain Township offers programs in a variety of recreation categories. The Department offers over 50 scheduled program sessions annually. These range from one-time events (e.g. Teen Night) to programs held on a daily basis seasonally (e.g. Stony Creek Camp).

Although each registration is counted as an individual sign-up, participation is actually for numerous times for the program. Most programs have multiple visits such as everyday for the summer recreation program or the many games and practices each participant has for a league sport. Actual user visits are much higher than registration numbers alone convey. Recreation provides an important public service in Whitpain Township. User fees help to offset program costs, while still remaining low.

The Director participates in community groups, such as Rotary, which helps the Township to connect with important community projects. A recent significant partnership fostered by the Director is with Montgomery County Community College. The partnership has enabled the Department to locate several major programs there including field hockey sponsored by WRA, the summer camp, and the pre-school program. This arrangement has freed up fields for other community sports. This partnership appears to have potential for expansion into other areas as the College wishes to become a partner and visible presence in the community life of Whitpain Township.

### Parks and Recreation Department Program Inventory

Tables 11 and 12 present the program inventory for the Whitpain Township Department of Parks and Recreation. The inventory is presented in tabular form organized around six elements: age group, activity classification, activity format, gender, season, and fee.

**Age Group** - Target age group for the program.

**Classification** - The classification system presents a grouping of activities according to the functional areas of recreation. Because the number of leisure time activities is so vast, classifying activities by functional area provides a simple method of coding activity into a system that is easily understood. It serves as a guide in measuring the balance and variety within the total services of the agency.

**Format** - Format expresses the idea of what form the leisure experience takes. Program formats are tools for offering a variety of experiences within activities. Formats include: self-improvement, competition, social, participant-spectator, and self-directed. For example, "soccer" could include league play, a trip to a soccer game, volunteerism through coaching.

**Gender** - It is important to serve both males and females.

**Season** - Whitpain Township uses a two "season" programming schedule: Spring/Summer and Fall/Winter.

**Fee** - The amount charged for participation in the program.

### Inventory Key

The Program Inventory offers a significant database for program planning. With 28 factors and over 50 programs, the data needs to be focused on summary types of information. For this reason, the data is organized in Tables 11 and 12. While program data can be sorted in a variety of ways, the tables are consolidated according to the above noted program elements. Table 11 shows the key to the programs in Table 12.

Age Group		Class		Format		Gender		Season		Fee
C	Children: pre-school	A	Arts	S	Social	F	Female	FW	Fall	\$ Amt
Y	Youth 5-14 Yrs.	C	Crafts	SI	Self Improvement	M	Male		Winter	
T	Teens 15-17 Yrs.	Dc	Dance	C	Competitive	B	Both	SS	Spring/ Summer	
A	Adults 18+ Yrs.	Dr	Drama	PS	Participant/ Spectator					
F	Families	E	Environ.	SD	Self-Directed					
		F	Fitness							
		Mt	Mental							
		Ms	Music							
		Sp	Sports							
		So	Social							
		V	Volunteer							

**Table 12  
Whitpain Program Inventory**

Program	Age	Gender	Class	Format	Season	Fee \$	#	Comment
<b>Free/Special Events</b>								
Concerts	All	B	So	S	SS	0	5,000	Six concerts
Harvest Fest	All	B	So	S	FW	0	3,400	Rain delayed
Earth Day/Arbor Day	Y/T	B	So	S	SS	0	150	
Movies	All	B	So	S	SS	0	2,100	Six movies
Teen Night	T	B	So	S	FW	0	150	
Bike Parade	A	B	So	S	SS	0	26	
<b>Trips</b>								
Circus	All	B	So	S	SS	26/30	17	
Deep Sea Fishing	All	B	So	S	SS/FW	65/75	12	Two trips
Theater Trips	All	B	So	S	SS/FW	\$55-122	60	Three trips
Radio City	All	B	So	S	FW	110/122	12	
Flower Show	All	B	So	S	SS	30/35	11	
76ers	All	B	So	S	FW	36/41	24	
Disney on Ice	All	B	So	S	FW	20/24	46	
Discount Tickets	All	B	So	S	FW/SS	varies	1,850	
<b>Sports &amp; Fitness Programs</b>								
Stuart Malcolm	C	B	Sp	SI	SS	100	50	
Dave McWilliams	C	B	Sp	SI	SS	85	100	
Kbox	C	B	SP	SI	SS	145	160	
Skyhawk Basketball	C	B	Sp	SI	SS	95/105	32	
Skyhawk Hockey	C	B	Sp	SI	SS	85/95	10	
Skyhawk Mini-Hawk	C	B	Sp	SI	SS	82/92	11	
Nike Golf Clinic	C	B	Sp	SI	SS	85/90	10	
Nike Golf B	C	B	Sp	SI	SS	170/180	6	
Nike Golf Camp 1	C	B	Sp	SI	SS	200	3	
Youth Tennis	C/T	B	Sp	SI	SS	60/70	76	
Foresite Golf	All	B	Sp	SI	SS, FW	85/90	7	
Adult Basketball	30+	M	SP	C	FW	30/35	36	
Adult Volleyball	18+	B	SP	C	FW	20/25	34	
Adult Softball	18+	B	SP	C/So	SS	0	210	
Adult Tennis	16+	M	SP	SI,C	FW, SP	28-60	27	
Youth Tennis	C	B	SP	SI,C	FW	28/35	24	
Fall In-Line	C	B	SP	C	FW	35	78	
In-Line Coaching	A	B	SP	SI	SS	0	1	
In-Line League	C,T	B	SP	C	SS	75-110	145	
<b>Camps</b>								
Stony Creek Camp	C	B	All	SI,S	SS	400/500	121	
Stony Creek Tracers	C	B	All	SI,S	SS	850/1065	36	
Kids' Club	C	B	All	SI,S	SS	385/425	39	

Source Whitpain Parks & Recreation Department

### Chart Highlights

There are a number of key points to note about the Whitpain Program Inventory. These include number of participants, classification, and service to clients.

- **Participants** - The participation numbers reflect a single registration by an individual for a program. It does not include multiple visits by one client for most of the programs. The numbers shown do not include spectators. With multiple visits and the spectators factored in, the volume of service and the real numbers become very large.

- **Classification** - The focus is on sports, outdoor recreation, and summer programs. This is the niche of public recreation. There is opportunity in Whitpain to expand into other program areas such as the arts, dance, drama, and others. However, facility and staffing limitations come in to play. Partnerships such as those the Township already has with the sports groups would be important to develop in other areas such as the arts in order to expand into other areas.
- **Service to Clients** - The programs are targeted to both males and females and is gender specific when appropriate. Most of the programs are held outdoors. Indoor programs are offered at facilities that are not owned by the Township including the Wissahickon School District and Montgomery County Community College.
- **Large Scale Programming** - What the chart does not reflect is the Anniversary Celebration for the Township's 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Enormously successful, the events were a huge undertaking. The Parks and Recreation Department demonstrated its expertise in collaboration and event production on a large scale. While it was far from the normal program, the events showed that community special events are appealing to the citizens.

## **Facility Rentals**

The public can rent township picnic pavilions. This enables citizens to plan and schedule their own social outings. When the facilities are not reserved, they are available for use on a drop-in basis without charge. The picnic pavilion rentals are popular.

## **Program Growth**

Program growth is evident in sports. More participants are playing sports during more seasons of the year. New sports are emerging such as field hockey and lacrosse. Where programs need to grow is in the arts, culture, nature, lifetime fitness, and wellness. Services for active senior adults, families, and teens appear to be needed.

## **Other Recreation Service Providers**

Whitpain residents are fortunate in having a number of leisure service providers in addition to the Township's services. These include schools, organized sports groups, and recreation centers in nearby communities. The role of the Township is to work in cooperation with the other providers and to facilitate their programming wherever possible. The Parks and Recreation Department disseminates information through its newsletter, **On the Fun Side**, responds to public requests, coordinates scheduling, and provides facilities for other providers. This is an important public service.

The Department's philosophy is that collaboration is mutually beneficial and results in effective public service for less cost. The Department and the community sports organizations have worked hard at building a strong working relationship. The Department rigorously avoids duplication of effort to focus on programs that are not offered elsewhere.

## Organized Youth Sports

Whitpain Township has several organizations that provide organized sports on a volunteer basis. The Parks and Recreation Department serves in the role of facilitator by providing facilities for the leagues. Over the past ten years, participation has increased, year-round play emerged, more females are playing, and players are involved at older and younger ages. This has resulted in the need for more facilities, additional maintenance requirements, and expansion of partnerships for facility use such as Montgomery County Community College.

### Whitpain Recreation Association (WRA)

WRA is the principle youth sports organization for the Wissahickon School District. Participants live in Whitpain, Ambler, Lower Gwynedd, and in other surrounding communities. WRA is a volunteer based organization. The leagues operate through volunteers, league fees, and a contribution of \$30,000-40,000 annually from Whitpain Township. WRA has been increasing in numbers since its inception. They provide the following sports:

#### Soccer

Age Group	Number of Participants
Pre-K	185
K	190
1 <sup>st</sup> Grade Girls	80
1 <sup>st</sup> Grade Boys	60
2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade Girls	85
2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade Boys	112
3 <sup>rd</sup> & 4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Girls	124
3 <sup>rd</sup> & 4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Boys	144
5 <sup>th</sup> & 6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Girls	92
5 <sup>th</sup> & 6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Boys	112
7 <sup>th</sup> & 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Girls	60
7 <sup>th</sup> & 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Boys	76
9 -12 <sup>th</sup> Grade Girls	53
9 -12 <sup>th</sup> Grade Boys	45
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,418</b>

\*Numbers include residents and non-residents. Numbers do not correlate with census figures due to individual participation in multiple sports. Source: WRA.

**Soccer** has experienced the most growth in sports in Whitpain. While trend information is not available, the league serves players year round. Field space is at a premium and the league makes do by using simple grassy areas for practice, especially for the younger players. The league reports no need for additional fields. Both township and school fields are used along with fields in Lower Gwynedd. MCCC has provided space for two soccer fields for WRA. About 360 players are in the travel division and use fields in many communities

## Baseball & Softball

**Table 14\***  
**WRA Baseball & Softball Participation 2002**

Age Group	Number of Participants
T-Ball	194
Boys 7	61
Boys 8	87
Boys 9-10	97
Boys 11-12	119
Boys 13-15	72
American Legion 16-28	16
Girls 7-8	51
Girls 9-10	59
Girls 11-13	49
Girls Travel 13-16	24
Total	829

\*Numbers include residents and non-residents. Numbers do not correlate with census figures due to individual participation in multiple sports. Source: WRA.

**Baseball and Softball** serves 829 players. WRA reports that the field numbers are adequate except for the need for another 90-foot field. At present they use Wentz, Shady Grove Elementary School, the PECO field, and Stony Creek Elementary School. WRA has invested in the correction of drainage problems at Stony Creek Elementary School. One of the difficulties with school field use is that WRA cannot get some of the permits in advance of more than the same day which is complex for scheduling games and getting notification to the players in time.

## Basketball

**Table 15\***  
**WRA Basketball Participation 2002**

Age Group	Number of Participants
Boys & Girls 7	100
Boys 8, 9	145
Boys 10	80
Boys 11-12	80
Boys 13-14	80
Boys 15-17	115
Girls 8, 9	60
Girls 10, 11	85
Girls 12, 13	45
Girls 14-17	65
Travel	87
Total	942

\*Numbers include residents and non-residents. Numbers do not correlate with census figures due to individual participation in multiple sports. Source: WRA.

**Basketball** serves 942 players. The need for more gyms is crucial. Growth in indoor basketball is significant. WRA worked with the Wissahickon School District to reduce the fees for gym use. This has been very beneficial to the league that passed the savings on to the families.

**Field Hockey**

<b>Table 16*</b>	
<b>WRA Field Hockey Participation 2002</b>	
<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>
Instructional 2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	42
Jr. 3 <sup>rd</sup> & 4 <sup>th</sup> grade	130
Intermediate 5 <sup>th</sup> & 6 <sup>th</sup> grade	165
Senior 7 <sup>th</sup> - 11 <sup>th</sup> grade	152
<b>Total</b>	<b>489</b>

\*Numbers include residents and non-residents. Numbers do not correlate with census figures due to individual participation in multiple sports. Source: WRA.

**Field Hockey** serves 489 players, having been first organized in 1997. The Township has relocated the field hockey fields from Wentz Run to MCCC where there are four fields. While this is a very beneficial partnership, there is no long-term lease for these fields so they are not permanently protected.

**Ambler/Whitpain Youth Football and Cheerleading (AWYFC)**

AWYFC started in 1998 with about 60 participants. In the last five years, the program has increased to 300 participants. Both football and cheerleading are growing with most of the participation in football. There are five teams and the league expects to add a sixth team in the coming season. The league is also considering adding a team for the older players in response to requests from the public. Cheerleading is also experiencing growth as a result of increasing interest with some speculation that the increasing availability of college scholarships for cheerleading is sparking interest as well. AWYFC plays at Wissahickon Middle School. The organization would like to have their own home field with facilities for storage, concession stand, and restrooms. Field lighting would help because the season runs with limited daylight hours.

**Sports Needs**

Through discussions with sports organizations and work sessions with parks and recreation staff and maintenance crews, a number of issues relevant to this plan emerged. All groups expressed the opinion that the Township does the most possible with its resources and that the Department goes out of its way to help the organizations and individual citizens. The major growth has been in soccer. The emerging organization of AWYFC is experiencing growth.

- WRA is satisfied with the number of fields they have except for the need for an additional 90-foot field.

- Consideration should be given to a program plan that would include additional sports beyond WRA services such as adults. Should such leagues emerge, there would be a need for more fields.
- AWYFC uses a school field that offers only the field space but not the support facilities that the organization would like to have to enhance the quality of their program such as restrooms, snack bar, equipment storage, and field lighting.
- The fields at MCCC serve the sports programs well but are not permanently protected.
- Gym time is at a premium and more gyms are needed. This appears to be the top programmed facility need.
- While WRA is the major township league, it serves the whole school district. That is a typical arrangement with most youth sports leagues. Other smaller regional leagues exist for lacrosse and swimming.
- One of the potential occurrences could be the splintering of WRA into other organizations. The Township should consider a league sanctioning policy before any splintering would occur in order to be preparing for multiple sports groups with their own individual needs.

## **Program Analysis**

Recreation programs and services are important in Whitpain Township. The Department is recognized by the public for providing effective services and in responding to public needs. About 60 percent of the budget is generated from non-tax sources through user fees in comparison with other similar departments that typically generate less than half of their budget through non-tax sources.

### **Programming for Diverse Age Groups**

Township program focus for both the township and community organizations is on children and youth. Special events serve people of all ages. Groups in need of service include active aging seniors, families, and teens.

### **Programming by Gender**

Both males and females participate in the recreation programs. The Township insures that recreation opportunities are available for both genders. The challenge is to establish policies that support growth in participation by females such as in facility allocation and operation of sports leagues. It is important to avoid policies that allocate facilities based upon historical precedence that virtually eliminate access to facilities by new leagues or activities. This affects primarily females. There should be equal access to recreation facilities for both males and females. The Township has been doing a good job of this by negotiating partnership with MCCC for the field hockey fields.

## **Program Structure**

The Department offers different types and lengths of programs and program formats. Instead of just offering the traditional multi-week programs, the Department offers special events, single time programs, special events, and a concert and movie series. The Department seizes opportunities for different formats such as the 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration. Areas for expansion include the arts, culture, nature, and wellness.

## **Program Fees**

Whitpain charges fees to support programs. Whitpain's fees are fair and priced to be a public service. Fees are charged for field and pavilion use. WRA is exempt from field use fees. Since the Township operates on a stringent "hold-the-line" on taxes philosophy, fees are a way to generate income to offset costs.

## **Program Schedule**

Whitpain offers two programming seasons: Fall/Winter, Spring/Summer. Consideration should be given to three seasons corresponding to the public school schedule of Fall, Winter/Spring, Summer. This would expand the planning efforts and enhance promotion of programs.

