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The Greater & Greener Plan
2012-2021

Parks & Recreation Plan Update

Township of Lower Merion
Montgomery County, Pennsylvania
2012
The Lower Merion Township Parks and Recreation Plan Update contains both an action plan and the research that supports it. It is presented in four sections:

**The Plan Summary** presents the findings of the research, public outreach and recommendations for improving parks and recreation over the next ten years.

**The Plan** includes Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4. They cover accomplishments since the last plan in 1996; an overview of the community; information about the planning process; recommendations; and the action plan.

**The Foundation** contains Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10. These chapters provide detailed information about parks and recreation facilities; community hubs and recreation; recreation programs and services, management and operations, and financing parks and recreation.

The Appendices consist of detailed reports and drawings about the proposed Capital Improvement Program; the Public Opinion Survey; Community Demographics; and the Athletic Field Assessment with Park Maps showing suggested reconfiguration of fields.

Many people are interested in specific aspects of parks and recreation so the information contained in each topic is intended to be comprehensive for that topic. You may see information repeated in several chapters and that is intentional. It serves the reader interested in that individual subject such as facilities or programs or financing. Because readers are pressed for time and have particular interests, here is a convenient way to approach this document:

- Read the Plan Summary first.
- Review Chapter 3, The Plan. This chapter contains the plan's five goals with the recommended actions to accomplish each goal.
- Go to Chapter 4, the Action Plan. This lists all of the recommended actions for the next ten years for parks and recreation with a time frame, leadership, resources needed, and the importance and benefits to Lower Merion Township of undertaking the actions.
- If you want more detailed information about the planning process and the Community, read Chapters 1 and 2.
- To explore the functional areas of Lower Merion Township's public parks and recreation system in depth, then go to the Foundation and read the chapter or chapters in which you are interested. These include: Parks and Recreation Facilities, Conservation, Community Hubs and Recreation, Programs and Services, Management and Operations, and Financing.
- Refer to the Appendices for additional information about capital improvements, population, community survey findings and proposed sports field re-configurations.
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Lower Merion Township in concert with the Plan Advisory Committee and the community has developed this Parks and Recreation Plan Update to guide future decision-making regarding parks, recreation facilities, programs and services, facility management, and the allocation of financial resources. The Township faces increasing community needs in a challenging economy. Making decisions based upon solid information is more important than ever. This plan provides current operational information and demographic data, identifies critical issues and trends, and establishes strategies and recommendations for taking Lower Merion Township’s good parks and recreation system to a great one.

A FRAMEWORK FOR DECISION-MAKING

The plan is not law or a regulatory document. It recommends an approach to achieve a parks and recreation system that serves our citizens throughout their lifetime, close to home, with diverse recreation opportunities year-round. It suggests management strategies and policies to protect our natural resources and provide quality recreation opportunities. The Update will serve as a reference for Township officials, management and advisory boards; community organizations; the Lower Merion School District; and other interested parties. The Update is a guide for future actions and decisions. Recommendations will require further discussion, public involvement, and approval for the actions to be undertaken.

THE COMMUNITY SUPPORTS PARKS AND RECREATION

Lower Merion Township residents treasure their parks and recreation opportunities as well as the community’s scenic character, heritage, and natural resources. Through a robust public participation process, many residents and community organizations participated in voicing their ideas, concerns, and suggestions regarding the kinds of facilities and services that are important to them as well as their ideas for supporting the parks and recreation system in the future. The public participation process included an advisory committee, public opinion survey, key person interviews, focus groups, and public meetings. The Lower Merion Township citizenry is very active and involved and places a high value on the parks, recreation programs, and conservation.

Fully 91 percent of the survey respondents reported using Township parks – and even infrequent park users reported how important parks and recreation are in this community. The core values expressed by the citizens regarding public recreation include the following:

- **Community Enrichment** – Enriching lives through recreation.
- **Leadership** – Providing a central unifying force in the community to assemble partners in the public and private sectors working to serve the public, conserve natural resources, and establish a premier parks and recreation system.
- **Fun** – Offering fun to our residents.
- **Exceptional Customer Service** – Focusing on providing service to our residents that is convenient, stress reducing, time-sensitive and friendly.
- **Health and Wellness** – Providing and promoting healthy lifestyle opportunities.
- **Quality** – Striving for quality in parks, facilities, resource protection, and recreation opportunities.
PARKS & RECREATION PLAN UPDATE

- Diversity – Fostering diverse populations of vendors, employees, and customers.
- Safety – Ensuring safe and secure environments.
- Accessibility – Providing accessibility through affordable options and a variety of offerings.
- Stewardship – Conserving cultural, natural, and historical resources.
- Building a Legacy – Maintaining a vision for the future while sustaining a healthy park system.
- Community Identity – Strengthening the sense of community here through parks and recreation is essential in supporting Lower Merion Township as a very special place in which to live.

Conservation emerged as a top priority. The survey findings indicated that focusing on enhancing parks and recreation facilities and programs to appeal to people throughout their lifetime are important, not just for youth and sports, as a priority for capital improvements. The majority of survey respondents indicated that they are willing to support parks and recreation by paying fees for programs, facility rentals, and maintenance of special use facilities.

VISION AND MISSION

Through the planning process, the Township established the following vision and mission statements for parks and recreation. These statements are the synthesis of the findings from public outreach. They will be used as the basis for decision-making for recreation programs, facilities, conservation and management in the future.

Vision Statement

Our first class parks and recreation system blends active healthy living with the conservation of open space, natural resources, and scenic beauty to promote a way of life unique to Lower Merion Township.

Mission Statement

Our mission is to help our citizens engage in active healthy lifestyles and to conserve our natural resources. We accomplish this by providing public service that is friendly, convenient, accountable, and exceeds public expectations and by working in collaboration with public and private partners.

PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

Lower Merion Township has parks and recreation facilities that are the envy of most communities in Pennsylvania. The 47 parks with 701 acres of parkland host two swimming pools, major conservation areas, the “crown jewel” of trails in the region, a bird sanctuary and wildlife areas, Appleford estate, a destination playground, river access, and places for fitness and relaxation.

While parkland acquisition in a community that appears to have so much parkland is a daunting task and where land is scare and expensive, exploring ways to add land to meet future recreation needs can be done creatively and with respect to community resources. Continuing to work through the land development process in securing parkland and trail connections is key as is securing land that is contiguous to existing parks.

The main challenges with recreation facilities found through onsite field work and the public participation process fall into three areas: completing projects holistically rather than piece meal, planning in a formalized systematic manner, and maintenance. The amenities for park improvement such as shade, restrooms, and landscaping are what make good parks great parks. Every plan should spell out the implications for long-term management, maintenance and operation of the improvement including staff, budget, and alternative methods of support. Effective planning builds public support and ensures the likelihood that the Township can successfully afford to operate the project over the long term. Park maintenance is the single biggest expense of public parks and recreation systems. At present, no written formalized workload cost tracking system or park maintenance management plan is in place. Having a formalized maintenance management system in place is essential for the efficient and effective allocation of funding and staff.

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Lower Merion Township has made major gains in recreation programs and services since the last plan. The decision to create a Recreation Supervisor position proved to be a wise investment. Program opportunities have tripled in the last 12
years. Remarkably 25 percent of the survey respondents indicated that they participate in organized recreation programs; this is higher than the national average of 20 to 22 percent. Over 56,000 people participate in recreation programs and use special purpose facilities such as the swimming pools. The Department has found creative ways of providing programs through partnerships and contracting with private sector recreation providers. An important program goal is to recover the cost of the program through fees and charges. In fact, programs recovered 85 percent of program costs in 2011. Belmont Hills Pool recovered 100 percent of its operating costs and debt service while Ardmore Pool recovered 77 percent of its operating costs. In addition to directly providing programs, the Department also facilitates the provision of recreation opportunities by other community organizations such as sports leagues. Future directions include focusing on adult and family recreation, fitness, and nature-based recreation.

Providing information about what people can do in the parks at their own discretion will be important in working to foster active healthy lifestyles. Offering ideas about how citizens can engage in recreational pursuits on their own for fitness, family bonding, and socializing with family and friends can have a positive impact on engaging people in healthy lifelong recreation activities outside or organized scheduled programs.

**ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT**

Lower Merion Township is fortunate in having managers and staff that are passionate and committed to working for the community, especially so in parks and recreation. Managers and staff have chosen to make serving Lower Merion Township their professional career. The Township consistently looks for ways to operate effectively, efficiently, and professionally.

Over the years, the Township has explored various organizational approaches to parks and recreation. In 2000, the responsibility for parks was transferred from Public Works into the Recreation Department creating the Parks and Recreation Department. The years of experience under this organizational structure have found that the Township has been able to provide the unique management and skills necessary for the diverse park requirements ranging from sports turf management to natural resource conservation as well as customer service. Park maintenance appears to be the Department’s most pressing issue due to the high demand for services, the park system with its extensive facilities, the addition of recreation facilities without a commensurate increase in maintenance support, and the high expectations of the public. Over the lifetime of a park, 75 percent of its cost is in maintenance. Historically, park maintenance operated without a formal written management plan. It is crucial that the Parks and Recreation Department develop a planned
**Benefits of Parks, Recreation and Open Space**

Enhances the quality of life in a community. • Increases property values. • Spurs economic vitality. • Deters crime and substance abuse. • Adds life to your years... and years to your life. • Improves the fitness and wellness of the residents. • Reduces the isolation of the elderly. • Helps children grow up great. • Builds strong family bonds. Fosters a sense of community. • Protects the environment. Conserves natural resources. • Preserves land.

**Goal 1:** Enrich parks and recreation facilities as community destinations where residents can have fun, experience nature, socialize, and exercise.

**Goal 2:** Conserve our natural resources by using best management practices in the parks for conservation, public education, and partnerships.

**Goal 3:** Ensure that a wide variety of recreation opportunities is available to people of all ages and interests in the community.

**Goal 4:** Work in collaboration with Township planners on the redevelopment of the villages regarding parks and recreation to ensure that public recreation facilities, opportunities, and partnerships in management are incorporated into the improvements.

**Goal 5:** Provide operational excellence and financial sustainability that will garner widespread public support for parks and recreation.

In order to accomplish these goals, the following strategy summarizes the actions recommended in the goals.

1. **Take care of what we have.** Develop a formalized maintenance management system in order to operate effectively and efficiently as well as to allocate resources for maximum public benefit. Given the workload of park management, it is essential to make adjustments, freeing up time and responsibilities to enable the Park Supervisor to be fully engaged in the process of planning the park maintenance management system. Adjusting workload for a year for this purpose will have long-term significant benefits for the parks and recreation system.

2. **Use a mix of public and private resources to support parks and recreation.**

Another major organizational issue is the effective management of volunteers. Volunteerism has risen to the level of significant community involvement that must be planned, organized, controlled, evaluated, and recognized. Volunteers provide important services that the Township could not afford to undertake on its own. Creating a Volunteer Coordinator position to be phased in from part-time to full-time is projected to result in the payback of cost to the Township through projects, programs, and tasks to be performed by volunteers without compensation.

**KEY RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Parks and Recreation Plan Update provides recommendations to improve the quality of life in Lower Merion Township through parks and recreation over the next ten years. It strives to conserve our precious natural resources, take good care of what we have, expand parks and facilities, enhance recreational services, and increase public awareness about recreation opportunities. The plan recognizes that Lower Merion Township cannot do all of this on its own or at once – partnerships, time, and funding are essential. Collaboration with others and an approach to funding that continues to use public and private support will be crucial in carrying out this plan successfully.

The plan develops the broad vision for parks and recreation into goals and recommendations. The goals are based upon the community values, vision, mission, and five themes that emerged in the planning process.

**Goal 3:** Ensure that a wide variety of recreation opportunities is available to people of all ages and interests in the community.

**Goal 4:** Work in collaboration with Township planners on the redevelopment of the villages regarding parks and recreation to ensure that public recreation facilities, opportunities, and partnerships in management are incorporated into the improvements.

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2. **Use a mix of public and private resources to support parks and recreation.** Continue to support parks and recreation at five per-
Continue the direct mailings of the Recreation Brochure as part of the Township newsletter to Township residents. Include testimonials from citizens in the guide as well as the benefits of parks and recreation to individuals, families, and the community. Use more photos of citizens engaged in recreation activities in the publication. Design and manage a parks and recreation website as the “go-to” source about real-time parks and recreation information. Include more information about parks and recreation facilities and trails on the Parks and Recreation Department website.