## **Year-Round Recreation**

One of the major limitations of the township's recreation program is the lack of indoor recreation facilities. While the schools are important sources of indoor facilities, there are inherent limitations. Many groups are competing for the same facilities. The school programs have top priority for schedules. Scheduling is not always reliable because non-school groups get bumped from time-to-time for school programs.

While gyms for organized sports are needed, other indoor facilities to serve people of all ages, interests, and abilities are needed. Drop-in activity space, fitness facilities, gyms, pools, and community meeting rooms are usually spaces that enable people to participate in an active healthy lifestyle year round at all ages throughout the lifetime.

## **Good Service/Good Will**

The public participation process found that the goodwill towards parks and recreation creates an overall favorable impression of Whitpain Township. The Department handles ancillary township functions because of its reputation for getting the job done, having contacts in the community, and providing excellent customer service.

## **Program Planning**

The Department has solid expertise in recreation programs and services. This is typically the weak point for most community parks and recreation departments. Great recreation programming does not just happen: it requires expertise, training, creativity, and a willingness to take risks. Recreation programs must meet client needs for socialization, enrichment, creativity, adventure, and physical and emotional well-being. Any changes in

program planning should be gradual and incremental. Adding programs for active seniors, teens, and families will require additional staff time. A program management plan for future endeavors in this area should be developed in order to project the proper resource requirements and potential partners.

### **Program Registration**

Use of the CLASS software should be implemented for program registration.

### **Program Promotion**

**On the Fun Side** is an important public service. Interviews found that people wanted more information about parks and recreation. This is always a challenge for municipal departments. A marketing and promotion plan for programs and services is needed.

### **Self-Directed Programs**

People want to be able to use facilities such as trails, bike paths, fitness facilities, scenic areas, and have access to natural areas for their own self-directed recreation. By developing these facilities and then advertising them along with how people can use them, the Department can facilitate public recreation on an on-scheduled, self-directed basis.

### **Program Summary**

Recreation programs are a hallmark of quality service in Whitpain Township. The Department:

- Offers diverse programs with a focus on youth, sports, special events, and outdoors.
- Established a foundation for fees and charges to offset township costs partially.
- Has clearly established a niche market in public service in providing outdoor recreation, adult sports, summer recreation, youth camps, special events, and advertising opportunities in the community.
- Does not duplicate what is provided by other groups.
- Focuses on quality in service delivery.
- Service to senior adults, teens, and families should be developed/expanded. The Department needs to form partnerships with others in order to maximize the resources needed for such programs due to present staffing limitations.
- Services to teens need to be based upon collaboration with the teens. To achieve success, the teens need to chart their own course. What Whitpain needs is a facility to serve as a home base for the teens. This should be part of a community recreation center for people of all ages.

The Department is operating at full capacity on programs in terms of both administration and facilities. To do any more, the Department would need additional indoor facilities,

staff, office space, and administrative support. Sustaining, developing, and enhancing partnerships with other providers will be crucial to success in the future. The Township has neither the financial nor human resources to meet public recreation needs alone. Potential expansion of a partnership with the School District and MCCC should be explored. Responding to public expectations for high quality, convenient service is important. The Township should continue in planning responsive, creative recreation programs with an eye towards meeting the needs of a changing population.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

1. **Develop a gradual incremental approach to program expansion.** The Department does a good job of what it is already doing. Adding more services will require additional staff time and office space.
2. **Expand services to teens, families, and senior adults.** The township's Parks and Recreation Department is a small department, and expanding services to other client groups would require additional time. A rule of thumb for adding new program is ten weeks of planning for every new program.
  - Focus program efforts on fun and fitness as a theme. This trend is apparent in the interviews and participation trends in township programs.
  - Programming for active seniors should be addressed as a medium term priority.
3. **Re-focus the department's programming philosophy.** Include more self-directed recreation opportunities rather than adding more organized, scheduled activities. Interviews, national and local trends show that people want very simple kinds of recreation opportunities: attractive, safe, clean facilities for walking, biking, socializing, being with family and friends, and enjoying nature. This comes not through programming, but through facility improvements and additions as well as in informing people about what is available. More "park-like" settings and "drop-in" indoor facilities would serve people well without requiring organized programs. More mixed uses in the parks would expand recreation opportunities for variety of park visitors who could all use the park simultaneously. Establish partnerships with MCCC and the Wissahickon School District.
4. **Hold community focus groups early in the year for planning the programs, especially the summer youth programs.** Invite parents and participants to determine changes they would like to see in the future. Consider inviting non-participants to determine if there is a latent market for summer programs and what people are interested in.
5. **Continue with the effective management practices that are already in place.** These include fees and charges, revenue generating facilities, and quality customer service.
6. **Use the Class Software for program registration, tracking, and decision-making.** Use the names and program registration for targeted marketing.

## Chapter 5: Administration and Management

Purpose of the Assessment.....	77
Department Organization.....	78
Management.....	78
Recreation.....	80
Parks.....	80
Employee Development Training.....	80
Partnership Sponsorship.....	80
Customer Service.....	81
Information Management.....	81
Customer Response and Convenience.....	82
Marketing and Communication.....	82
Park and Recreation Board and Public Involvement.....	82
Maintenance Management.....	83
Park Maintenance.....	83
Maintenance Trends.....	83
Maintenance Responsibilities.....	83
Planning, Directing, and Controlling Maintenance.....	84
Management Analysis.....	85
Management Strengths.....	85
Management Challenges.....	85
Conclusions and Recommendations.....	86

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# Administration and Management

Effective management is the foundation of a successful parks and recreation department. The public participation process for this plan found that the community has a high regard for the Parks and Recreation Department. This finding emerged in all segments of the Township from the general citizenry to organized community groups and other public entities such as the Wissahickon School District and service organizations such as the Rotary.

## Purpose of the Management Assessment

The purpose of the management assessment was to work with the Department in taking a fresh look at operations and planning. The goal was to determine how best to position the Department to achieve Whitpain's parks and recreation goals. The assessment addressed organizational structure, staffing, employee development, public involvement, maintenance, and information management.

With escalating costs and increasing demand for services, Whitpain Township is under pressure to justify every dollar spent. Township operations are rooted in a strong base of fiscal conservatism making management decisions to operate with the utmost accountability and creativity a mandate. The challenge in Whitpain is to keep moving ahead to respond to evolving community needs without becoming mired in how the Department has always operated. The key is to look forward and not focus on maintaining the status quo. The status quo will fall short of community recreation needs over the next ten years. Table 17 presents a strategic approach to management versus the conventional based upon tradition. Strategic management can help the Township achieve its **Recreation 2020** vision.

<b>Table 17</b>	
<b>Conventional Management vs. Strategic Management of Parks and Recreation</b>	
<b>Conventional Management</b>	<b>Strategic Management</b>
1. Maintaining the status quo	1. Change-oriented, dynamic
2. Rooted in tradition	2. Mission-oriented
3. Follows a blueprint for decision-making	3. Vision of future guides actions
4. Reactive	4. Proactive
5. "Wait and See" in ambiguous situation	5. Action-oriented, even in face of ambiguity
6. Focused on internal operations	6. Focused on customer service
7. Relies on the tried and true	7. Operates with creativity and innovation
8. Lock-step processes	8. Fluid, dynamic processes
9. Quantitative measures and facts are emphasized	9. Emphasis is on options and high quality
10. Focus on efficiency	10. Focus on effectiveness

## Department Organization

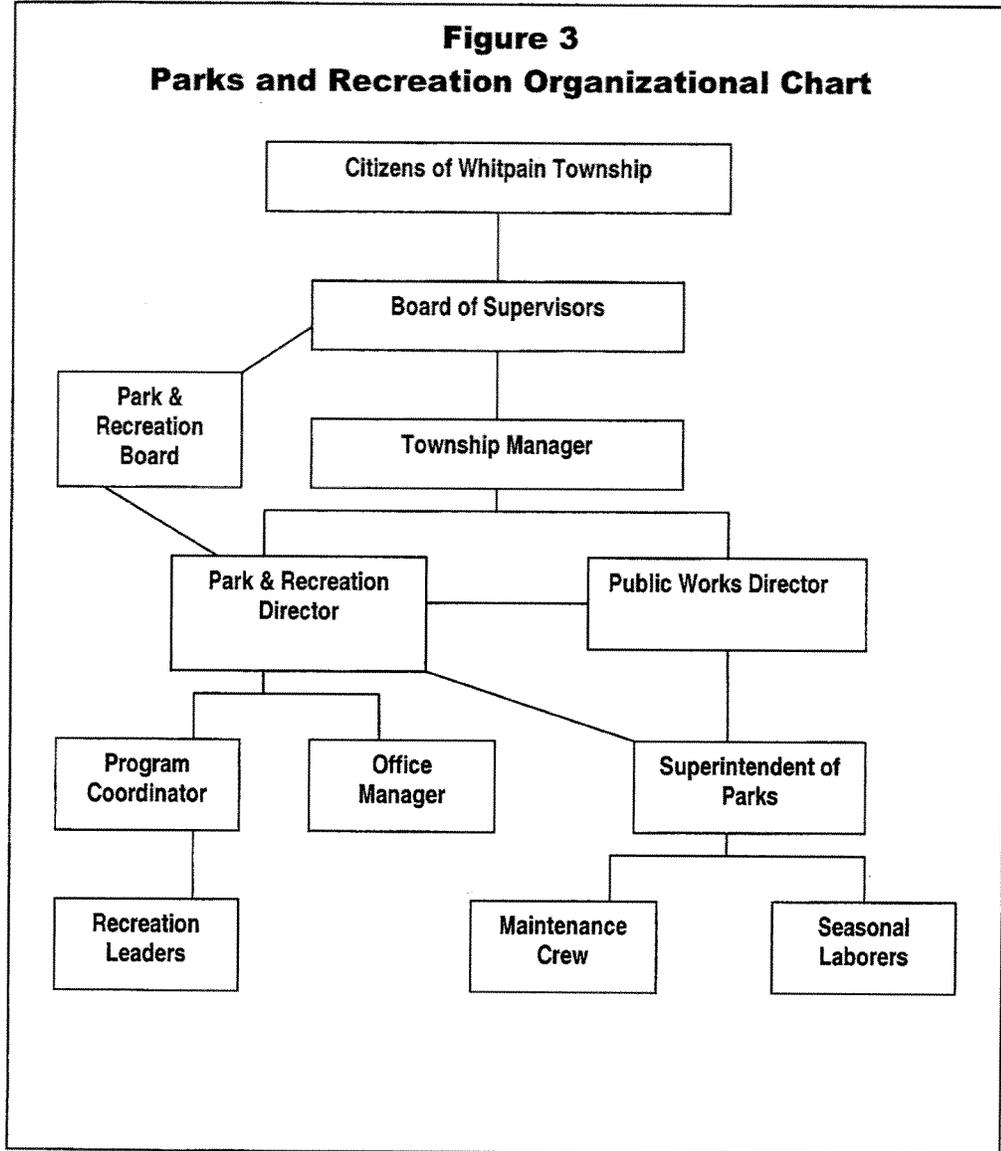
The Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for recreation and service delivery, public outreach with other providers and the citizenry, planning, park planning, financial management; and coordinating park maintenance operations. The Board of Supervisors, an elected board of five members, is the policy making board. The Township Manager implements township policy and oversees the day-to-day operation of Whitpain, including the Parks and Recreation Department. The Director of Parks and Recreation reports to the Township Manager. The Board of Supervisors appoints the Park and Recreation Board. The Director works with the Board. The Director also coordinates park maintenance with the Public Works Department and park security with the Police Department.

## Management

Whitpain has a small management team with a full time director, a full-time program coordinator, an office manager, park superintendent, four full-time park maintenance workers, seasonal staff for recreation and maintenance, and shared maintenance with Public Works. Figure 3 shows the organizational structure for Parks and Recreation. The team leverages their time and facilities by working in collaboration with other providers of parks and recreation services. The providers include both community organizations and private sector businesses. The Department clearly knows their role in parks and recreation thus avoiding duplication of services and maximizing resources.

The Director and the Program Coordinator are professionals in parks and recreation. Their combination of expertise works well for Whitpain Township. With their knowledge, skills, and aptitude, they provide expertise and dedication beyond their duties required for job performance.

**Figure 3  
Parks and Recreation Organizational Chart**



## **Recreation**

Typically parks and recreation departments operate primarily with part-time, seasonal employees. In Whitpain, there are about 55 part-time seasonal recreation positions and three seasonal Public Works employees. The number of part-time positions creates a large workload for the Director and Program Coordinator in terms of recruiting, hiring, training, supervising, and evaluating the number of employees in the system.

## **Parks**

Park maintenance is the joint responsibility of the Parks and Recreation Department and the Public Works Department. The department heads and the Superintendent of Parks work closely together in coordinating routine tasks and special projects.

## **Employee Development and Training**

The Department of Parks and Recreation has line items in the budget for conferences, seminars, annual meetings, memberships, dues, and subscriptions. The Director attends annual parks and recreation conferences and workshops held in Pennsylvania and the National Recreation and Park Association Congress annually.

The Park Superintendent regularly attends training programs and is certified in pesticide and herbicide use. He also belongs to PRPS (Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society) and KAFMO (Keystone Athletic Field Management Organization).

While training opportunities are available, there is no formal employee development program. A training program would outline the development program for the staff over the next five years. This would be beneficial from two perspectives: one, it would be a sound approach to investing in the township's largest expenditure in parks and recreation: labor and, secondly, it would provide a career development benefit for the staff.

Training is essential in keeping up with regulations, technology, and trends. Regulations, guidelines, and standards in parks and recreation are evolving and deal with such diverse topics as herbicide and pesticide spraying, playground safety standards, trail planning and management, and health guidelines. Our changing society has resulted in issues that impact services for children and youth: child custody, abuse, discipline issues, juvenile justice, violence, substance abuse, and other major concerns that were not in the picture just a few years ago.

The most pressing training need is for training on the Parks and Recreation Department's software program. Although the Township invested in the purchase of the system, due to cost, the staff has not participated in the training required for its effective use. This should be a priority as effective computerization is cost effective in the long run through reduced staffing costs and production of real time information to enhance decision-making.

## **Partnerships and Sponsorships**

Partnerships with other organizations in the community enhance public service at reduced costs. The Department has worked over the past decade in forging a strong partnership with the sports organizations and community groups. Partnerships have resulted in major

community events such as the 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration and the community festivals such as Harvest Day.

The Department works with area businesses and organization on events and activities. Businesses in the area provide both donations and funds to support township programs.

The Township's partnership with the Wissahickon School District has been a challenge. As with any township and school district, there are usually issues related to use of school facilities. School District facility use fees resulted in the Township relocating its summer programs out of the schools and onto Montgomery County Community College property.

The School District makes its fields and gyms available for recreational use by community groups. The School District is undergoing a multi-year outdoor facility improvement program. It will produce improved ball fields, tennis courts, and a track.

The School District reports that there is a wide choice of activities and services for the youth in this area through both the public and private sectors. Accessing the information about what is available is a challenge for most people.

## **Customer Service**

In this age of e-mail, voice mail, faxes, and the Internet, customer service has become a buzzword in our society. And for good reason: Research shows that 70 percent of lost customers never come back because they did not like the human side of doing business with the provider of the service.<sup>6</sup> For the Whippen Township Parks and Recreation Department, customer service is a top priority. Their "actions speak louder than words" and earn them high marks in public service and customer loyalty. Interviews revealed the high positive regard that people have for the Department. They lauded the responsiveness of the Department to their needs and the act that staff goes out of their way to serve the public.

## **Information Management**

Providing such excellent public service is a challenge given the volume of contacts and public interaction the Department experiences on a daily basis. The Department processes thousands of transactions annually: registrations, permits, citizen requests, assistance to community organizations, production of public information, program planning, league support, evaluations, financial data, and scheduling.

Since the Department purchased CLASS software, making the most use of this system should be a priority. This is difficult given the workload of the staff and the ever-pressing demands for immediate attention to various tasks. The only way to make this happen is to dedicate the budget to cover training and travel, provide and annual technical assistance and training budget, and develop an action plan with a schedule to train personnel on CLASS. Unless it is scheduled and budgeted, the Department will not be able to make the most use of the software investment.

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<sup>6</sup> Whiteley, Richard C. (1991) *The Customer-Driven Company: Moving from Talk to Action*. Reading Massachusetts: Addison - Wesley, pp. 9, 10.

## **Customer Response and Convenience**

Making registration more convenient is under consideration in the Department. Providing easier, faster, "hassle-free" registration will serve the public well. This would include credit and debit card payments as well as Internet registration. At present people can register by mail using a check.

## **Marketing and Communication**

The Department creates and distributes a recreation newsletter two times year. Moving more into the use of the Internet to provide real time information on programs and activities will help to keep the public informed.

Public awareness and recognition of facilities and services is important. Interviews found that getting information out to the public about what is available in the Department and through other recreation providers is one of the most valuable services the Department could provide.

The Department should consider the development an orchestrated marketing program. The Department could also join LERN, a professional organization dedicated to lifelong learning and recreation. This organization can provide services such as newsletter and brochure critiques and exchanges that would help to provide ideas and insight to the Department staff.

## **Park & Recreation Board and Public Involvement**

The Parks and Recreation Department operates in a collaborative fashion with individuals and organizations throughout the community. The Department meets monthly with the Whitpain Recreation Association (WRA) and participates in community organization such as Rotary. The Park & Recreation Board is an active organization focused on parks and recreation in Whitpain. The committee has seven members representing diverse interests in the community.

There is an overall sense that the Department has an open working relationship with other providers in the community. The public participation process found that people in the community have high regard for the Department, finding the staff most helpful and responsive.

The Township organizes committees for special projects such as the 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration. The Director works collaboratively with such committees. The Committees provide the time, expertise, and support to implement initiatives that would not be possible with a small staff.

## Maintenance Management

Maintenance is the single largest recurring expenditure in park and recreation operations. Over the lifetime of a park, about 75 percent of its cost is in maintenance while only about 25 percent is in acquisition, development, design, and construction<sup>7</sup>.

### Park Maintenance

The parks consistently have an attractive and clean appearance. In addition to parks, the Park Maintenance workers also maintain roadsides, sewer and utility rights-of-way, and retention basins. In addition the Superintendent participates in design projects for parks. This is a very good practice as he can provide advice and guidance that will result in better-designed facilities in terms of maintenance and operation.

The Superintendent has a sports turf management program for the ball fields. It includes aeration, seeding, over seeding, weed and pest control, and mowing.

The Township does not track costs by facilities or task at this time. Use of the CLASS software would enable the Township to do workload cost tracking in order to see how park maintenance resources are used. A useful comparison is a per acre maintenance cost for similar municipalities which ranges from about \$1,500 per acre to \$3,000. Whitpain's per acre budget is about \$1,155. If this figure were adjusted for developed active recreation acreage and undeveloped lands, the comparison would work this way: 109 acres of undeveloped lands X \$500 per acre = \$54,500. 85 acres of active land X \$2,000 = \$170,000. The total under this method would be \$224,500, which is approximately the park maintenance budget. It is important to note that these figures are *minimum* expenditures.

### Maintenance Trends

Whitpain already operates progressively in maintenance operations through such programs as sports turf management and contracting out tasks such as mowing. The shared park and public works pool enables the Township to get the most out of its equipment and labor.

Planning for maintenance is important. The addition of new facilities and the rehabilitation of existing facilities should include a maintenance impact statement. A maintenance impact statement provides an estimate of costs associated with new or expanded parks and recreation facilities including labor, materials, supplies, equipment, utilities, and other items. This would insure that adequate resources are allocated to take care of the new responsibility.

### Maintenance Responsibilities

Maintenance operations encompass the full range of maintenance activities including custodial services, grass mowing, sports turf management, fertilization, tree maintenance,

<sup>7</sup> Lay, Francis. (1978). *Management of Grounds and Site Maintenance Operations*. Manual of Site Management, Environmental Design Press. p.4.

trash removal, snow removal, playground inspections and repairs, improvements, and repairs to recreational facilities.

Now, maintenance focuses on the care of developed recreation facilities. The Township is beginning to get into natural resource management starting with the Growing Greener grant for stream bank stabilization. As the Township strives to protect natural resources as a dedicated effort in the future, such as at Prophecy Creek Recreation Area, maintenance functions need to expand to include natural resource protection as well. Training in this area would be important for township management and staff.

One particular functional area that should be explored is the retention basin maintenance. A program for naturalizing these areas to reduce mowing and promote more natural conditions should be considered. This involves both planning for the actual maintenance with a more natural approach and public education about the change from a manicured approach to a more naturalized condition.

### **Planning, Directing, and Controlling Maintenance**

There is no formal system for planning, directing, controlling, and evaluating park maintenance. It is advisable that the Township develops a maintenance management system with workload/cost tracking. A goal of establishing cost centers in parks as well as the costs of specific maintenance functions such as ballfield maintenance should be established. Such information will enable the Department to allocate resources more effectively and make the case for maintenance support. This information is needed for planning facilities, making informed decisions, and as a means for calculating potential fees and charges.

Consideration should be given to defining maintenance levels in the parks. At present, there are no standards for quality of care in the parks. All of the parks are maintained at the same level. Based upon identified maintenance levels and the workload/cost tracking information, the Department should be able to develop maintenance impact statements for new facilities. By using the maintenance documentation and desired maintenance levels, the Department should be able to project appropriate staffing levels. With tight fiscal resources, minimal spending on maintenance and an expanding base of responsibility through park and recreation additions, looking ahead to present costs, needs, and alternatives will become important in the future.

Park maintenance is not window dressing; it is a public health and safety issue. Consumer Product Safety Commission guidelines set the standard for playground safety. It is anticipated that a safety standard for athletic field compaction may emerge in the future. Most park litigation is related to safety issues and the standard of care provided by the jurisdiction.

A formal maintenance management system for the parks is an essential tool that would enable Whitpain Township to continue to provide facilities that are safe, attractive, and a pleasure to use as the system grows and changes.

## Management Analysis

In a time of increasing accountability for all levels of government, decision-makers, staff and citizens alike, expect efficient and effective operating systems. In Whitpain Township, the management team is committed to providing professional, effective public service through parks and recreation.

### Management Strengths

The Department of Parks and Recreation has a thoroughly professional management team. The Director and Program Coordinator are parks and recreation professionals. This is a winning combination. The Department has been able to operate with seasonal part-time employees that extend the capacity of the Department to provide programs and services.

The elected officials are supportive of parks and recreation and expressed great respect for the job the Department is doing. They are looking at meeting the future needs of the community in terms of providing additional facilities and services to under-served citizens such as teens, families, and adults. They also wish to provide programs in addition to sports such as the arts and cultural activities. They are concerned about providing these services in a fiscally responsible way for both present and future taxpayers. Township administration has an ear to the ground regarding parks and recreation. Finding ways to serve the public through parks and recreation, in an appropriate fiscally responsible manner, is a goal of the administration and the guiding philosophy for this plan.

Community partnerships are the strong suit of the Parks and Recreation Department. This should continue. The public participation process for this project brought to light that people in the community view the Parks and Recreation Department as responsive, well organized, and collaborative.

### Management Challenges

**Staffing** - The Department has a small staff. To provide the kind of services that will be needed in the future, the staff should increase. A teen/family coordinator position should be considered. This could be through the addition of another part-time staff. Long-term, as the population increases and produces a larger segment of active and healthy senior citizens, additional staff time will be needed to plan for and deliver these services. Because of the traffic and volume of telephone calls to the Department, a customer service representative could be considered to respond to public inquiries in the office and on the phone. This would relieve the Office Manager to perform other management functions such as operation of the information management system to be developed through CLASS. The Township has been responsive to adding support for expanded responsibilities such as a fourth maintenance worker when Prophecy Creek Park was acquired.

**Salaries and Wages** - Recruiting and retaining quality staff will require commensurate compensation. With comparable salaries in the private sector ranging in the neighborhood of over \$10 per hour, the municipality needs to be vigilant in maintaining competitive wages.

**Training and Employee Development** - Training needs to become an organized, focused process over three to five years. Topics should include CLASS training, trends and issues, indoor recreation facility planning and management, natural resource management, rules and regulations related to parks and recreation, and others that may emerge. Both recreation and parks employees should have a specific employee development program. Research shows that among all businesses, employees generally function at about 50 to 60 percent of their efficiency because they lack a clear understanding of what is expected of them, the knowledge and skills for the job, or the motivation to do the work.<sup>8</sup> Each of these blocks can be reduced through training. Training helps staff keep up-to-date with technological and legal changes; enhances efficiency; and boosts morale.

Training should be formalized as an employee development program. A percentage of the budget from one to two percent of the operating budget should be designated for training. It could be phased in over the next three to five years. This would be \$4,000 to \$8,000 annually based on the current operating budget.

**Maintenance** - With park maintenance functions split between two departments, coordination and accountability is essential. Park maintenance is a challenge. The per acre maintenance cost is in the low normal range of typical communities. The nature and quality of this township merit superior quality and maintenance. The challenge will be to do this as the system expands and already tight finances get tighter. A maintenance management system needs to be established based upon current methodology for facility maintenance including sports turf management, natural areas management, established modes and quality standards, and workload/cost tracking.

**Making the Case for Parks and Recreation** - The Department needs to develop a strong base of information and numbers regarding parks and recreation. Documenting and enumerating both benefits and costs will help the Department to provide information to:

- Provide elected officials with good information to make sound decisions.
- Create public awareness and support for parks and recreation.
- Plan for future projects and services.
- Leverage partnerships and seek grants.

**Maximizing the Resources of a Small Staff** - Computerization of management functions will help the staff to do more, reduce paperwork, and operate in a more informed fashion. Strong consideration should be given to making a planned commitment to getting the CLASS system up and running to capacity.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The Department operates with a team of individuals that are uniquely qualified to lead parks and recreation into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. They are dynamic, action-oriented, and dedicated to excellent customer service. It is important to help them sustain this level of

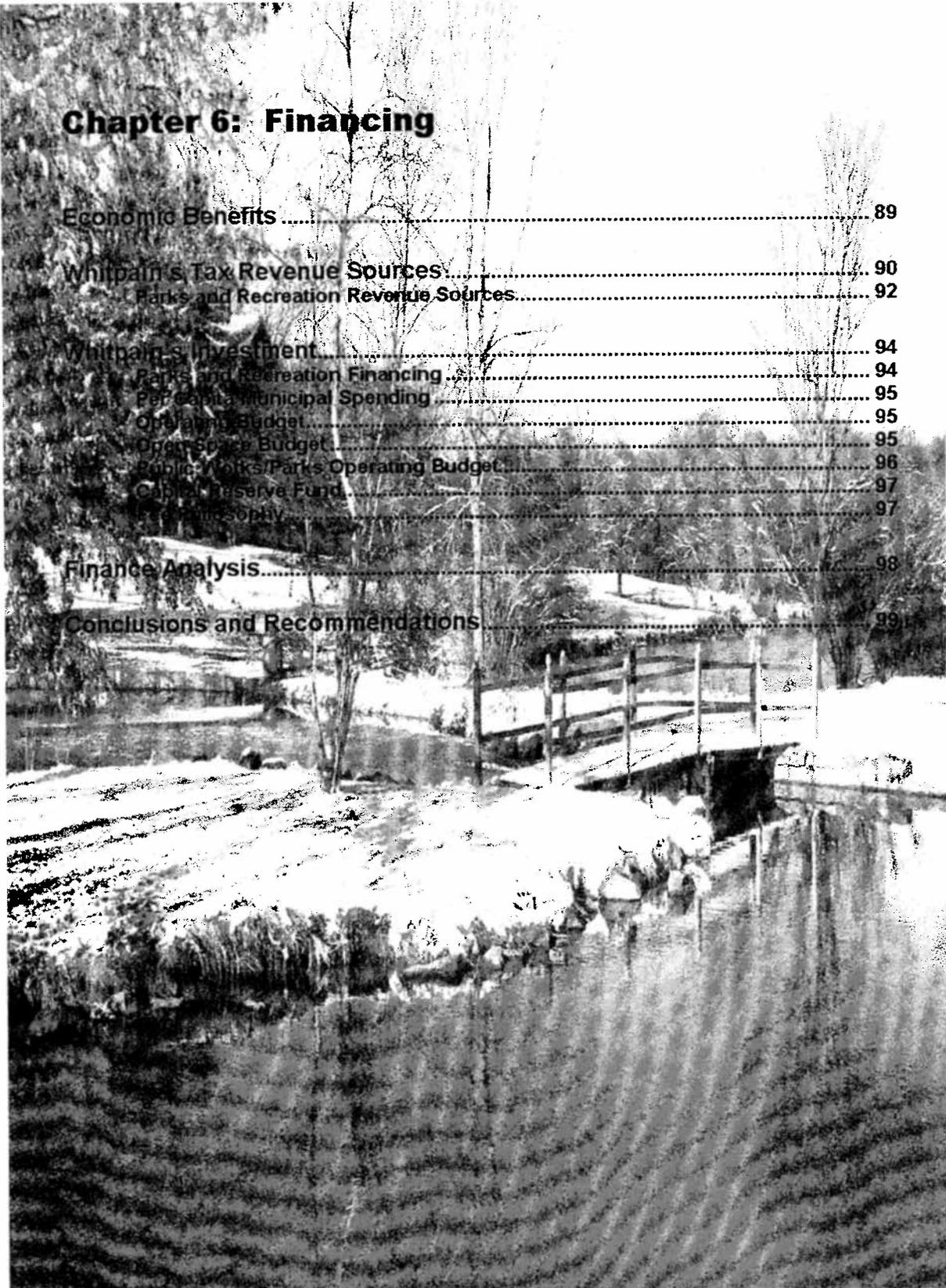
<sup>8</sup> McKinney, William, and Lowery, George A. (1989) Staff Training and Development for Park, Recreation and Leisure Service Organizations. Alexandria, VA: National Recreation and Park Association. p.1.

performance and avoid the burnout associated with the stress and high level of functioning at which they operate. To keep the spirit and achievements going into this century, the Department needs adequate staffing levels for all department functions (administration, maintenance, and programming). The recommendations for management include:

1. **Determine how to develop a family services focus for recreation programs and services.** This could be in partnership with parent organizations.
2. **Evaluate the roles and responsibilities of the Park & Recreation Board.** Consider establishing sub-committees to address specific issues such as teen programs, policy development, greenway and trail planning, facility planning, financing, and others as determined.
3. **Continue to foster partnerships and sponsorships.** Integrate partnerships and outreach as part of workload planning. It is an important focus and not merely an add-on to the normal workload. Partnerships need to be developed, cultivated, enhanced, and sustained over the long term. A recognition program for partners is important. The Department does a good job of this and needs to continue with it.
4. **Work towards establishing a highly recognizable presence in the community.** Use the logo and uniforms for recreation and park staff, expand the park signage program, use the Internet to promote parks and recreation, and participate on community boards and commissions. It is essential that the public recognize the Department as the main provider of community recreation services.
5. **Continue to set performance standards for both recreation and parks on an annual basis.** The Department needs to respond to crises and most often this is unavoidable. However, a planned system of annual goals and objectives will help to focus all parties on a common vision.
6. **Consider expansion of office space.** The current space is too small to hold the existing staff and equipment. Consideration could be given to alternate sites such as Prophecy Creek or an indoor center, should one be developed. Expansion of the Township Building appears to not be an option in order to retain the beautiful fit of the building within the neighborhood.
7. **Add a customer service representative for peak service hours and seasons.** This would be a part time position(s) that could be filled by hourly employees, volunteers, or interns.
8. **Consider staffing additions to meet public need for expanded recreation services.** The addition of facilities such as an indoor recreation center will require a staffing plan. For example, an indoor center would enable services for teens that would warrant dedicated staff time. This would apply to other program areas as well, dependent upon the nature of the initiative undertaken. Partnerships for shared staff could be explored with other organizations such as the Wissahickon School District or the Montgomery County Community College. With the current national concern about wellness, activity and youth services, this position could possibly be funded through a grant.