IMPLEMENTATION: Moving Forward

While it might appear that the job is complete because the plan is written, the work has only begun. Implementing the Lower Merion Township Parks and Recreation Plan Update is not one step, but more of an ongoing process of planning, doing,
assessing effectiveness, and beginning the process anew over the next ten years to bring the Township ever closer to its potential as a nationally recognized parks and recreation system. To implement the Update, an operational plan is needed. An operational plan will describe the specific actions that will be taken to accomplish each objective identified in the Update. The operational plan will identify timelines, responsible parties, resource allocations and sources, and an evaluation plan that will identify specific outcomes to be achieved. The Parks and Recreation Plan Update focuses on the what. The operational plan focuses on the how. The operational plan should include the following:

- **Action Items** – Identify the specific tasks that should be done to achieve the identified objective.
- **Responsible Parties** – Designate the staff members, committees, or others who will be accountable for accomplishing each task.
- **Schedule** – Create the exact dates in months and years for accomplishment of the task. Set milestones for important accomplishments by specific date.
- **Resource Requirements and Sources** – List all of the funds, materials, equipment, facilities, and so on required to accomplish the task. Provide the source of these resources including Lower Merion Township, partners, sponsors, fees and charges or others.
- **Outcomes** – Specify the anticipated results to be achieved by the designated timeline.
- **Evaluation Measures** – Establish indicators to show if the effort has been successful.

ENSURING SUCCESS FOR THE OPERATIONAL PLAN

Generally, the Parks and Recreation Director prepares the bulk of the operational plan that is used for an annual work program in consultation with the Township Manager and Assistant Township Manager. The Board of Commissioners approves all policy.

To get started, consider having a “retreat” for the parks and recreation management and staff to identify how to kick-off this plan. Include the liaison from the Board of Commissioners. Plan this ahead thoroughly to get the maximum benefit. Based on the outcomes of the retreat, the Director would create the operational plan for the next fiscal year. It should address all of the functional areas of parks and recreation including programs, management, maintenance, parks, recreation facilities, marketing, and financing. The operational plan links the work of the Parks and Recreation Department to the recommendations of the Parks and Recreation Plan Update. Establish two review meetings to keep implementation and use of the plan as a priority.

Keep this plan before key stakeholders. This plan should be out and used regularly just as the 1996 Plan was. All outcomes should refer to plan implementation. It is easy to get distracted in routine activities but the Plan needs to be in use in all Township planning and decision-making. Boards such as the Commissioners, Township Administration, and the Building and Planning Department all need to have the Plan and refer to it regularly so that there is an on-going link to this plan.

As an adopted plan, it serves as a guide; it is not carved in stone. It is intended to seize opportunities and meet emerging needs as circumstances warrant. The process of implementing the plan is ongoing and continuous, not a one time event, as set forth in the operational plan. Lower Merion Township should move ahead with the plan as adopted, but be prepared to adjust and switch strategies as necessary. Flexibility, patience, and adaptability will be essential in creating the parks and recreation system that suits a community the caliber of Lower Merion. With a tangible plan and a sound implementation process in place, Lower Merion Township is likely to enhance the parks and recreation system that is recognized far and wide as a community treasure, a source of economic vitality, and a reason to live, work, and play here.
Chapter 1 – Building Upon Success

Chapter 2 – Community of Neighborhoods

Chapter 3 – Recommendations

Chapter 4: Action Plan
Chapter 1
Building Upon Success

The Lower Merion Township Parks and Recreation Department, in collaboration with the Parks and Recreation Plan Advisory Committee and the community, has updated the Parks and Recreation Plan of 1996. The Parks and Recreation Plan Update: The Greener and Greater Plan will guide future planning and decision-making related to parks, recreation facilities, programs, services, organization, and management and the allocation of financial and human resources.

Having implemented the majority of the recommendations contained in the 1996 plan and continued with further planning for facility improvements, trails, services, and alternative funding, Lower Merion Township has improved the quality of facilities and services of the Parks and Recreation Department substantially. Recognized statewide and regionally for innovation and commitment to excellence, the Parks and Recreation Department has earned seven awards for its facilities, services, and management from 1998 through 2011. Not a municipality to rest on its laurels, Lower Merion Township once again delved into this update to ascertain how to best serve the public with the kinds of facilities and services that citizens of all ages and interests desire with support from a combination of public and private resources over the next ten years.

The Update provides a baseline of operational information, taps into the recommendations of related municipal plans, identifies critical issues and opportunities, establishes strategies for improving parks and recreation, addresses funding, and provides specific recommendations for implementing the updated plan. The strategies developed for this plan are based upon an investigative and educational process to identify recreation initiatives and opportunities that are important to the citizens and community organizations vested in the Township, the environment, and active healthy living.

Plan Purpose and Goals

The purpose this plan is to:

- Update the 1996 Lower Merion Park & Recreation Plan;
- Complement the 2006 Lower Merion Open Space and Environmental Resource Protection Plan;
- Serve as the Parks & Recreation element of the Township’s Comprehensive Plan; and
- Comply with the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code Act 170, Section 503(11).

Lower Merion Township’s goal for the plan is to continue to guide the Township’s actions and decision-making in achieving its mission to: “provide first-class, year round recreation programs, events, parks, and facilities that enhance and enrich the lives of Township residents of all ages.”

This plan recognizes that Lower Merion Township has made a major commitment to ensuring a high quality of life for the citizens by supporting parks and recreation. Finding ways of providing services and facilities in response to ever increasing public expectations through a mix of public and private resources is an ongoing theme of the Parks and Recreation Department.
Several residents interviewed reported that they moved to Lower Merion Township because of the parks.

- Community recreation needs;
- Parkland and recreation facilities;
- Related Township plans and initiatives with implications for parks and recreation;
- Programs and services;
- Administration, management, and maintenance; and
- Financing.

Community Based Plan
Citizen involvement is the hallmark of this plan. It will continue to play a vital role in the implementation of the recommendations. Elected and appointed officials came together with citizens in a public conversation about how to improve the community through parks and recreation.