## **Chapter 6: Financing**

Economic Benefits .....	89
Whitpain's Tax Revenue Sources.....	90
Parks and Recreation Revenue Sources.....	92
Whitpain's Investment.....	94
Parks and Recreation Financing .....	94
Percents Municipal Spending .....	95
Operating Budget.....	95
Open Space Budget.....	95
Public Works/Parks Operating Budget.....	96
Capital Reserve Fund.....	97
Philosophy.....	97
Finance Analysis.....	98
Conclusions and Recommendations.....	99



# Financing

Financing parks and recreation has been evolving throughout the United States. Funding once was completely supported by government through compulsory taxes. Over the past several decades, funding has shifted to a mix of public support and revenues generated through fees and charges, donations, partnerships and sponsorships. Whitpain Township finances parks and recreation through a combination of local taxes, user fees, and financial assistance through sponsorships.

## Economic Benefits of Parks and Recreation

Recreation is an investment, not a cost. The National Recreation and Park Association has undertaken a nationwide campaign to promote the benefits of parks and recreation. It is based upon decades of research that demonstrates the economic, social, individual, and environmental benefits of parks and recreation. Research findings come from a broad spectrum of sources ranging from the National Park Service to medical schools and conservative "think tanks" such as the Rand Corporation. These diverse sources all point to the value of parks, recreation, and open space.

- Open space/parks/recreation rank high among factors used by small businesses in choosing a new business location<sup>9</sup>.
- Property values are higher near open space.
- Recreation deters crime and substance abuse: incarceration of a juvenile offender costs 100 times more than public recreation for one youth.
- Walking an extra mile adds 21 minutes to your life and reduces national health care costs by 34 cents.
- Recreation is the single most effective way to build strong family bonds, the foundation of our society.
- For every dollar a community invests in parks and recreation, anywhere from \$1.02 to \$1.42 is generated in spending in the economy.
- According to the American Softball Association, softball tournaments generate about \$150,000 in spending in the local community over a single weekend.

<sup>9</sup> Crompton, John L., Love, Lisa, and More, Thomas. "An Empirical Study of the Role of Recreation, Parks and Open Space in Companies' (re) Location decisions," *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration*, 15:1 (Champaign, IL: American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration, (1997), 37-58.

- In the Delaware Valley, for every dollar a person spends on a cultural activity, they spend another four dollars on related items such as food.

### **Whitpain Township's Revenue Sources**

Whitpain Township operates within the philosophy of keeping township taxes low and providing effective public service. Many municipalities are enacting their own Earned Income Tax. Because of this, revenues from this source are decreasing in Whitpain Township. Montgomery County reassessed all properties in 1999 at 100 percent of value. About 60 percent of the budget comes from the Earned Income Tax and 20 percent from real estate taxes. The remaining 20 percent is derived from a variety of fees and charges for licenses, permits, reports, cable television, and others as shown in Figure 4.

**Figure 4**  
**Whitpain Township Revenue Sources**

**Real Estate Taxes:** The tax rate is .8 mills including .4 for debt service; .2 for Open Space Acquisition & Development; .15 for Fire Protection; and .05 for Fire Hydrant.

**Recreation:** User fees for recreation programs and services.

**Open Space:** Funds derived from developers through the mandatory dedication of parkland or fee in lieu of dedication.

**Act 511 Taxes:** These taxes represent 68 percent of the township's revenues. This is a category of taxes under Pennsylvania's state law called Act 511. The category includes the following taxes along with their tax rate in West Manchester:

- \* **Earned Income Tax** - A 1.0 percent Earned Income/Net Profits Tax became effective in January of 2001. The tax requires that all persons living or working in Whitpain Township pay 1.0% on all individual gross earnings and net profits from businesses. It does not apply to income, which is constitutionally or specifically exempt.
- \* **Deed Transfer Tax**
- \* **Occupational Privilege Tax** - \$10 per person on first \$500 earned

**Licenses and Permits:** Revenues under this category are derived from cable television but also include revenues from permits for plumbing, zoning, alcoholic beverages, inspections, and occupancy permits.

**Fines and Forfeits:** Fines from violations and accident reports.

**Interests and Rents:** The Township has an aggressive investment program that assures Whitpain gain as much as possible while minimizing exposure to loss. Property rentals also generate revenue for the Township.

**Grants and Gifts:** Whitpain Township pursues grant funding and has been fortunate in receiving donation for community endeavors.

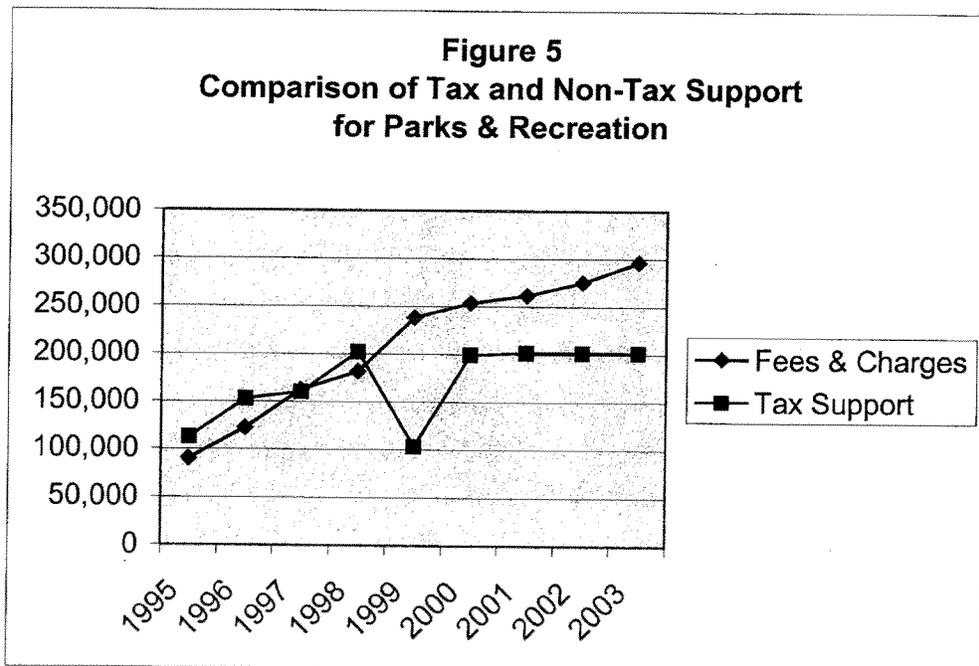
**General Government Permits:** Fees charged by Whitpain for regulatory actions regarding development, planning, and zoning hearings.

**Public Safety:** Charges for public safety include fees for inspections and accident reports to insurance companies.

## Parks and Recreation Revenue Sources

Most parks and recreation systems rely heavily on tax dollars to fund operations. Financing trends show that parks and recreation is moving more towards a market-based economy in which the users pay. Whitpain fits squarely in this pattern: fees and charges help to offset programs and services. The Department generates 60 percent of its budget from non-tax sources through user fees and charges, sponsorships, sales, and facility rentals. The other 40 percent of the budget is supported by local taxes. Table 18 presents the Whitpain Township Parks and Recreation revenue sources for 1999 to 2003. Revenue source ratio: 80 percent tax funds/20 percent non-tax sources.

- Revenues from recreation fees have increased from \$89,800 in 1995 to \$296,321 in 2003. This is an increase of 230 percent increase in eight years.
- During that same time period of 1995 to 2003, the tax support for the parks and recreation budget increased by 79 percent. However, during the last three budget years, the tax support for parks and recreation operating budget has remained the same. During this time, the Township has added parkland and opened new facilities.



- In 1995, the department supported 44 percent of its budget through fees and charges. In 2003, this non-tax share will increase to 60 percent as shown in Figure 5.
- The addition of facilities and staff has enabled the Department to expand its public service and generate increased revenue to help offset operating costs.
- User fees and charges help to offset the cost of providing programs, which benefit individual citizens or groups of citizens.

- Tax funds are directed towards facilities, maintenance, and management that benefit the community overall.
- The value of the contributions of community organizations such as the sports groups and the partnership with the School District is not reflected in cash revenues. They are nonetheless a benefit to the community through parks and recreation.
- The Township has a fees and charges schedule for use of pavilions, game courts, and ball field usage for sports camps.
- Sponsorships reflect the positive regard towards parks and recreation by the business sector. The sponsorships are an important form of advertising for the sponsors by aligning themselves with a very positive community service.

<b>Table 18</b>					
<b>Park and Recreation Revenue Sources 1999-2003</b>					
<b>Source</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
<b>General Fund</b>	103,400	199,327	202,000	202,000	202,000
<b>Program Fees</b>					
Ston Cr Day Camp		82,668	91,441	100,115	85,000
Tennis		0	6,500	7,000	8,500
Hay Ride					7,500
Harvest Festival		16,000*	15,000*	20,000*	4,000
Trips		8,296	11,000	24,500	31,800
Concerts/Movies		=407	625	15,000	16,500
Classes		18,659	8,000	16,500	28,800
Hockey League		14,250	14,750	30,500	37,000
Disc. Tickets		34,575	41,500	44,500	
<b>Rentals</b>					
Wentz		8,228	4,000	12,000	5,000
<b>Sponsorships</b>					
Newsletter					1,800
Arbor Day					4,500
Teen Nights		1,984	2,000	7,500	1,000
Prop. Cr. Hay Ride					2,000
Harvest Festival					11,750
<b>Sales</b>					
Tickets					41,221
Harvest fest Contract					1,000
Concession Stand		5,169	9,500	9,500	8,950
<b>Miscellaneous</b>		870	7,665	0	0
<b>Total Fees &amp; Charges</b>	<b>237,892</b>	<b>191,106</b>	<b>211,981</b>	<b>287,115</b>	<b>296,321</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>441,292</b>	<b>452,824</b>	<b>463,277</b>	<b>489,115</b>	<b>\$498,321</b>

\* Total Harvest Fest; 2003 on reported by category.

## Whitpain's Investment

Whitpain Township has a strong commitment to fiscal responsibility and holding the line on taxes. The Township has not raised taxes in over twelve years. During that same time frame, the Township has taken bold steps in preserving precious open space including Prophecy Creek, St. Helena's, and developing Stony Creek Sports Park. None of this has been easy. Officials fought long and hard through court battles and by floating bonds to make this happen. The Township was simultaneously holding the line on taxes and beginning to see revenues slow due to completion of development and the enactment of the earned income tax by other communities.

### Parks and Recreation Financing

The Director of Parks and Recreation is responsible for overseeing the financial operation of the Department. The Department operates with a mix of funding sources including compulsory resources, earned income, and financial assistance. This is a balanced approach to financing parks and recreation.

#### Budget Process

Although the Director of Parks and Recreation works on financing year round, the budget process begins in earnest after the summer recreation season. The Director solicits input for the parks and recreation staff and the Park and Recreation Board in preparation of the annual budget. The Director presents it to the Township Manager and the Finance Officer for review. The Board of Supervisors reviews, revises, and adopts the township budget in December for the following fiscal year.

#### Comparison with Municipal Budget

Table 19 presents the parks and recreation budget compared with the township budget as a percentage of the operating budget. The comparison is favorable with Parks and Recreation averaging about six percent of the operating budget from 1999 to 2003. It is important to note that about 60 percent of the Parks and Recreation budget is from non-tax sources.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Township Budget</b>	<b>P&amp;R Budget</b>	<b>% Twp. Budget</b>
1999	6,186,128	441,292	7.1%
2000	7,360,350	452,824	6.1%
2001	8,943,219	463,277	5.1%
2002	8,837,643	488,305	5.1%
2003	8,100,793	511,548	6.3%

## Per Capita Municipal Spending for Operating Parks and Recreation

Whitpain budgets about \$26.87 per capita in operating funds annually for parks and recreation. Adding park maintenance funded in the Public Works/Park budget increases this to \$38.98. Most departments generate about 30 percent of their budget from non-tax sources while the Parks and Recreation Department is generating about twice that at 60 percent.

According to the most recent figures available, the statewide average was \$20.11 per capita municipal investment in 1995. It is projected that this is above \$30 eight years later. The nationwide average in 1994 was \$45.

## Operating Budget

Table 20 presents the Park and Recreation operating budget for 1999 through 2003.

Item	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Salaries	185,028	201,579	206,077		220,000
Benefits	46,784	44,863	47,206		68,478
Dues & Memberships	614	644	730	855	785
Conferences & Seminars	3,100	3,915	3,630	3,180	2,455
Travel	1,100	1,670	1,050	900	700
Printing & Advertising	11,700	14,800	14,300	12,450	13,150
Office Supplies	2,025	1,700	1,400	1,200	900
Uniforms	1,750	1,850	1,285	1,200	500
Equipment & Supplies	10,000	10,068	8,610	8,350	6,450
Ticket Sales	35,000	37,000	37,000	44,000	38,000
Stony Creek Camp	40,246	35,925	40,075	43,775	41,675
Tennis	1,400	1,850	1,875	2,575	1,875
Events	3,200	2,800	3,550	7,225	8,475
Harvest Festival	11,865	16,225	17,725	20,150	14,325
Trips	37,510	30,210	28,739	23,955	23,080
Concerts	5,450	6,250	12,450	20,370	19,325
Programs	19,220	17,125	14,050	16,700	16,600
Hockey League	15,100	16,050	15,900	17,982	20,200
Concession Stand	10,200	8,300	7,625	8,700	7,950
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>441,292</b>	<b>452,824</b>	<b>463,277</b>		<b>511,548</b>

## Open Space Budget

The Capital Reserve Fund is a compilation of many small funds, each with a specific purpose and each set up on a long-term basis. They are set up by action of the Board of Supervisors and can only be abolished by unanimous action by the Board.

The Capital Reserve Fund includes four categories: Storm Water Management, Storm Water Basin Management, Recreation, and Road Improvements. The Township Budget 2000 reports that future improvements to the newly purchased 17 acre municipal complex on East Berlin Road and improvements to other park areas will be based upon the survey findings for this Recreation and Park Plan. The Recreation Capital Reserve Fund has \$90,160. This fund serves as the Park and Recreation Capital Improvement Budget.

**Table 21  
Open Space Budget 1999-2003**

Item	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
<b>Revenues</b>					
Beginning Balance	277,144	4,519,100	1,193,094		
Interest Earned	15,000	65,000	35,000		
Contributions	1,000	5,000	2,000		
County Grant	0	0	53,000		
Transfer/General Fund	30,000	30,000	30,000		
Aetna Grants	0	0	17,500	0	0
Miscellaneous Income	1,500	500	50,000		
<b>Total</b>	<b>324,624</b>	<b>4,619,600</b>	<b>1,380,594</b>		
<b>Expenditures</b>					
Land Purchase	0	4,050,000	0	0	0
Land Development	29,850	163,200	354,825	0	0
Park Construction	0	250,000	650,000	466,500	5,950,000
Park Equipment	38,800	76,900	69,200	97,400	51,100
WRA Appropriation	30,000	30,000	40,000	0	30,000
Misc/Shade Tree	7,500	14,500	266,525*	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>106,150</b>	<b>4,584,600</b>	<b>1,380,550</b>	<b>563,900</b>	<b>6,031,100</b>

\*Includes \$246,675 for the anniversary celebration. WRA: Whippain Recreation Association.

### Public Works/Parks Operating Budget

The Public Works Department provides park maintenance services. These expenditures are covered in the Public Works Department budget. Table 22 presents the annual Public Works/Parks Budget for 1999 through 2003. The Township General Fund provides the revenue for this budget.

**Table 22  
Public Works/Park Operating Budget 1999-2003**

Item	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Leaf Collection	32,000	27,000	26,000	26,490	24,000
Salaries	98,892	101,514	141,692	146,346	157,907
Supplies	24,700	26,700	33,000	36,900	41,550
Outside Contracts/Mowing	3,500	3,500	8,500	16,250	13,000
Tree Maintenance/Rights of Way	0	0	15,000	10,000	14,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>159,092</b>	<b>158,714</b>	<b>224,192</b>	<b>235,986</b>	<b>250,457</b>

## Capital Reserve Fund

Whitpain Township has a ten-year Capital Plan based upon the life span of identified equipment and its cyclic replacement requirements. The Capital Reserve Fund includes all township departments. It covers items such as land acquisition, vehicles, furniture, computer equipment, and minor equipment. Park and recreation minor equipment includes items such as laminating machines, sound system, and shelving.

Item	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Computer System Upgrades	\$10,000	0	3,000	0	0
Minor Equipment	3,000	0	5,000	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>9,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

## Fee Philosophy

Whitpain Township charges user fees for programs and services as well as a rental fee for picnic pavilions. The Department of Parks and Recreation operates under the philosophy that user fees will be paid by participants for programs or facility use for which they derive a direct benefit not available to the general citizenry as a whole. The Township's philosophy is not to charge for admission to parks. Trends elsewhere show that communities are beginning to change this philosophy to charge fees for facility use that benefits a particular group of users rather than the community at large, such as maintenance of sports fields. Agreements could be negotiated incorporating important factors such as volunteerism, contributions, and benefit to the community with respect to fees for facility use.

## Donations

The Department pursues donations from local businesses to support special events and projects. Area businesses donate both products and funds. Events such as the 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary are strongly supported by both financial contributions and volunteers.

While donations are typically discussed in terms of pursuing outside funding, the Township also donates funds annually to the Whitpain Athletic Association (WRA). This is an unusual practice as most municipalities provide the fields and some maintenance as support for such organizations. There is a growing trend towards charging field use fees that go back into field maintenance. This is based on the philosophy that ballfields require a higher level of maintenance as a special use facility that benefits targeted groups of visitors rather than the citizenry as a whole. Some municipalities charge field use fees for adults and not for youth while others are phasing in use fees over time. The Township is operating under this philosophy in part by including a field use fee in the Stony Creek Camp program.

## **Grants**

Whitpain Township pursues grant funding for park and recreation projects. Recently the Township obtained a Growing Greener grant for stream bank stabilization and conservation.

## **Fees-in-Lieu of Dedication of Land**

Fees-in-lieu of the dedication of parkland are derived from fees assessed for new homes built in the Township

## **Financing Analysis**

Whitpain Township has a very conservative fiscal philosophy. Low township taxes in Whitpain Township are a priority. The Township prides itself on holding the line on taxes while providing community services. The elected officials are committed to holding the line on taxes. Fiscal resources are becoming tighter in the Township requiring a move into cutting expenses to balance the budget.

The Parks and Recreation Department operates in a conservative fashion by using a revenue generation approach that includes tax dollars but also fees and charges, grants, gifts, donations and sponsorships. About 60 percent of the Park and Recreation budget comes from non-tax sources.

A review of the township budget shows that Parks and Recreation is actually in four budget accounts: Parks and Recreation, the Public Works/Parks budget, the Open Space budget and the Capital Reserve Fund. The Parks and Recreation and Public Works/Parks Budgets both serve as the operating budgets. The Open Space Fund serves both for operating and capital improvements. This fund provides diverse projects ranging from land acquisition and park development to donations to WRA and special event programming such as the 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration.

Whitpain funds Parks and Recreation with about six percent of its annual township operating budget. While six percent is a good percentage generally, the fact that the township's operates within a strong climate of fiscal austerity, this translates into funding for parks and recreation that may be somewhat above average based on projections for statewide per capita municipal investment in parks and recreation. When considering the tax investment alone for parks and recreation, the per capita township tax investment is \$23 annually, less than the cost of three movie tickets. This is within the context that Whitpain Township is one of the five most affluent communities in southeastern Pennsylvania, including being one of the top three in every income category in Montgomery County, the wealthiest county in the Commonwealth.

Whitpain Township has focused on a strong program of capital investment in parks and recreation. This includes floating bonds to acquire land at Prophecy Creek, one of the most significant accomplishments in land preservation in the region, and St. Helena's. The Township also developed Stony Creek Sports Complex. These were wise investments that will benefit generations to come.

When operating with tight fiscal resources, there is a tendency to concentrate on maintaining the status quo rather than on creating a vision for what the community should be. The interview process revealed that citizens love their community and have great pride in living in Whitpain Township. The financial challenge will be to provide the operating support needed for the increased responsibilities of parks and recreation. There was a strong message in the interviews that the citizens want to make sure that the Township takes good care and makes the best use possible of parks, recreation facilities, and natural areas.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Fiscal resources in Whitpain are tight and getting tighter. The Township has done a laudable job of capital investment in land acquisition and park development. The Parks and Recreation Department has risen to the challenge of holding the line on taxes by generating 60 percent of its budget from non-tax sources.

The reality is that only so many tax dollars are available in Whitpain. Unless the community makes a decision to increase financial support for parks and recreation, the alternatives are to:

- Do less and serve the public less.
- Pass on costs to users.
- Create partnerships and share costs of acquisition, development, and operations.
- Build program capacity to improve facilities, maintain quality facilities and services, and to buy new equipment and facilities.

Whitpain is faced with the conundrum that the public appears to want more facilities, programs, and services yet most people are not willing to pay for it. The community survey found that only one in four is willing to pay a tax increase. About three out of four respondents felt that user fees should support parks and recreation. Given these alternatives and the fact that doing less is not a preferred option, the Township should:

1. **Continue its financial support for providing community service through parks and recreation.**
2. **Continue to charge user fees to support programs.** Increase program fees. Consider a five-year program to increase the charges for picnic pavilions, game fields, and courts.

The fees should translate into the cost of a "recreational hour" per person. A recreational hour is defined as what a person would pay for a recreational experience with such activities as going to the movies, golfing, and so on. Based upon a movie ticket, it would be about \$4 per hour. Recognizing that the fees are low now in the Township, the Township could phase in fees over the next five years with gradual increases with respect to what the market will bear. Rates could be based upon group size and type (citizen, school, non-profit, business and so on).

3. **Develop a strategic sponsorship program that benefits the community as a whole.** Create, develop and/or sustain partnerships for park operations. For major capital improvement projects, partnerships with other providers and private sector involvement should be considered to generate a portion of financing necessary. Such partnerships need to be based upon a solid business plan that demonstrates the costs and potential advantages to the citizenry as owners of the public estate.
4. **Allocate resources for capital improvements and operating based on community need and the goal of making the parks more valuable to the community.** In Whitpain, this would be “creature comforts” to make the parks more enjoyable for the public such as drinking fountains, restrooms, shade, landscaping, scenic beauty, and seating areas. This should also include “lifetime” fitness and wellness facilities. A real presence should be established in the parks through open and clean restrooms, park security, events and programs, courteous and responsive staff. The allocation of resources in this fashion will build stewardship for the public parks and public awareness that parks and recreation adds value to the community. Wentz Run is the model of this type of operation with its strong presence in park staffing, concession operation, and clean and attractive facilities at all times.
5. **Develop a business plan for all special use facilities.** Examples of this would include the Prophecy Creek House as a rental facility or a community recreation center. The plan would show costs, revenues, management policies, and public benefits to the citizens at large.
6. **Establish a formal policy on user fees, charges, and donations of tax dollars to community groups.** This policy should reflect the philosophy that programs and services directed towards targeted participants should recover a designated portion of their costs, tax support should be directed towards public recreation and parks facilities and services that benefit the general citizenry overall.

## Chapter 7: Goals and Recommendations

Guide, Not a Law.....	101
Foundations for Recommendations.....	101
Vision.....	103
Benefits of Parks and Recreation.....	104
Goals.....	105
Goal 1. Park, Facility, and Greenway Goal.....	106
Parks.....	110
Master Plans.....	110
Indoor Recreation Center.....	113
Natural Resources Protection.....	113
Trails and Greenways.....	114
Goal 2. Programs and Services Goal.....	116
Plan for Senior Adults.....	117
Fitness and Wellness.....	117
Children and Youth.....	118
Family Recreation.....	118
Teen Recreation.....	119
Self-directed Recreation.....	119
Facilitate Services.....	120
Three Program Session.....	120
Goal 3. Management Goal.....	121
Enhance Planned Maintenance Management.....	122
Information Management.....	123
Support Staff Professionals.....	124
Umbrella Organization for Volunteers.....	124
State Parks.....	125
Community Awareness.....	126
Needs and Interests.....	126
Goal 4. Investment Goal.....	128
Operating Budget.....	129
Tax and Non-Tax Support.....	129
Capital Improvement Program.....	130
Public and Private Support.....	131
Revenue Philosophy.....	132
Fundraising.....	133

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## Goals and Recommendations

The goals and the recommendations present a suggested course of action for Whitpain Township to pursue over the next ten years and beyond. The plan looks ahead to the year 2020 so that the Township can work at the actions incrementally: through an annual action plan, a medium term capital improvement program over five to ten years and long term strategies that require more intense planning, investment and partnerships. The Action Plan provides a rational approach for decision-makers to use regarding parks and recreation. By having a slate of actions identified and adopted elected and appointed officials, community organizations and citizens have a common reference for township plans and goals.

### Guide, Not a Law

The plan serves as a guide, not a requirement of law. Not everything can or should be done at once. The recommendations serve as a road map for Whitpain Township to follow on the path to its goals. The Township can follow the map at its own pace determining where to follow the path exactly and where to take detours to seize opportunities or meet emerging needs. The plan is intended to be a flexible, living document that will enable the Township to make wise decisions in implementing **Recreation 2020**.

### Foundation for Recommendations

The foundation for the goals and recommendations is based upon public opinion, analysis of the township's parks and recreation system, and research into trends and issues.

Overall, Whitpain has an exemplary municipal parks and recreation system rooted in a successful history of strong community volunteerism supported by professional management. This plan presents a strategy for making the best use of the township's success and positioning the Parks and Recreation Department for the future. The underlying message of the Plan is for the Township to maintain the course of its current operations and implement gradual, incremental expansion of facilities, programs, and services. The planning process revealed that there are nine key areas of focus:

1. **Stay the Course:** Overall the Township has done a good job of preserving parkland, developing recreation facilities, and establishing a quality

recreation program. It is important to continue on this path towards making the best use of existing facilities and taking on new projects as resources are available. Any expansion needs to be undertaken with respect to the resources (human and financial) available, partnership potential, and financial support.

2. **Make the Best Use of Existing Land:** Focus on existing parkland. Make the best use of what the Township already has. This includes master planning Prophecy Creek, St. Helena's, and the Cook tract to develop a common public vision for these future park sites; adding facilities to all of the parks for lifetime fitness and wellness such as walking and biking paths; connecting parks and other community destinations through a community trail system; and insuring that the public has access to beautiful scenic areas in order to enjoy nature and solitude. Make the parks attractive to individuals, families, friends, and community groups to serve people of all ages and abilities.
3. **Be Sensitive about Land Conservation:** Understand and work with the challenge of public sentiment about land acquisition. There is only a limited time left to preserve whatever land in Whitpain that has not been developed. Given the recent major acquisitions of Whitpain Township, there appears to be public sentiment resisting any more acquisition. With the development pressures in the region, the Plan urges the Township to consider the preservation of remaining large tracts, land contiguous to parks, and areas for natural resource protection or for trail linkages as both important and urgent.
4. **Adapt Programs and Services:** Focus on serving active aging seniors, families, and teens. Concentrate in program areas beyond sports to include the arts and culture, lifetime fitness and wellness, and nature. Provide facility-based recreation opportunities that people can use at their own discretion such as trails and pathways, indoor recreation facilities for fitness, wellness, and socializing. Recreation programming should continue to be largely self-supporting.
5. **Institute Gradual and Strategic Changes:** Given the small staff, expand programs and services incrementally and gradually. Focus on a combination of development of information and referral services, partnership efforts in target program areas, and programs offered or co-administered by the Whitpain Parks and Recreation Department.
6. **Plan for an Indoor Recreation Center:** Plan an indoor recreation center for citizens of all ages and interests to use throughout their lifetime and on an expanded basis once they retire. The lack of indoor public recreation facilities is a major factor in service limitations for teens and senior adults as well as programming in the arts, culture, and lifetime wellness.
7. **Continue Maintenance and Operational Support:** Provide administrative, maintenance, and financial support commensurate with the parks and recreation system responsibilities. To achieve the goals of this plan, the Township may want to consider assessing staffing, resource needs, and administrative space in conjunction with facility or service changes.

8. **Continue Financial Investment:** Work within the climate of fiscal austerity that is on the horizon for Whitpain Township. Continue to generate over half of the budget through non-tax sources and provide stable township investment in parks and recreation. Work within the township budget to continue using a mix of tax and non-tax sources to fund township initiatives. This could include compulsory resources such as taxes, grants and gifts, fees and charges, sponsorships, partnerships, bequests, and fundraising.

### **Vision for Whitpain Township's Parks, Recreation, & Open Space System**

Whitpain Township is committed to enhancing the quality of life for the people who live and work in this community through parks and recreation. Park and Recreation is an essential public service that strengthens our community by fostering health and wellness; building family and community bonds, crime prevention, environmental protection, and contributing to the local economy. The Township will structure a balanced parks and recreation system that:

- Provides sufficient safe, clean, and attractive parks and recreation facilities to meet the needs of the citizens.
- Ensures equitable distribution of recreation facilities throughout the community in parks or through trail connections to parks.
- Builds a sense of community through shared recreational experiences and programs.
- Involves and is responsive to the residents as active recreation participants and partners in all aspects of parks and recreation.
- Creates and maintains partnerships to optimize funding opportunities, use and operation of recreation facilities, and improvement and expansion of recreation programs and services year-round.
- Protects the township's investment by providing quality facility maintenance.
- Informs the public about the township's parks and recreation opportunities.
- Provides for effective and financially sound management of public resources.

## Benefits of Parks and Recreation

Parks and recreation should be viewed as an investment rather than a cost. Small investments in recreation, parks, sports, and the arts often yield economic returns. Money generated by capital improvements, events, and the provision of on-going services is spent several times over in the community. Parks and Recreation builds community, strengthens family ties, increases property values, deters crime, and protects the environment.

- Property values are higher near open space and trails.<sup>1</sup> The economic value of parks and green space has long been established and demonstrated by increased demand and pricing of park side properties. Increased property values yield more tax revenues.
- Parks and recreation attract businesses to the community. The Joint Economic Committee of the U.S. Congress reported that a community's quality of life is more important than purely business-related factors when it comes to attracting new businesses.<sup>2</sup> Among the factors used by small businesses in choosing a new business location, parks, recreation, and open space ranks first.
- Recreation deters crime reducing police, justice, and incarceration costs<sup>3</sup>. Public recreation costs only cents per day per person. It costs over \$35,000 to incarcerate one youth for a year, more than sending a student to Harvard for one year.
- The U.S. Surgeon General identified physical inactivity as the number one public health issue in the United States stating, "Being inactive is as risky to one's health as smoking".<sup>4</sup> Obesity costs the United States \$238 billion per year in expenses from associated diseases such as diabetes, stroke, and heart disease not including the cost of treating obesity itself.<sup>5</sup>
- The percentage of young people who are overweight has more than doubled in the past thirty years. Almost half of young people aged 12-21 and more than one-third of high school students do not participate in vigorous physical activity on a regular basis. The time spent in physical education classes is decreasing in both number of classes and time within the classes.<sup>6</sup> Only 27 percent of high school students in ninth through twelfth grades took a physical education class in 1997.<sup>7</sup>
- The importance of after-school programs for children and youth is becoming emphasized increasingly. Federal legislation is being proposed to support such programs. The U.S. Surgeon General recommends that communities provide a range

<sup>1</sup> Trust for Public Land. (1994). **Healing America's Cities: Why we must invest in parks**. San Francisco, CA: Trust for Public Land Office.

<sup>2</sup> National Park Service. (1989). **Economics of Parks and Recreation Resource Book**. Institute on the Economic Impact of Parks and Recreation. Sacramento, California.

<sup>3</sup> National Recreation and Park Association. (1994). **Beyond Fun and Games: Emerging Roles for Parks and Recreation**. Arlington, VA: National Recreation and Park Association.

<sup>4</sup> Surgeon General. (1996). **Physical Activity and Health**. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Public Health Service, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. <<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdp/hp/sgr/npai.htm>>.

<sup>5</sup> Fox, Maggie. *Ibid*.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Center for Disease Control. (1999) CDC's Guidelines for School and Community Programs Promoting Lifelong Physical Activity. <<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdp/hp/dash/phactaag.htm>>.