Throughout the public participation process, it was evident that the residents love living here and that the parks and recreation have a lot to do with that! In fact, an oft-repeated message of numerous residents during on-site interviews was that they moved to Lower Merion Township because of the parks and recreation opportunities here. Residents expressed their vision for Lower Merion which embraces a green and connected community, conservation of natural resources, year-round recreation, safe places to walk and bike, facilities for a wide range of outdoor enjoyment, and recreation opportunities for people of all ages and interests.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS 1996 - 2011
Since 1996, Lower Merion Township has:
- Rehabilitated the Belmont Hills and Ardmore swimming pools. The Belmont Hills Pool captured the “Best of Philly” award for swimming pools in the Delaware Valley.
- Developed and undertaken the implementation of a Township trail plan that will provide community connectivity to the region for the residents.
- Launched new recreational opportunities for people and their canine friends in designated township parks.
- Established a full-time Recreation Coordinator to expand the Township’s recreational opportunities and expanded community recreation services.
- Cultivated a productive and harmonious relationship with the Lower Merion Township School District. Schools have become “school-parks” through non-school hour scheduling and programming for community recreation.
- Developed park master plans and embarked upon their implementation at facilities such as the new Linwood Park; improved river access at Flat Rock Park; major new playground at Ashbridge Park; trails in Rolling Hill Park; renovations of comfort stations; and the revitalization of existing facilities.
- Fostered the development of community volunteers working for the betterment of the community and conservation of natural resources through parks and recreation.
- Planned and implemented creative and effective strategies for increasing responsibilities and limited staffing in maintenance management.
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Is this plan a law?
No, it is a guide. The elected and appointed officials of Lower Merion Township will use the plan to make informed decisions and set policy relative to parks and recreation.

What will the plan do?
The Parks and Recreation Plan Update will focus planning on community opportunities and issues that can be addressed through parks and recreation. It provides a common framework for decision-making and sets forth recommendations and strategies to improve the quality of life in the community. As an update, it builds upon the Lower Merion Township Parks and Recreation Plan of 1996.

What will the plan not do?
The plan does not mandate or require actions. It does not preclude adding new projects based upon trends, evolving needs, and opportunities. The intent of the plan is to provide an overall framework and guidelines to improve the community through parks and recreation.

How will the plan be used?
The plan is intended to be a living document that will play a role in the decisions that Lower Merion Township will make about parks, recreation, financing, management, and related efforts. This plan serves as a reference document and a framework for overall municipal and collaborative planning and management. It is essential that all related boards and commissions incorporate this plan into their own planning efforts in related areas including land development, open space conservation, trail planning, capital improvement planning, and municipal financing.

How will the plan be implemented?
The recommendations will be phased in over the next ten years. Not everything can be accomplished at once. Recommendations range from those that cost little to large projects that would require grants and other resources. Lower Merion Township is most concerned about the wise use of resources and seeking funding from non-tax sources.

Why is it important to have a quality park and recreation system?
Parks and recreation is integral to the quality of life in Lower Merion Township. Proximity to open space has a clear and positive impact on property values. Properties are worth more, and that value has been shown to increase over time, regardless of the condition of the economy. Calculations of home sales in nearby Radnor show that homes within a quarter mile of the Radnor Trail can attribute an additional value of $69,139 due to proximity to the trail. Recreation is the chief factor in establishing healthy family bonds, the foundation of our society. Recreation deters substance abuse and crime. Recreation adds years to our lives and life to our years. Parks protect our natural resources and provide clean air and water. Recreation helps to build a strong sense of community by connecting citizens through enjoyable hours spent together in the pursuit of happiness and health. By offering access to nature and lots of fun things to do close to home, Lower Merion Township will reinforce its position as a community that is attractive to high quality redevelopment projects.

Parks and Recreation
- Improves health and fitness.
- Increases property values.
- Deters crime and substance abuse.
- Protects the environment and preserves natural resources.
- Establishes strong family bonds, the foundation of our society.
- Attracts and retains businesses and residents.
- Connects the mind, body and spirit of people leading active lifestyles.

One of the Best Places to Live Among America’s Small Towns

In 2011, *Money Magazine* named Ardmore as one of the best places to live among America’s small towns. The ranking, also featured online by CNN with *Money* and *Forbes* magazines, each year compares communities based on such factors as financial, housing, education, quality of life, and leisure and cultural opportunities. In 2009, it ranked 12th as a “Best Place for the Rich and Single,” based on its wealth and number of unattached professionals. The publications describe Ardmore this way: *One of Philadelphia’s Main Line suburbs, Ardmore is just a few minutes from the city by rail; many residents work there. Many colleges, including Villanova University and Bryn Mawr College, are located nearby, giving residents access to still more cultural events. And there’s a growing arts scene right in town, not to mention an historic downtown, lots of shopping and a new park recently opened for residents that transformed a parking lot into green space.*

**LOWER MERION TOWNSHIP: A Great Place to Live**

Lower Merion Township is a very desirable community in which to live. Desirable schools from pre-school through universities, both public and private; low crime rate; outstanding municipal services; a fine library system; attractive scenery; and convenient access to world class sports and cultural activities in Philadelphia all contribute to the quality of life in Lower Merion Township. The excellent parks and recreation system is a main factor the community’s appeal.

**Population Changes**

With a population of 57,825, Lower Merion Township’s population fluctuated 57,825 and 59,561 since 1980. Population projections for 2010 show a slight increase of 1.2 percent to 57,118. A full demographic analysis is presented in Appendix A.

**Neighborhood Changes**

Lower Merion Township has experienced population decreases in ten of its 16 communities: East and West Bryn Mawr, Gladwyne, East Ardmore, North and South Penn Valley, Haverford, Merion, North Ardmore, and Bala. Neighborhoods where population increased include: Cynwyd, Rosemont/Villanova, Belmont Hills/College Park, Penn Wynne, West Ardmore, and Wynnewood.
Demographic Trends: Implications for Parks and Recreation Planning

Population changes and trends affect planning for recreation facilities, services, and programs.