<sup>7</sup> Fox, Maggie. (1999) *Obesity Costs U.S. \$238 Billion A Year - Survey*. Reuters: Science Headlines. <[http://dailynews.yahoo.com/h/nm/19990916/sc/health\\_obesity\\_2.html](http://dailynews.yahoo.com/h/nm/19990916/sc/health_obesity_2.html)>.

of developmentally appropriate community sports and recreation programs that are attractive to all young people. It will cost less to provide facilities that deter health problems than treating the problems themselves.

- The greater the leisure participation, the greater the life satisfaction. Recreation helps people live longer - adding up to two years to life expectancy through the moderate expenditure of energy on a daily basis such as walking.<sup>8</sup>

## Goals

Strategies to address the key findings that emerged from the planning process are organized around four goals. The goals represent the long-term condition for which Whitpain Township will strive. They include the following:

### Goal 1

Provide adequate parkland, recreation facilities, greenways, and trails to meet the needs of the citizens now and in the future.

### Goal 2

Offer programs and services that will enrich the quality of life for the people of Whitpain.

### Goal 3

Manage the parks and recreation system in a professional manner that conveys the greatest possible benefit to the public.

### Goal 4

Invest in parks and recreation to sustain and enhance the quality of life in Whitpain into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

## Goal Organization

Each goal is organized according the following five topics:

**Goal Statement** identifies what Whitpain Township wishes to achieve.

**Significant Issues** is a brief statement with the issues, considerations, and factors that could influence decision-making.

**Next Five Years** shows the scenario for parks and recreation over the next five years.

**Benefits** present the major positive outcomes of taking action.

**Objectives and Recommendations** list the actions to be taken.

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<sup>8</sup> Paffenbarger, R.S. Jr., Hyde, M.A., & Wing, A.L., et al. (1986). *Physical Activity and All-Cause Mortality*. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 314, pp. 605-613.

## Goal 1

### Establish a premiere system of parks, recreation facilities, and greenways throughout Whitpain Township.

#### Overview

Wise investment in open space has provided the municipality with sufficient parkland to meet the acreage standards recommended by this plan into the next decade based on population projections. Whitpain Township has seven parks with 194 acres. The emphasis of the Township should be on developing existing parkland with facilities to achieve a balanced parks and recreation system that meets the needs of people throughout their lifetime. Park development has been very successful in establishing recreation facilities for sports as well as natural areas for environmentally oriented recreation and conservation. It's time to switch gears now towards making the best use of the existing land by providing facilities for people of all ages, interests, and abilities to use throughout their lifetime. The emphasis should be on achieving a balance of active and passive facilities as well as facilities for self-directed individual and non-scheduled recreation such as places for people to walk and bike. The Township is in particular need for an indoor recreation center. The Recommendations **Map** presents the recommendations for the Whitpain Township Parks, Recreation, and Greenway System.

#### Significant Issues

Wentz Run Park is highly valued in the community for the recreation opportunities offered to sports leagues, families, and individual users. The addition of Stony Creek Sports Park provided facilities targeted at teens and youth. These active parks are balanced with Prophecy Creek Park and Armentrout Preserve, which offer an oasis of protected open space where residents can enjoy passive recreation pursuits and exploring nature. Partnerships with the Wissahickon School District and Montgomery County Community College provide athletic facilities for the extensive youth sports programming, township camps, and adult indoor recreation opportunities.

Greenways are critical to improving the quality of life and livability of neighborhoods, communities and regions. Greenways are linear corridors of public and private lands used primarily for recreation purposes. They can include trails and linked tracts of open space. Greenways not only provide open space for human access and recreational use, they also function as corridors for wildlife habitat and movement, environmental protection, and intermodal transportation. A comprehensive system of greenways should be established to conserve the municipality's green infrastructure, which respects and connects with that of the larger outside region. The system should connect parks, commercial areas, schools, and residential area and should provide a system of trails where appropriate in order to provide access, recreation, and encourage alternative forms of transportation. The following should be considered when developing Whitpain Township's recreation system.

### Planning District #2

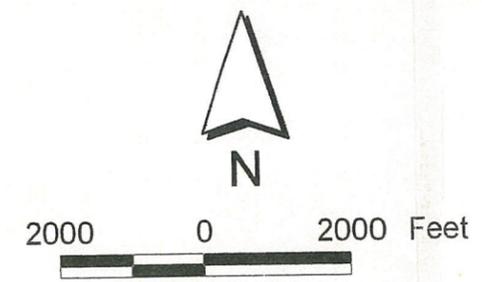
- Maximize the recreation potential of Stony Creek Park through acquisition of contiguous acreage.
- Partner with Montgomery County and adjoining municipalities to protect and develop the Stony Creek Greenway and Liberty Bell Trail.

### Planning District #3

- Develop Prophecy Creek Park as a passive park with an environmental education and arts and culture theme.
- Partner with WVWA and adjoining municipalities to protect and develop the Wissahickon Greenway.

# Whitpain Township

## Recommendations Map



### Legend

- Parks
- Open Space/ Detention Basins
- Schools
- Flood Plain
- Potential Greenway/ Trail Corridors
- Greenway/Trail Link
- Roads
- Parcels
- Township Line
- Planning District

### Planning District #1

- Master Plan the Cook and St. Helena's Tract in a manner consistent with environmental and recreational needs. Preserve and enhance natural features for conservation purposes.

### Planning District #4

- Maximize the recreation potential of Wentz Run Park through acquisition of contiguous acreage, development of trails that connect to designated greenways, and development of passive recreation opportunities in the wooded area.

**Toole Recreation Planning**  
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- While there are seven parks in the Township, only one is a community park.
- The municipality is dependent on partnerships to provide facilities for youth athletic programs.
- Preserving open space and providing parks with natural features and trails emerged as top priorities in the public participation process.
- Indoor recreation and year-round recreation opportunities are desired.
- Planning for arts and cultural programming is crucial.
- Seniors are more active and desire facilities to promote a healthy lifestyle.
- Greenway development requires a multi-phased, multi-year approach, including land protection, planning, design, construction and maintenance. Pennsylvania has a strong commitment to greenways and trails, which has made substantial funding available to communities for grants for trails and greenways. The public is generally very supportive of greenways thus facilitating the organization of partnerships for greenway and trail projects.

### **Next Five Years**

The public appears to want the Township to develop and operate the existing parkland. A concern is that the Township is nearly fully developed and any additional land for parks or conservation would have to be obtained within five years or it will be lost to development. However, there is only a short window of opportunity to do this given development pressure. The public may perceive that the Township has already acquired enough.

### **Benefits of Parks, Open Space, and Greenways**

- Primary factor in quality of life
- Provide educational opportunities as an outdoor classroom.
- Source of community pride
- Increased property values
- Attracts and retains businesses
- Foster health and fitness activities
- Provide safe links between parks, schools, community areas, and neighborhoods.
- Protect open space and preserve natural resources and wildlife habitat.

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**Objective 1****Provide parkland to serve citizens of Whitpain Township.**

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**Recommendations**

- a) Maintain a standard of a minimum of 10 acres of parkland per thousand residents. Whitpain Township should use this parkland acreage standard in accordance with the Municipalities Planning Code in order to use it as a basis for the mandatory dedication of parkland.
- b) Acquire lands contiguous to existing parkland. Wentz Run Park and Stony Creek Sports Park should be expanded with contiguous acreage, as possible, to maximize the recreation potential and efficiency of the parks.
- c) Acquire land for future recreation use that is to remain in reserve for future recreation needs when financially feasible.

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**Objective 2****Master plan park sites to maximize recreation potential, respond to needs, and provide premiere public recreation areas.**

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**Recommendations**

- a) Plan parkland holdings with facilities to meet identified needs.

**Prophecy Creek Park** – Master plan Prophecy Creek Park in a manner that emphasizes passive recreation opportunities and protects the natural beauty and diverse resources.

- Undertake a master plan to guide the park's development. The suggested development theme is two-fold: environmental education and arts and culture.
- Concepts and ideas include: Use the mansion, barn, and site for arts and cultural programming. Consider the development of classrooms in vernacular farm structure images.
- Establish a sculpture garden.

- Provide facilities for community-wide special/cultural events such as an outdoor amphitheater.
- Locate athletic field space (active recreation) as required at the southwest quadrant of the park, contiguous with the athletic fields at Shady Grove Elementary School.
- Provide facilities to promote environmental education: trails that explore the sites natural resources for nature study, interpretative signage, and remote and centralized learning areas. Partner with the Wissahickon Area School District and the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association.
- Plan and establish trails throughout the site to make it a walking/jogging/equestrian destination for fitness and wellness activities.

**Cook Tract** – Master plan the Cook Tract in a manner consistent with environmental and recreational needs. Preserve and enhance existing natural features for conservation purposes.

**St. Helena's Tract** – Master plan the St. Helena's Tract in a manner consistent with environmental and recreational needs. Preserve and enhance existing natural features for conservation purposes.

**Stony Creek Sports Park** – Complete the phased development of Stony Creek Sports Park.

- Add support facilities that will add to the convenience and enjoyment of using the park. Monitor park users to determine these improvements.

**Wentz Run Park** – Develop the wooded area of the site with trails for nature study, benches, and environmental education interpretative signs. Connect trails beyond the park site as shown on the Greenway/Trail Map.

**Erbs Mill Park** – Develop the park site as a neighborhood park. Provide a small age-segregated playground, a small pavilion, and a trail that encircles central open field. Provide landscaping for shade and to buffer adjacent residences, benches, and a park sign.

**West Side Park** – Address the ongoing vandalism and damage to the play equipment, site amenities, and landscaping. The Township should consider re-establishing West Side Playground at the eight vacant properties on Maple Street, just east of the site. This concept should be explored with input from residents of the neighborhood and a corresponding commitment to the upkeep and monitoring of the new park. The neighbors should help to design the new park and a neighborhood based adopt-a-park program should be created to maintain and monitor the park. If this option is pursued, convert the existing park site into an open lot with lawn and shade trees.

**West Side Court** – Add comfort amenities such as benches and a drinking fountain.

**Armentrout Preserve** – Continue to protect and preserve the site's natural resources. Monitor use of the site and realign trails as necessary to address erosion and overuse. Provide facilities to enhance the enjoyment of using the park such as hitching posts for horses, drinking water fountains for people, horses, and dogs, and a small pavilion.

**Wissahickon Park** – Keep abreast of brownfield regulations and programs that could be used to mitigate the environmental hazards at the park site.

- b) Master plan new parks and greenways.
- Complete master plans for each park and greenway incorporating public participation as part of the planning process. The master plans should include the plan for the park site as well as phased cost estimates that outline the anticipated development and maintenance costs.
  - Retain professional landscape architects and recreation planners with experience and expertise in designing and operating public parks to develop the master plans. Require a public participation process for the design.
- c) Improve the safety, function, convenience and aesthetics of park sites through the following initiatives:
- Improve existing park sites and recreation facilities to meet ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) requirements.
  - Provide play equipment that meets the safety and age-segregation criteria of the CPSC (Consumer Product Safety Commission) Guidelines for Public Playground Safety. Remove all equipment that does not meet the CPSC Guidelines. Conduct ongoing safety inspections of playgrounds. Provide adequate safety zones around each piece of play equipment with safety surfacing material that meets the test requirements of the CPSC and the latest American Society of Testing and Materials criteria.
  - Provide walking trails in parks and to recreation facilities. The ADA requires access to recreation facilities and activity areas via an accessible route.
  - Connect park sites to designated greenways and trails.
  - Make the park sites comfortable and convenient to use by adding benches, trash receptacles, drinking fountains, bike racks, and

restrooms. Provide benches near playgrounds, in shaded locations, and at other activity areas for adults to sit and watch park activities.

- d) Provide additional outdoor recreation facilities to meet present and emerging needs.
- Provide athletic fields and courts to meet the expanding needs of youth and adult leagues, recreation programs, and individuals.
  - Provide facilities for emerging sports such as lacrosse and field hockey.
  - Provide facilities that are popular with teens. Such as skate parks, basketball courts, and trails for in-line skating and bicycling.
  - Provide facilities for lifetime recreation/leisure pursuits such as trails, volleyball courts, tennis courts, and picnic pavilions.

---

### **Objective 3**

#### **Consider the development of an indoor recreation center.**

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#### **Recommendations**

- a) Develop a business plan for capital and operating costs and revenues.
- b) Possible locations for a recreation center should include existing township land, new land acquisition, and public private partnerships.
- c) Focus on design that serves citizens throughout their lifetime and on an expanded basis when they retire. Intergenerational facilities are important for the future.
- d) Include facilities for multiple interests including fitness and wellness, the arts, culture, lifelong learning, sports, relaxation and socializing, and special events.

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### **Objective 4**

#### **Promote protection of natural areas through the park system.**

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#### **Recommendations**

- a) Protect parkland and other lands that provide access to natural areas.

- Include natural areas within community parks to provide for a balance of active and passive activities and areas.
  - Work with the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association, local conservancies, and adjoining municipalities to protect open space and natural lands.
  - Preserve open space and natural lands through conservation easements, ordinance provisions, and other means.
- b) Include natural areas for recreation and environmental education in the Whitpain Township park system.
- Provide trails and greenways to connect natural area, community destinations, and parks and provide for long distance recreation activities.
  - Incorporate natural areas within community parks for passive recreation activities, enjoying nature, and environmental education.
  - Design future parks with nature. Protect and enhance natural resources, buffer sensitive natural resources, use native plant material, incorporate unique areas into park designs, and develop sites using Best Management Practices for erosion control and storm water management.

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## **Objective 5**

### **Promote trails and a greenway system to provide a connected community.**

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#### **Recommendations**

- a) Seek land that extends existing trails, protect natural and manmade corridors, and provides a connected network of greenways and trails.
- Develop a greenway master plan that explores the development and protection of greenways and trails as shown on the Recommendations Map. Identify acquisition and non-acquisition strategies.
  - Acquire land through access easements, acquisition, donation, or dedication that extends trails throughout Whitpain Township.
  - Protect greenway riparian corridors along the Wissahickon Creek, Prophecy Creek, and Stony Creek.

- Protect the right-of-way associated with the Liberty Bell trolley line.
  - Acquire key tracts that extend the identified greenways throughout the Township and promote connectivity to parks, schools, neighborhoods, and other locals of destination or origin.
- b) Foster partnerships that promote greenways and trails within the Township and regionally.
- Continue to partner with Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association and adjoining municipalities to extend greenways and trails regionally.
  - Coordinate with Montgomery County regarding the trail initiative for the Liberty Bell trail along the abandoned Liberty Bell trolley line.
- c) Promote bicycle and pedestrian compatibility on all state and local roads.
- Evaluate local roads in terms of bicycle and pedestrian compatibility.
  - Work with PennDOT, the Township Public Works Department, and others to provide bicycle and pedestrian friendly facilities when upgrades are undertaken for public roads such as Route 202 and Route 73.

## Goal 2

**Provide programs and services that will enrich the quality of life for the people who live in Whitpain Township.**

### Overview

Whitpain Township provides over 50 programs annually. These translate into thousands of programming days because most programs run over several days or weeks. The Township also is very effective in facilitating recreation services provided by other public and private enterprises. These partnerships enable the small staff to offer more programs to the community than they would be able to do on their own.

### Significant Issues

Services to teens, families, and seniors; programs and activities beyond sports; and year-round indoor recreation are the three most important issues to address in terms of leisure service delivery in Whitpain Township.

Whitpain has experienced the traditional path to establishing a year-round parks and recreation department. Services focus on children, team sports, the outdoors, and summer recreation. The programs are limited by facilities available in the Township. The Township is now at a turning point in community recreation services: rather than to maintain existing services or to focus on delivering services to meet emerging needs.

The Department operates with a small staff and limited resources. For the Department to take on another program area, additional staff time is needed. A rule of thumb for recreation programming is that it takes ten weeks of planning for every new program added.

Some issues affect recreation but are beyond the purview of the department including transportation. This is a problem for both youth and senior adults. As the population ages, this will become a more pressing issue in the future.

<b>Benefits of Programs and Services</b>
• Deterrent to drug and alcohol abuse
• Builds strong families, the foundation of our society
• Develops a sense of community
• Reduces isolation of community members with decreasing household sizes
• Improves health, reduces stress, and enhances self-esteem

## **Next Five Years**

Whitpain will face the challenge of programming for a population that is both aging and family-oriented. The citizens have been expressing the need for teen programs and indoor recreation. Consideration of supporting programs and services through such features as transportation and convenient ways for people to access information about recreation opportunities will be important in the future. The Township offers a limited number of programs for senior adults now. Program expansion is limited by lack of space when seniors would participate. They use facilities in other townships at the present time.

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### **Objective 1**

**Develop a plan for providing recreation services to senior adults in Whitpain Township.**

---

#### **Recommendations**

- a) Focus on medium to long term planning priority given the demands and workload on the township staff at presents. The Township still has time to move into this area, unlike teens and tweens, which appear to be a more pressing issue. Develop programs targeted at the healthy and active participant that will make up most of the township's senior population in the future.
- b) Consider a senior center or space for seniors such as a multi-purpose room as part of a plan for an indoor recreation center.

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### **Objective 2**

**Address the need to provide and promote recreation opportunities aimed at improving lifelong fitness and wellness.**

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#### **Recommendations**

- a) Adopt a multi-faceted approach that includes facilities, services, promotion, and partnerships.
- b) Create facilities such as paths ways, indoor recreation, and scenic natural areas to entice people to participate.
- c) Promote the need for an active lifestyle, its role in disease prevention, and how the Department can help citizens to lead healthy lifestyles.
- d) Establish partnerships with health care providers in this effort.

---

**Objective 3**

**Continue to provide a quality recreation program for children and youth.**

---

**Recommendations**

- a) Hold a youth and parent forum prior to planning the next year's summer recreation program. Include both participants and non-participants to determine how to make the program more effective.
- b) Explore the potential for establishing after-school recreation programs. Initiate discussion with the School District in a possible joint venture. Pursue grants to fund a pilot project.

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**Objective 4**

**Adopt a program planning philosophy that is aimed at family recreation opportunities. Build on current programming that lends itself to family recreation such as the concerts and special events.**

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**Recommendations**

- a) Establish a category for family recreation in the program planning agenda. Fold in existing programs such as the concert series under a program area devoted to family recreation. Set goals for family programming that would include potential partners or facilitating programs sponsored by other providers.
- b) Promote the family recreation events to the public. Merely advertising existing programs as family oriented would be a low cost way of expanding services in this area. The Department provides good advertising to the public. Just as in private enterprise, the Department is faced with the struggle to capture the public's attention in this information age. Finding new and innovative ways of telling families about recreation opportunities will help the Township to be even more effective in providing opportunities for families to develop strong ties through recreation.

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**Objective 5****Establish a teen recreation program.**

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**Recommendations**

- a) Establish a teen advisory council. Have the teen advisory council establish their mission, goals, and ground rules for working with the Township.
- b) Build on the work of the teens and existing programs such as the dances. Start small and work towards having one or two key successes to launch the new program area.
- c) Target the age group of 12 to 16 to reach the difficult to serve age group of pre-drivers.
- d) Add a teen coordinator position to the Department of Parks and Recreation. The current staff could manage an event or two for teens in the coming year but not much more than that. Based upon the plan for teen services that is developed, this position could be phased in starting with part-time workers or interns during appropriate hours for working and programming with teens.
- e) Continue the Counselors-In-Training program as a feeder program for staffing for the future.
- f) Consider a teen center as part of plan for a community recreation center.

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**Objective 6****Refocus the program planning philosophy of the Department to include self-directed activities in addition to organized, scheduled programs.**

---

**Recommendations**

- a) Undertake park-planning initiatives that will provide facilities for self-directed activities geared towards lifetime fitness and wellness.
- b) Develop facilities geared to the interests of the general population. These include paths for walking and fitness, nature areas, and park support facilities so that residents can develop healthy, active lifestyles.
- c) If the Township develops a plan for an indoor recreation center, facilities that citizens of all ages and interests can use for self-directed recreation should be considered as a priority. Facilities such as fitness, game areas, lounges,

gymnasiums and so on enable citizens to participate in recreation when it is convenient for them.

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### **Objective 7**

#### **Continue to facilitate the provision of community recreation services by other providers.**

---

#### **Recommendations**

- a) Continue to collaborate with the community organized sports groups including the Whitpain Recreation Association (WRA), Ambler Whitpain Youth Football Club (AWYFC), and lacrosse.
- b) Continue to provide facilities, support, and begin advertisement in the Parks & Recreation Newsletter for community groups providing recreation services.
- c) Monitor trends to determine how services can be enhanced or rejuvenated. A regular program of community needs assessment and program evaluation should be established.

---

### **Objective 8**

#### **Consider moving from two programming seasons to three seasons: fall, winter/spring, and summer.**

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#### **Recommendations**

- a) Develop a program management philosophy building upon the already successful programs such as the summer camps, concert series, and community celebrations. Public input for this plan revealed that the community is very interested in special events.
- b) Continue to send out the direct mail newsletters and also post on the website.
- c) Join LERN, the professional organization for life long learning and recreation in order to get ideas on programs elsewhere, join a brochure exchange, and add the NRPA annual program forum as a training opportunity for the Program Coordinator.

### **Goal 3**

**Continue to manage the parks and recreation system in a professional manner that conveys the greatest possible benefit to the public.**

#### **Overview**

The Whitpain Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for the operation and management of the public estate; the health and safety of park visitors; resource protection; and for planning, directing and controlling park operations on a day-to-day and long-term basis. Whitpain Township operates with a strong commitment to fiscal responsibility and accountability for every dollar spent. In a community that operates with limited financial resources and a small staff, the elected officials, and township administration have demonstrated their commitment to enhancing the quality of life through parks and recreation. The Park and Recreation Board provide the eyes and ears of the community in guiding the management and operation of the parks and recreation system.

#### **Issues**

The upside of how the Township manages is the fact that the staff works hard at meeting and anticipating public needs to the greatest extent possible. The downside is that there is a limit to what they can do given the resources that are available. There is a tendency to try to accomplish more and more whether or not additional resources are allocated to support the effort.

The staff is so busy managing daily operations that they are not able to take a step back in order to develop management systems that would help them to operate more efficiently. An example includes training for the computerized information management system.

Practical roadblocks to additional staffing are financial resources and actual space limitations of the small office space.

#### **Next Five Years**

The next five years will be pivotal in Whitpain Township for parks and recreation. Whitpain can maintain the status quo and keep working as is. Such an approach will work in the short term but will fail to meet the growing demands and evolving needs of the community. The other approach is to harness the community's resources to work in a collaborative fashion in finding ways to meet the needs of the citizens, and create the type of community people will want for themselves and their children. The Department has already established a strong track record of partnerships that can pave the way for future endeavors.

<b>Benefits of Professional Management</b>	
•	Protection of major public investment in real estate and facilities
•	Provides public safety and security
•	Enhances the desirability of Whitpain as a place in which to live
•	Offers accountability and responsive public service in an era of cynicism; this is vital in moving society forward

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### **Objective 1**

#### **Enhance the planned maintenance management system for the parks and recreation facilities.**

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Park maintenance has a direct influence on the experience of the park visitor and the perception of the community as well as on the safety and security of public facilities. Fortunately, park maintenance in Whitpain is good, with dedicated staff and volunteers. Interested parties including the elected officials, township administration, the Public Works Department, and community organizations are in agreement: they want the parks to be maintained in the best condition possible. However, the appearance of the parks cannot get any better with current resources; they are stretched to the limit and operating at lower end of per acre costs for park maintenance. As Whitpain's park system grows, so will the demands placed on the maintenance operation. As land is added and facilities are developed addressing maintenance needs over the long haul is essential.

<b>Lifetime Cost of a Park</b>	
Acquisition, Planning, Financing	15%
Design	2%
Construction	10%
Maintenance	73%

### **Recommendations**

- a) Develop a maintenance impact statement for all capital improvement projects.
- b) Continue to involve the Park Superintendent in park planning and design.
- c) Consider maintenance requirements in future computerization in parks and recreation. Use the CLASS software for workload cost tracking.
- d) Use this information for planning, decision-making, making the case for additional support, and establishing fees and charges for facility use.

<b>Benefits of Park Maintenance</b>
• Protection of investment
• Clean, beautiful facilities build community pride
• Reduced injuries and prevention of lawsuits
• Cost savings through planned maintenance: it costs seven times, as much to make an emergency repair than if it were scheduled task
• Avoidance of long-term capital costs for park renovation resulting from deferred maintenance

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## **Objective 2**

**Build the case for parks and recreation through effective information management.**

---

### **Recommendations**

- a) Begin a strategic and vigorous program to document the facts and figures related to parks and recreation. The Department needs to establish an information base that supports the investment and return in parks and recreation.
- b) Arrange CLASS training for the staff and provide annual training and technical support to make the system thrive.
- c) Track numbers that illustrate the impact on parks and recreation in Whitpain. Document a range of information from impact on property values to the numbers of participants at community recreation events and what they spend.
- d) Use this information for decision-making, promotion, budgeting, and negotiating partnerships and sponsorships.

<b>Benefits of Information Management</b>
• Better understanding of community needs
• Enhanced decision-making capability
• Improved customer service
• More effective allocation of resources, potential cost savings
• Documentation that parks and recreation is an essential community service

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**Objective 3****Support the professionalism of the department by providing adequate staffing levels, training, and seasonal support.**

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**Recommendations**

- a) The role of the Director should change to incorporate more focus on planning and projects recommended in this plan, and less hands-on programming.
- b) Consider staffing requirements with the changing needs of the Township. Dedicate work hours to senior adult, teen, and family recreation commensurate with work hours available. Develop annual work objectives for these areas. Conduct pilot projects to determine future directions in these areas.
- c) Add a customer service representative(s) to handle public transactions during peak times and seasons. Consider creating an intern program for this through collaboration with a college or university.
- d) Create a five-year employee development program. Allocate one to two percent of the budget for training. Areas to be considered include sport turf management, computerization, specialized management schools, participation in national conferences, and others to be identified. The employee development program should also incorporate a performance evaluation program that reflects a philosophy of personal and professional development. Insure that certification programs are kept up to date for staff.
- e) Develop annual goals and objectives. Clear guidelines on expectations and goals will enhance productivity and set standards for achievements as well as rein in too many projects with the given resources.
- f) Continue to recruit high caliber staff for recreation leadership and park maintenance positions when needed. Conduct wage surveys in the area regularly to determine competitive pay rates. Set wages at a competitive level to attract quality employees.

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**Objective 4****Establish an umbrella organization for volunteerism related to parks and recreation.**

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Now volunteers are scattered among various community groups. By harnessing them under one umbrella, the Department would be able to more efficiently coordinate all the volunteer efforts. The plan foresees expansion into volunteer services, which at this time is most challenging.

## Recommendations

- a) Recognize that volunteers are not free. The Department needs a program to oversee, sustain, and enhance park volunteer efforts.
- b) Establish recognition for volunteers. Continue to provide public recreation of sponsors and community organizations in **On the Fun Side** about volunteers. This can range from a very simple personalized letter to a more elaborate community celebration depending on sponsorship potential to offset costs. This could be phased in over time but the main point is to get started on recognizing community volunteers right away.
- c) Try to establish park friends' organizations for facilities such as Stony Creek Sports Park, Prophecy Creek, and township pathways.
- d) Continue to work with the organized sports groups in a collaborative fashion.
- e) Sustain and enhance the sponsorship program for the township's activities.

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### Objective 5

#### **Provide secure and safe parks that protect both visitors and public property.**

---

## Recommendations

- a) Use the model of Wentz Run Park for other parks. The presence of township staff makes all the difference in the world in conveying the importance of the park, the park visitor, and the township's commitment to the parks and recreation system.
- b) Work with the Police Department on park safety. Include the police in park planning to insure that improvements are consistent with security measures.
- c) Consider establishing a "Park Keepers" program. This program would be like a citizen's watch. It would provide a presence in the community parks by having a watchful eye on the community parks.
- d) Continue the Department's current practice of regular park inspections, reporting and tracking. Continue to coordinate with the township's insurance carrier to develop a system that minimizes the township's exposure to liability.

<b>Benefits of Park Security</b>	
•	Protection of major public investment in real estate and facilities
•	Develops public stewardship of the parks
•	Creates community perception of public safety
•	Reduces vandalism

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**Objective 6**

**Enhance the visibility and public awareness of parks in the community.**

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**Recommendations**

- a) Use the logo for the Department to project the image and presence in the community desired by parks and recreation. Parks and Recreation in Whitpain is a source of community pride. A unified identity system organized around the logo is a great way to build a visible presence in the community that connects with the taxpayer.
- b) Display the logo on all departmental materials, promotions, uniforms and other signs. Identify all of the different materials and equipment that could carry the parks and recreation message: brochures, letterhead, park signs, trucks, uniforms, memo pads, vehicles, awards, and so on.

<b>Benefits of Identity System</b>
• Builds accountability in eyes of taxpayers
• Promotes healthy lifestyle choices
• Contributes to community pride
• Generates awareness and support for the parks and recreation system

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**Objective 7**

**Maintain the pulse of the community in terms of needs and interests in parks and recreation.**

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**Recommendations**

- a) Evaluate programs, services, and facilities on an on-going basis to determine public preferences. This should be a formalized process instituted for the programs overall.
- b) Continue to participate in community advisory groups and organizations as a liaison to parks and recreation.
- c) Obtain public input from a variety of means including:
  - Park and Recreation Board
  - A community wide needs assessment update every three to five years. Build upon the recent township survey in future surveys. Use this plan as

the basis for the next survey. To begin planning for active adult programs, consider a targeted survey of people age 45 and over.

- Letters and telephone calls from citizens. Suggestion boxes. A website for parks and recreation.
- Focus groups. Community boards and organizations including the sports groups, service organizations, and others.
- Periodic interviews in parks with park visitors.

## **Goal 4**

### **Invest in parks and recreation to sustain and enhance the quality of life in Whitpain Township into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.**

#### **Overview**

The Township invests about six percent of its operating budget in parks and recreation. The Township has made a considerable commitment to parks and recreation in the form of capital funds for land acquisition and park development over the last ten years. Their commitment has resulted in the preservation of some of the most important land in southeastern Pennsylvania in the face of tremendous development pressure.

The challenge lies in supporting the expansion of the park system, in operational costs. Nationwide, municipalities spent an average of \$45 per capita in 1992 (most current figure) on parks and recreation. The average per capita operating investment in municipalities in Pennsylvania was about \$20 in 1995, the most current figures available. Whitpain is investing about \$44 in 2003. The Parks and Recreation Department generates about 60 percent of its budget from non-tax sources, a notable accomplishment in comparison with the norm of about 30 percent.

#### **Significant Issues**

Township finances are already tight and are projected to get even tighter. The Township is nearly fully developed and other municipalities have enacted the Earned Income Tax, which cuts into Whitpain's revenues from this source.

The major challenge in accomplishing the vision for Whitpain's parks and recreation system is funding. There is a strong sentiment with respect to holding the line on township taxes.

#### **The Next Five Years**

Since the Township is about to complete its development, land acquisition is essential. Providing a balanced park system is the township's goal. The Township needs to develop plans for the existing parks to insure that capital investment is made on a sound basis. The plans are also needed to tap into funding opportunities when they arise. Providing an equitable investment in land acquisition, fixing up existing parks and recreation facilities, and exploring a year-round indoor recreation center are big ticket items. To support this, Whitpain's capital improvement program should reflect this plan so that everybody sees what is slated for improvement. If needs or opportunities emerge, priorities could change but the CIP should be the basic guide for funding decisions. Along with the capital improvement program, there needs to be an orchestrated public participation and public education process so that the community develops an understanding and confidence in the financing decisions. Since not all things are possible, it is important to have public understanding about the framework for the decisions and decision-making process.