- Neighborhoods - Neighborhoods with the highest population densities are located along the Route 30 and Route 1 area stretching from Bryn Mawr south to Penn Wynne and east to Bala.
- Age - Overall, the population is aging while the youth population is decreasing. Since the last plan, the median age increased from 40.5 to 41.8. The population ages 55 to 64 increased by 27 percent and those 85 and older increased by 35.2 percent. The highest concentration of residents age 65 and older is along the western and southeastern part of Lower Merion from Bryn Mawr to Bala. The population of youth ages 14 and under has declined over the last ten years. The neighborhoods with the highest proportion of youth ages 18 and under include Bryn Mawr, Merion, and Ardmore.
- Race - The Caucasian population is 84.3 percent of the population compared with 93.1 percent in 1990. The community is diversifying with African Americans (6.6%), Asians (5%), and Hispanics (2.1%). The non-white population is concentrated in Ardmore, Bryn Mawr, and portions of Bala and Wynnewood.
- Income - Historically, Lower Merion Township has been one of the most affluent communities in Pennsylvania. The perception of wealth often obscures the reality that there are citizens with financial challenges living in this Township. Lower and middle-income neighborhoods are located in Bryn Mawr, Ardmore, and Bala.
- Education - Lower Merion Township residents are among the best educated in the state. Nearly 29 percent of Township residents hold a Bachelor’s degree, more than double that of Pennsylvanians overall. Thirty-eight percent have graduate or professional degrees, nearly five times the rate of the state population (8 percent) as a whole.
- Future Land Development Plans - Although population projections forecast continued slight population decreases for the next decade, proposed land development plans include additional development that could bring several hundred new residential units to Ardmore, Bryn Mawr, Bala Cynwyd, and the City Avenue District. This could bring in a population increase of 500 – 600 people.

The demographic profile demonstrates that Lower Merion Township is a large and affluent township that is aging, well educated, and diversifying. According to the Comprehensive Plan, the diversity within the Township “virtually ensures that it functions more as a federation of neighborhoods;” and “residents often have strong ties to their local neighborhood.” In many cases, parks and recreational facilities are an important part of this identity and form an integral part of the community by providing residents with a place to interact and socialize. Continued maintenance and improvement of the Township’s open space, parks, and recreational facilities is therefore necessary not only for the obvious health benefits, but also for continued community cohesion.

Noting demographic changes allows the Township to anticipate future conditions and plan accordingly. Although the Township’s population has decreased slightly since 1980, it remains a large and active community. Its open space, parks, and recreational facilities are heavily used and will continue to be heavily used for the foreseeable future. This is especially true of facilities in the Township's densely populated areas, where heavy use is a function both of facility quality and of accessibility to a large number of residents in the immediately surrounding neighborhoods. In all cases, improvements to, and maintenance of facilities are needed to keep pace with use, to ensure their safety, and to maximize efficiency and economy of resources.

Furthermore, while much of the current demand for the Township’s parks and recreational facilities is generated by youth athletics, the Township must consider the needs of a growing middle-aged and senior population as citizens plan for an active and healthy future.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Public involvement included five components: a Plan Advisory Committee; key person interviews; focus groups; a community public opinion survey; and public meetings. This process provided valuable information from those in the community who are involved in various parks and recreation related efforts, as well as the general public. Through these components, the needs of both the general citizens and community organizations that provide recreation services were considered. By combining interviews of key stakehold-
ers that provide valuable support and services regarding parks and recreation with the opinions and needs of the general public, Lower Merion Township officials and managers can achieve a balanced perspective on special needs and overall community interests.

Plan Advisory Committee
The Plan Advisory Committee guided the planning process by serving as the eyes and ears of the community. Members embodied a broad spectrum of community interests including representatives of the Board of Commissioners, Planning Commission, Parks and Recreation (Administration, Programs, and Maintenance), conservation, senior adults, sports groups, Lower Merion School District, and business. Committee members provided ideas, presented concerns, worked on formulating recommendations, participated in public forums, arranged interviews, and reviewed and revised the plan. The Committee focused on achieving a balanced, realistic, and achievable plan that would enhance the quality of life in Lower Merion Township.

Focus Groups
Small groups of citizens came together to discuss their interests, ideas, and concerns regarding specific areas of parks and recreation. These groups included individuals and organizations devoted to the particular topic under discussion. The focus groups and their findings were as follows:

Youth – The Lower Merion School District facilitated a youth focus group with fifth graders in Penn Wynne Elementary School. Things that are important to the fifth graders include: clean restrooms and water fountains; sturdy soccer field goals; bright colors in the playgrounds and parks; more playground equipment with greater variety including more swings; shade; more ballfields; more places to sit in the parks; tables with flat surfaces; and more bike trails.

Senior Adults – The PALM (Positive Aging in Lower Merion) Senior Center offered the planning team a morning to spend with participants in the senior adult programs. Consensus was that PALM is very important to the community. The senior adults reported liking being able to participate in a host of activities as well as drop in just to socialize. Being able to get to the center by walking as well as by Township bus is vitally important to those who use PALM. While the location works well, the building does not. It is too small and lacks sufficient rooms and space for the kinds of activities needed. Space is especially needed for fitness. The PALM visitors reported enjoying Vernon Young Park very much and described the difficulty in getting a space in the pool area on nice days as the area fills up quickly with people staying the whole day. They expressed concerns about Linwood Park’s edges blending with the street and creating a hazardous situation for them when caring for their grandchildren who can’t distinguish the park from the street. They would like the Township to work with the Ardmore Community Center in looking at the needs of both organizations and now they could be met through facility improvements since they operate at different times. PALM operates until 3:00 P.M. while the Ardmore Community Center opens at 3:00 P.M.

Nature – Twenty-two representatives of community conservation organizations participated in a focus group about conservation in Lower Merion Township. They included the Lower Merion Conservancy, Garden Works, Friends of Linwood Park, Shade Tree Commission, Flat Rock Park, Riverbend Environmental Center, Gladwyne Elementary School, Bridlewild Trails, Friends of Cynwyd Heritage Trail, and General Wayne Park. These groups represent thousands of members and supporters of their conservation and environmental missions. The participants described the great progress and positive focus in Lower Merion Township on conservation and the environment. Evidence of this is in the stream bank stabilization projects, development of trails, and increasing natural plantings along with removal of invasive species. They described problems regarding the need for increased maintenance; coordination of the fragmented volunteer efforts; sharing of information, projects and training; and the loss of big trees in the Township. The Township is incrementally replacing trees but cannot keep up the pace necessary for tree replacement on the scale needed. They would like to see a coordinated volunteer program developed and managed; a clearinghouse of information about conservation initiatives, programs, and projects, contacts for Lower Merion Township; involvement in larger regional conservation efforts and opportunities; more adoption of Township parks by groups of people; and increased public awareness that natural resource conservation is integral to the quality of life in Lower Merion Township.

Sports – Fifteen participants representing the Main Line Synagogue League, Narberth Athletic Association, St. Margaret’s CYO, Lower Merion Girls Lacrosse, Main Line Girls Basketball Association, Lower Merion Family Ultimate Frisbee, Havertford Soccer Club, Lower Merion Soccer, Lower Merion Little League, Ashbee Lacrosse, and the Lower Merion School District engaged in a discussion that centered on their needs for more athletic facilities. While the Lower Merion Township Parks and Recreation Department does an outstanding job of serving the sports leagues, they just don’t have enough sports fields. More than 11,000 participate in these leagues and along with their caregivers and
league volunteers represent an estimated 40 percent of the Township’s population. Indoor recreation space for sports is also lacking. While it seems that the private schools could offer use of their facilities, this is not possible due to restrictions placed by the neighborhoods. We need to look at alternatives such as turf fields, industrial areas, Fairmount Park, Polo Field, and other creative approaches.

Public Forums

Nearly 50 citizens participated in a public forum about parks and recreation. In presenting their ideas, concerns, and opportunities, the citizens’ discussion focused on the importance of conservation, recreation facilities, funding, and support for parks and recreation, increasing public awareness, maintenance, and programs. Overall, the citizens appreciate the Township’s support of parks and recreation, and they treasure the public parks. The actions that emerged as the most important to the citizens included conservation of the Township’s natural resources; completion of the Cynwyd Heritage Trail; exploration of the improvement of the indoor recreation facilities; development of additional indoor facilities elsewhere in the Township; establishment of a volunteer program; re-tooling programs to serve all ages and provide intergenerational opportunities connecting the community; and offering convenient well-known ways to provide information to the community.

A second public meeting was held to present recommendations of the Plan to the Board of Commissioners and obtain feedback from the community.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted with 106 individuals regarding parks and recreation. These included community organizations; citizens with identified interests; people who asked to be interviewed; schools; faith based organizations; scouts; business people; private non-profit organizations; regional recreation, park and trail groups; Township management and staff; elected and appointed officials; survey non-respondents; park visitors; and recreation based organizations in neighboring communities. Findings of interviews were specific to individual interests and perspectives and mirrored the results of other segments of the public participation process.

Public Opinion Survey

A statistically valid and reliable survey was conducted in two parts. Respondents totaled 751 for a return rate of 26 percent. Direct mail surveys typically generate a two to four percent response rate. The purpose of the survey was to determine the opinions, ideas, and concerns of the residents to serve as a foundation for decision-making regarding parks and recreation. By understanding the citizens’ needs and interests, the Township will be able to direct planning and resources for the benefit of the community overall. The value of a survey is that the general citizenry could offer their opinions and ideas. This is important information as it represents the majority of the citizens not organized as any one special interest.

Findings

- Top Recreational Pursuits – Walking, playing, and socializing in Township parks, nature enjoyment, bicycle riding and exercise and fitness are the top five activities in which Township residents participate.
- High Level of Park Visitation – The respondents are frequent park visitors. Nine out of ten survey respondents, 90 percent, reported using Township parks. This is a very high response rate, significantly higher than the national average of 72 percent. And they use multiple Township parks with respondents reporting using six to eight different parks. The most popular parks appear to be South Ardmore, General Wayne, and Rolling Hill. In addition, about one in two respondents reported using private recreation facilities for sports and fitness.
- High Marks on Parks – Three out of four respondents, 75 percent, rated Township parks as good to excellent. Park characteristics garnering the highest rating included location, safety, cleanliness, attractiveness, and being fun places to spend free time. Appeal to people of all ages, types of facilities, and access to nature got lower ratings although still positive at 60 to 62 percent.
- Places to Walk and Bicycle – While respondents generally responded that most recreation facilities are available in the community, they stated that there were not enough bicycle trails (71 per-
Activities of Interest – The top activities in which citizens are interested include programs offered by Lower Merion Township, events sponsored by the Civic Associations, recreational classes for adults, boating, and the arts.

Participants and Programs – Families and adults would be the two groups most likely to participate in programs offered by the Township. Generally, respondents stated that children and youth are served recreationally. Overall, participants in Township recreation programs stated that the programs are interesting, of high quality, and scheduled in convenient locations at suitable times. Aspects of programs for the Township to improve include advertising, providing registration via the internet, allowing credit card payments, and recreation leadership.

Awareness about Parks and Recreation – Lake of awareness was reported as the chief reason that prevents citizens from participating in recreational opportunities. The area in which they would like more information include: trails (75 percent), recreation facilities (64 percent), programs and activities (61 percent), where to get information about parks and recreation (57 percent) and Township parks (56 percent). Most would prefer getting information on the Township website and through newsletters mailed to the homes.

Supporting Parks and Recreation – More than half of the respondents are willing to pay program fees and charges to use facilities with high maintenance costs.

Public Participation Process Key Findings

Key findings of the public involvement process include the following:

Consistency and Changes Since 1996 – Comparisons with current public opinion to those in the 1996 Parks and Recreation Plan found many similarities. The residents continue to have significant pride in their community and the park and recreation system. Conservation is important. More ballfields are needed. Neighborhoods are concerned about potential negative impact from park use on the residents. Citizens expressed more interests in community connections and safe places to cycle and walk. Interest in volunteerism has increased although sports organizations continue to express concerns about the limited volunteering by their members.

High Level of Park Use – Field observation, interviews, and the public opinion survey found that Lower Merion Township’s parks receive high use and that there are not enough facilities to accommodate recreation needs. The citizens are major users of Township parks: nine out of ten survey respondents, 90 percent, responded that they use the parks - and they rate the parks as “good to excellent”.

Growing Sports Participation – League registrations have increased dramatically and the need for more ballfields is pressing.

Lifelong Active Healthy Recreation Interests – The citizens want to experience a full range of recreation opportunities beyond sports, mainly in the area of nature, wellness, and family experiences and opportunities for adults. They also want safe places to walk and bicycle as well as year round indoor recreation opportunities.

Volunteerism is popular. People want to help out. Trails, events, park development (especially Linwood Park), programs, and conservation initiatives have attracted many volunteers.