<b>Benefits of Investing in Parks and Recreation</b>	
•	For every dollar a municipality spends in parks and recreation, another \$1.06 to a \$1.42 is spent in the community
•	It costs 30 cents a day to provide youth recreation and \$35,000+ a year to incarcerate a youth
•	Parks and recreation motivates business relocation and expansion
•	Investments in environmental protection PAY FOR THEMSELVES

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### **Objective 1**

**Provide adequate financial support for parks and recreation in its operating budget.**

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#### **Recommendations**

- a) Develop an impact statement for all projects to demonstrate the need for support to undertake the project and protect the investment. This would enable the Department to hire additional staff for maintenance and programming as improvements are made to the system.
- b) Consider using the equivalent cost of a "recreational hour" which is about \$4 when setting fees and charges. Consideration should be given to the need for equity and provisions for those who cannot afford to pay. Scholarships or work exchange programs could be set up.
- c) Continue to support organized sports and work on collaborative projects for the benefit of the community.

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### **Objective 2**

**Continue to use the current revenue strategy of tax and non-tax sources.**

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#### **Recommendations**

- a) Explore the township's potential for increased support for parks and recreation for both operating and capital projects.
- b) Consider floating additional bonds over the next twenty years for land and facility development over the next 20 years. If the Township can make a funding

commitment, then decisions about park improvements can be made in a logical fashion based upon a projected configuration of the park system in the year 2020.

- e) Determine what the level of investment for operating and capital for parks and recreation over the next five years.
- d) Continue to use the present mix of private funding sources in the revenue management plan including:
  - **Fees and Charges.** Policies for fees and charges and recovery rates should be established.
  - **Grants, Bequests, and Donations.**
  - **Private Fundraising.**
  - **Sponsorships and Partnerships.**
- e) Develop a gift catalog and promote the catalog as a way of encouraging donations to improve the parks. Items could range from a few dollars up to full-scale facilities such as pavilions, pathways, and gymnasiums.

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### **Objective 3**

#### **Establish a five-year capital improvement program based upon decisions made for implementing this plan.**

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### **Recommendations**

- a) Project the funding that would be available for capital improvements over the next five years.
- b) Set fees-in-lieu of dedication based on market value for remaining developments. The current fees should be evaluated based upon the standards for parks and recreation set out in this plan.
- c) Adopt criteria for determining what capital projects to pursue. Given the fact that there are different views and interests, a clear process for decisions about funding should be established and provided for public information. Factors for the selection of capital projects are in Figure 6. These can be made into selection criteria based upon township needs and resources.

**Figure 6**  
**Factors for Selection**  
**of Capital Improvement Projects**

- Proposed project meets public need
- Project benefits a majority of the citizens
- Project meets safety and accessibility needs of community
- Project is consistent with township design guidelines, park master plan, and park mission
- Community groups support the project
- Based upon existing condition of the park
- Investment history of the park
- Available funding for the project
- Project cost
- Capacity of the Township or other provider to complete the project
- Quality of project in terms of enhancing public image and service
- Likelihood of continued maintenance for the project.

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**Objective 4**

**Develop a financing plan for major parks and recreation projects that includes a mix of public and private resources.**

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**Recommendations**

- a) Sustain, enhance, and expand alternatives including partnerships, sponsorships, fee and charges, and fundraising.
- b) Apply for grants from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (PA DCNR) to help pay for trail planning, trail development, land acquisition, and park improvements.

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## **Objective 5**

### **Develop a revenue philosophy based upon input from the citizens, community leaders, and elected officials.**

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#### **Recommendations**

- a) Include the following points in suggested revenue philosophy for Whitpain as follows:
- Continue to provide free basic services at the parks, charging cost recovery fees where necessary.
  - If both the community and users receive identifiable benefits for a high-cost activity, both groups will share costs.
  - Consider high-cost special programs or services and facilities when users are willing to pay all expenses. Also, consider contracting out development projects if a public private partnership could be established in a way that would benefit the community overall.
  - Strive to meet future demands for parks and recreation through developer fees.
  - Develop a policy on donations with respect to both receiving donations and gifts and providing township donations to other organizations.
- b) Classify programs and services into major categories. This will provide a structured way of thinking about investing in programs and services. This will simplify decision-making and enable the Township to provide reasonable response time to community requests or proposals. The following categories could be used:
- **Instructional Programs** are any type of program where certified or skilled personnel are paid to provide the instruction.
  - **Tournaments and Contests** include competitive games and activities including sports, art shows, or any activity where people compete to win or for prizes.
  - **League Programs** serve team sports. The cost to provide services to leagues can be expensive.
  - **Special Activities** include community-wide events and are generally one-time events. May require hiring specialists and performers as well as renting equipment and buying supplies.
  - **Rentals** may include picnic pavilions, buildings, equipment, and so on. Activities are self-directed without township supervision.

- **Special facilities** are often referred to as revenue producing and include such things as community centers and pools. These facilities are generally expensive to develop, operate, and maintain.

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## **Objective 6**

### **Establish a plan to undertake a private fundraising campaign if this is a viable option for a major project.**

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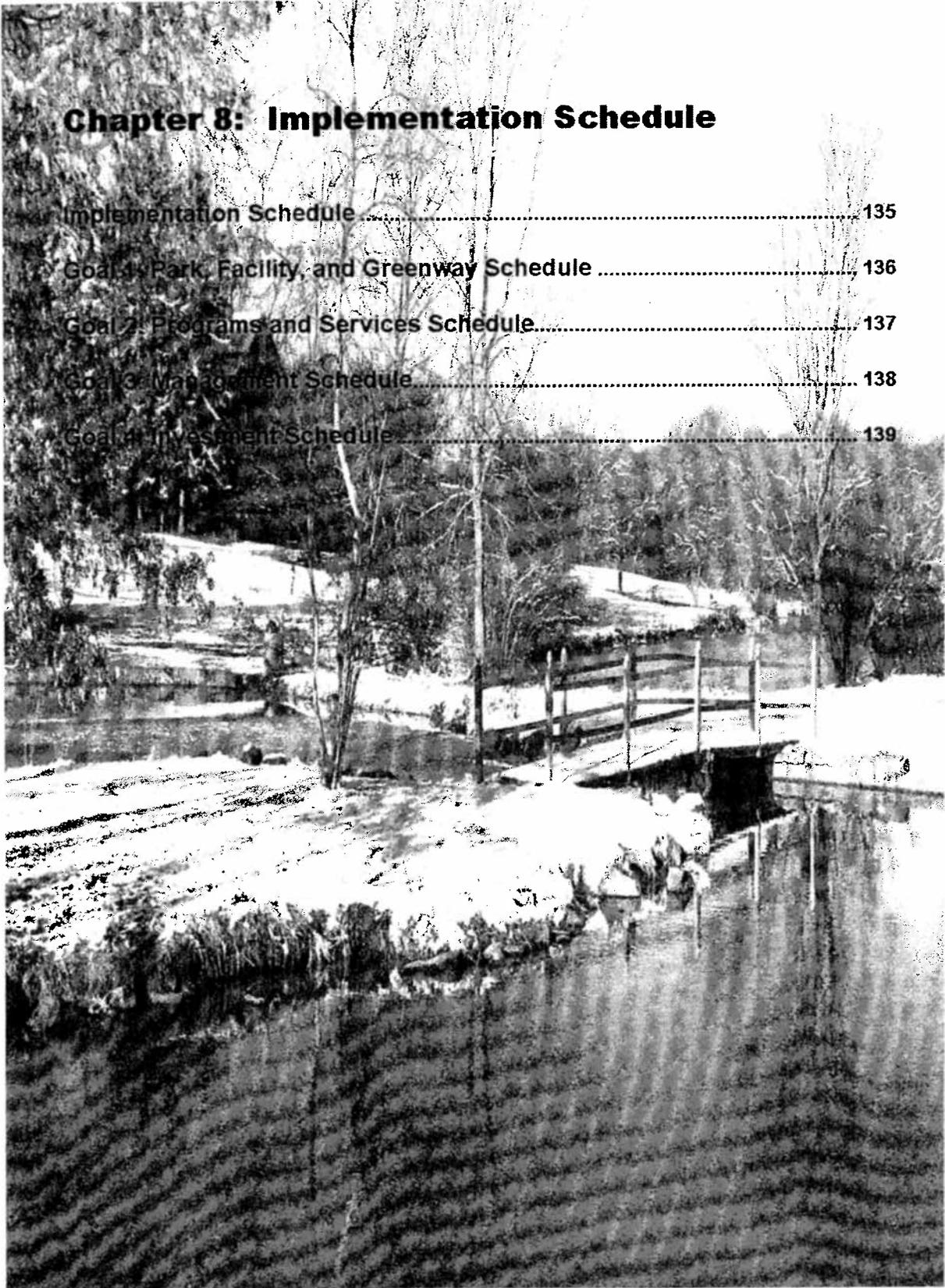
#### **Recommendations**

- a) Determine if the Township has the capacity to undertake a fundraising campaign. Consider the following factors in order to avoid the error most frequently made in capital fund-raising: deciding to have a campaign before the organization is ready. The factors that should be considered include:
  - Staff capability
  - Budget
  - Quality of data available on prospective donors
  - Volunteer base
  - Potential of getting major donors on the Board
  - Board strength
  - Gift management
  - Gift recognition
  - Consensus on fund-raising direction
  - Availability and skill of leadership and staff to commit to the project
  - Materials and publications to explain the case for support
  
- b) Develop a campaign master plan if the Township decides to move ahead with a fundraising project. It should include campaign objectives, policies, an organizational chart, campaign job descriptions, a campaign strategy, printed materials, cultivation plans, and a prospective pool analysis. In conducting a successful campaign program, many organizations find that they cannot take on an additional task when they already have too much to do in daily operations.

- c) Decide the purpose of fundraising and what the benefit to the community at large will be. The Township needs to be able to develop a *case of compelling need* that requires private funds. Preparedness underlies all successful campaigns. Projects that could be considered are a new community park, an indoor recreation center, an amphitheater, pavilions, children's playgrounds, sports fields, trails, roller hockey rinks, beautification, and nature. Some things that the Township may want to consider for special design features would be, paid design competitions for the shelters, pavilions, or park buildings in schools of architecture or design. Fundraising should be strategic, well orchestrated, and for popular projects.

## **Chapter 8: Implementation Schedule**

Implementation Schedule .....	135
Goal 1: Park, Facility, and Greenway Schedule .....	136
Goal 2: Programs and Services Schedule .....	137
Goal 3: Management Schedule .....	138
Goal 4: Investment Schedule .....	139



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## Implementation Schedule

The Implementation Schedule sets forth the time frame for the actions Whitpain Township will undertake in the short, medium, and long term. Not everything can be accomplished at once. Opportunities arise and needs change, requiring this schedule to be flexible. The Implementation Schedule is organized around the four goals of the Plan for parkland, recreation facilities and greenways; programs and services; administration and management; and financing.

## Implementation Schedule 2003-2020

### Goal 1

Provide adequate parkland and recreation facilities to meet the needs of the citizens now and in the future.

Project	Cost	2003-05	2006-10	2011-20
<b>Recreation Facilities</b>				
<b>Open Space Projects</b> Stony Creek Sports Park, Wentz Run Park, Erbs Mill Park, West Side Park, West Side Court, Armentrout Preserve	Based on individual properties and master planning. Through 2005, may invest \$1.5 million in park development; 2006-2010, \$3 million. Long range depends on funds available	√	⇒	⇒
Complete park master plans	Neighborhood parks - \$15-20,000 Community parks - \$40-70,000	√	√	⇒
Develop a business plan for a community recreation center; incorporate a public participation process	\$25,000-30,000			
Playground Improvement Program	Five year cycle - \$10-15,000/yr.	√	⇒	⇒
<b>Greenways and Trails</b>				
Develop a greenway master plan	\$60-75,000		√	
Acquire land to develop and extend greenways and trails through easements, acquisition, donation, and dedication	Based on market value of land	⇒	⇒	⇒
Coordinate with Montgomery County on Liberty Bell Trail initiative	Staff time	√		
Coordinate with PennDOT and the Township Engineering Dept. to provide bicycle and pedestrian friendly facilities along public roads	Staff time	√	⇒	⇒
<b>Parkland</b>				
Acquire parkland contiguous to existing parks	Based on market value of land	⇒	⇒	
<b>Open Space/Resource Protection</b>				
Partner with the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association, local conservancies, and adjoining municipalities to protect open space	Staff time and based on market value of land	√		
Continue to implement the recommendation of the 1995 Whipain Township Open Space Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Acquisition of priority parcels</li> <li>▪ Adoption of open space protection non-acquisition policies and methods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Based on market value of land</li> <li>▪ Staff time</li> </ul>	⇒	⇒	⇒

**Key** √ - Start project ⇒ - Continue implementation

## Goal 2

Provide programs and services that enrich the quality of life for the people who live in Whitpain Township.

Project	Cost	2003-05	2006-10	2011-20
Develop a program plan for addressing the needs of an active aging adult population	Staff time. Potential survey cost of \$8-10,000	√	⇒	⇒
Establish fitness and wellness as cornerstone of public recreation services	Staff time to develop partnerships with health care providers and for program development	√	⇒	⇒
Expand community culture and arts programming	Staff time to spearhead establishment of public community arts/culture with other community organizations. May be able to get a volunteer to take this on. Pursue state grants for program funding		√	⇒
Repackage existing programs with a family emphasis and promote them as family programs	Staff time and use of existing advertising budget	√		
Establish a teen recreation program	Should be done in conjunction with planning an indoor center		√	⇒
Pursue a partnership with the School District for after-school programming for children and youth	Staff time. Investigate and seek grants for funding		√	⇒
Continue to facilitate public recreation offered by other providers	Staff and volunteer time	⇒	⇒	⇒
Build upon the promotion of organized programs to focus on what people can do on their own in the parks.	Staff time	√	⇒	⇒
Explore moving from two programming seasons to three	To be determined based upon staff exploration of the costs and potential revenues to offset department costs		√	
Partner with the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association on environmental programming at Prophecy Creek	Staff time and volunteers	√	⇒	⇒

**Key** √ - Start project ⇒ - Continue implementation

### Goal 3

**Continue to manage the parks and recreation system in a professional manner that conveys the greatest possible benefit to the public.**

Project	Cost	2003-05	2006-10	2011-20
Develop an information management system using Class software	Staff time. Training cost of about \$15,000	√	⇒	⇒
Continue to involve maintenance in planning and design. Develop maintenance impact statements for new projects	Staff time and cost included in park master planning	√	⇒	⇒
Establish a five year Employee Development Program	Budget 2-4 percent of the operating budget for employee development, annually		√	⇒
Create a volunteer umbrella organization	Staff time	√		
Continue township efforts in making parks safe and secure. Retain park attendant program	Existing cost. Continued coordination with police		√	⇒
Consider establishing a "Park Keepers" program to provide citizen eyes and ears on parks	Joint effort of P&R and Police			
Develop an organized evaluation program for department initiatives. This includes program areas and individual programs.	Staff time	⇒	⇒	⇒
Implement the playground safety program	Director's time and capital funding for equipment replacement			
Set annual goals and objectives for all staff. Review accomplishments semi-annually	Staff time	√	⇒	⇒
Add customer service representative(s) at peak demand times	Consider student intern program		√	
Partner with the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association on environmental programming at Prophecy Creek	Staff time and volunteers	√	⇒	⇒
Pay salary and wage levels that attract and retain high caliber employees	Examine wage rates in the service industry periodically to insure that rates are competitive	√	⇒	⇒

**Key** √ - Start project ⇒ - Continue implementation

## Goal 4

Invest in parks and recreation to sustain and enhance the quality of life in Whitpain Township into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Project	Cost	2003-05	2006-10	2011-20
Continue to appropriate 6-7 percent of the township operating budget for parks and recreation	\$250,000 annually, existing allocation	√	⇒	⇒
Continue to invest in park development the next five years and beyond	Open space funds currently support about \$500,000 annually. Consideration should be given to additional funding when the bonds are paid off and current land acquisition prices are resolved	√	⇒	⇒
Programs should continue to be largely self-supporting	Revenue generation of about \$300,000 annually		√	⇒
Consider creating a Development Director for the Township to pursue grant funding. P&R staff cannot devote the time to this effort that would have a financial payoff.	Explore ways of hiring a funding specialist who can offset the salary through grants and other financial means	√		
Establish and adopt policies for fees and charges, and donations	Staff and volunteer time		√	⇒
Continue to seek sponsorships and partnerships to support township programs	Staff and volunteer time			

**Key** √ - Start project ⇒ - Continue implementation