Park Use and Neighborhood Interests – Two views of parks and recreation access exist in this large township. In areas where the Township is more "country," the residents expect to drive for recreational opportunities and want their area to remain scenic and rural in character. In the "town" areas of the community, people like to access recreation by walking or bicycling and don’t want to have to get into their cars to drive somewhere. Planning for both conservation and more recreation opportunities where citizens are concentrated and where re-development is likely are both important. Neighbors near ballfields express concern and opposition to recreation near their homes, including the use of private school facilities for public recreation.

Meeting Needs of the Less Fortunate – The areas of the community where citizens have financial challenges need attention and support as the Township moves forward with the exploration of ways to support parks and recreation financially.

Increasing Public Awareness – Getting information to the public about recreational opportunities conveniently and in a timely way is crucial. The provision of information using new technology will be one of the most important services the Township could provide in the future.

TRENDS

When Lower Merion Township developed the last parks and recreation plan in 1996, the world was much different. Laptops and cell phones were only beginning to appear. Cameras still had film. The Internet was by dial-up. There was no texting, Facebook, or Twitter. Trends represent underlying forces, basic human
needs, attitudes, and aspirations. They help the Park and Recreation Department navigate the world, understand what is happening and why, and prepare for what is yet to come. Trends help identify emerging currents or forces gaining momentum in the community. Monitoring the pulse of culture as it shifts helps the Department ensure that its services and facilities remain relevant to the citizens for the future. For example, how citizens get information has implications in how the Department delivers it. The future starts now and the challenge to the Parks and Recreation Department is determining how to apply the trends in public service. Trends affecting society that have relevance to parks and recreation planning include those shown in Table 1.1

**Trends in Lower Merion Township**

Trends that affect parks and recreation in Lower Merion Township are shown in Table 2

**SUMMARY**

Lower Merion is a community of neighborhoods in which the residents have great pride. The Township is nearly fully developed and has had a relatively stable population for decades. The prospects of redevelopment of neighborhoods could generate a significant number of new households with the addition of housing units in Ardmore, Bryn Mawr and City Avenue. Including recreation and public spaces as part of the redevelopment planning is crucial. The findings of the robust public participation process indicate that there is strong interest in the conservation of natural resources; development of more athletic fields; establishment of a coordinated volunteer program; increase in recreation programs for families and adults; and support to support for parks and recreation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trend</th>
<th>Implication</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Awareness that good health extends longevity and leads to a new way</td>
<td>Establish active healthy living recreation programs as a focus.</td>
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<td>of life.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Workingwomen and men, questioning personal/career satisfaction and</td>
<td>Increase public awareness about close to home, free recreation opportunities that citizens can do on their own such as bicycling, walking,</td>
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<td>goals, opt for simpler living.</td>
<td>experiencing nature, and playing with family and friends.</td>
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<td>Too fast a pace, too little time, forces people to assume multiple</td>
<td>Make experiencing parks and recreation convenient, easy in any way possible from registration through scheduling, and serving as the “go</td>
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<td>roles.</td>
<td>to” resource for information on recreation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A reaching back to spiritual roots.</td>
<td>Build a sense of community by personalizing contacts with citizens and participants as much as possible. Use information database to identify</td>
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<td></td>
<td>citizen interests and develop outreach programs tailored to individual participants. Feature photos and testimonials about parks and</td>
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<td></td>
<td>recreation in publications and on website.</td>
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<td>Belonging to a group that represents common feelings, causes or</td>
<td>Establish Lower Merion’s parks and recreation system and services as a haven for individual growth and establishment of healthy family and</td>
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<tr>
<td>ideals; validating one’s own belief system.</td>
<td>social bonds that create a sense of community.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Need to protect oneself from the harsh, unpredictable realities of</td>
<td>Explore the creation of activities, programs and leagues that are emerging as popular nationwide such as kick-ball leagues, and day camps</td>
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<td>the outside world.</td>
<td>for adults.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nostalgic for their carefree childhood, baby boomers find comfort in</td>
<td>Strive to develop targeted outreach programs based upon interest in the way that on-line business do. Provide excellent customer service.</td>
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<td>familiar pursuits and products from their youth.</td>
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<tr>
<td>To offset a depersonalized society, consumers crave recognition of</td>
<td>Consider the development of adventure-based programs, trips and opportunities. Use this desire in advertising and images to generate more</td>
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<td>their individuality.</td>
<td>participation and use of Township parks and recreation facilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Current times what our desire for roads untaken and adventure,</td>
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<td>especially among the active aging population.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consumers, anxiety-ridden by social, economic, political, and ethical</td>
<td>Provide outstanding customer service. Make participation as easy and convenient as possible. Provide information in real time through</td>
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<tr>
<td>chaos, find themselves beyond their ability to cope today or imagine</td>
<td>the website or social messaging about schedule or facility changes.</td>
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<td>tomorrow.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The country rediscovers a social conscience of ethics, passion and</td>
<td>Capitalize on this interest in Lower Merion Township by establishing a volunteer program with an emphasis on conservation and environmental</td>
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<tr>
<td>compassion.</td>
<td>education.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stressed-out consumers want to indulge in affordable luxuries and</td>
<td>Develop a way to tell the story of how community parks and recreation present means for people to refresh themselves. Citizens can improve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seek ways to reward themselves.</td>
<td>their lives through active living, personal growth &amp; development and by experiencing nature.</td>
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### Table 2. Lower Merion Township Trends and Implications for Parks and Recreation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trend</th>
<th>Implication</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sports Participation: Increasing</strong> – Sports participation increased by 56 percent since 1996. Sports leagues play year round thus compounding the problem of organizations wanting to use dual use facilities. Fielding the number of players interested in playing sports is difficult and waiting lists for participation in community sports could be possible in the future. People see sports as a way to get children into college and on scholarship. Therefore, public expectations of sports opportunities are high. People also have high expectations for the school district for facilities.</td>
<td>Creative approaches to addressing ball field shortages in Lower Merion need to be considered. This includes re-arrangement of existing facilities, acquiring additional parkland where possible, developing synthetic turf surfaces, and installing field lighting where possible. Opportunities for land acquisition and field lighting are limited. Continued collaboration with the Lower Merion School District and sports groups is paramount.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical Activity and Playing Outdoors: Decreasing</strong> - Kids are staying in and using technology instead of being active and outside. Youth ages eight to 18 year-olds devote an average of seven hours and 38 minutes to using entertainment media across a typical day (more than 53 hours a week). There is less personal contact among people, especially youth, because of technology. Less than half of adults get the recommended 150 minutes per week of moderate level physical activity necessary for health benefits.</td>
<td>Need to build stewards for the environment among future generations as well as foster active healthy lifestyles. Providing experiences in active healthy living through parks and recreation is crucial to public health. Supporting healthier lifestyles through recreation can help people make long-lasting and sustainable changes that can reduce their risk for chronic diseases. A number of provisions in the health reform law are aimed directly at improving population health by addressing conditions where Americans live, learn, work, and play. Consider establishing the Parks and Recreation Department as the convener of related organizations in Lower Merion to engage in planning a common strategy for addressing this issue. This would include the School District, hospitals, Y’s, fitness clubs, health care providers and social service agencies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Electronic Media: Becoming the Preferred Means of Communication</strong> - Citizens want easy access to register for programs on line. People are hungry for information about parks and recreation opportunities.</td>
<td>Technology is increasingly important in helping people learn about parks and recreation. Use of the website and the Township newsletter</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Sense of Community: Ever More Important to the Citizens</strong> - People want to have a sense of community and be socially connected. Cultural diversity is increasing.</th>
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<tr>
<td>The parks and recreation programs provide a vehicle for establishing a sense of community in Lower Merion Township. Providing ways for citizens to come together on shared interests builds community. Involving people of various cultures, ethnicities, and economic levels in community parks and recreation planning will become increasingly important.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Traffic: A Concern</strong> - Lifestyle choice here is rooted in the automobile. Traffic and the number of vehicles are increasing. Parking in parks is a problem.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Continue implementation of the Township’s Bicycle Plan. Advancing Lower Merion’s efforts to become bicycle and pedestrian friendly are important. Working to attain designation, as a Bicycle Friendly Community and a Runner Friendly Community is a desirable goal.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Bicycling: Safe Places to Ride for Transportation and Recreation Needed</strong> – Bicycling emerged as a major interest of the citizens. They want to be able to cycle safely for recreation, transportation and fitness. Youth want to be able to ride their bikes to parks. Connections from neighborhoods to the regional trail system are highly desirable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Volunteerism in Conservation: On the Rise</strong> - People want to volunteer but don’t know how or where to go or who to contact to get involved. Although many don’t know what they could do as volunteers, they would like to serve. Organizations using volunteers report interest and growing participation but that efforts are fragmented and disorganized.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Explore the establishment of a volunteer program in the Parks and Recreation Department.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Community Recreation Conflicts: Active Recreation vs. Neighbors</strong> - Recreational facility use generates conflicts primarily regarding sports use between the community at large and the desire of adjoining residents.</td>
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<td>Careful consideration of such situations should continue with an eye toward creative solutions that achieve a balance of meeting community needs and the quality of life in neighborhoods.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Scheduled and Open Use Facilities: Facility time for Self-Directed Play Needed</strong> - Opportunities for unorganized activities are very limited due to highly scheduled facilities.</td>
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<td>Allocating time or specific facilities for citizen for games and sports on their own would help citizens to get outdoors to play.</td>
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<td><strong>Canine Park Use</strong> - Dogs in parks are controversial.</td>
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<td>Providing information about where dogs are allowed in parks will foster public understanding about canine use of parks. Lower Merion Township has made provisions for dogs in parks, convenient clean up for dog owners, and protection of park areas that are not appropriate for dogs such as sports fields.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Evolving Senior Population:</strong> more active, healthy, involved and interested. Independent and focused on leading active healthy lifestyles. People are retiring later.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Township is Built Out:</strong> Limited Space for Park Expansion. While the need for additional recreation facilities is apparent, land is very expensive and generally not available.</td>
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<td><strong>Tax Base:</strong> Decreasing. Key stakeholders expressed concern about the perception that parks and recreation may not be an essential service. This is especially distressing during the current economic downturn.</td>
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</table>
Lower Merion Township is a premier residential community. In a public opinion survey\(^1\), residents listed parks and open space as the best feature of Lower Merion Township along with location and schools.

The recommendations of this plan aim to continue the tradition of parks and recreation as vital to the quality of life including:

- Continued conservation of the community’s natural and scenic resources,
- More vibrant, interesting, and greener parks,
- Ways to expand facilities for sports and active healthy living,
- Enhanced recreation opportunities for people of all ages, especially adults and families, in the areas of nature, fitness and wellness, and the arts,
- Expansion of public recreation spaces and services in community hubs through community re-development,
- Streamlined park maintenance through the development of a formalized maintenance management system, and
- Strengthened support for operations through public and private funding, partnerships, and volunteerism.

Together, the strategies of this plan offer something for everyone. They will make even more use of the tremendous energy, creativity, and commitment that citizens already have for parks, recreation, and conservation by providing new channels for people to work together toward common goals. The Plan Advisory Committee and community organizations have already demonstrated their commitment to moving forward in parks and recreation by identifying key issues and generating solutions and future directions through constructive dialog during the planning process. This is a positive sign that the plan’s fundamental concepts have broad public support – for the community’s support and initiative, and that of Township leadership, are as vital for putting this plan into action. Working together, community organizations, citizens, and Township government will help to sustain and enhance Lower Merion’s wonderful parks and recreation system that has earned both love and investment from so many people.

This chapter presents a critical analysis of the parks and recreation system. It establishes core values, the vision, and the mission for the Township’s parks and recreation system. Five goals set forth the direction for the plan and provide a framework for achieving the vision of a premier parks and recreation system in Lower Merion Township. The goals detail specific objectives and actions for Lower Merion Township to undertake.

**PARKS AND RECREATION IN LOWER MERION TOWNSHIP**

Lower Merion Township has 701 acres of open space including 650 acres of parkland in 47 parks ranging from less than a quarter acre to over 100 acres. The citizens can experience a variety of activities in the parks ranging from the peaceful quiet of enjoying nature to the excitement of playing sports or learning a new skill. The recently renovated Belmont Pool captured the “Best of Philly” award. The Ardmore Community Pool is so beloved that it is hard to get a spot there on a beautiful summer day. More than 11,000 participants play in the community sport leagues. About 350 people turned out to volunteer a day of their time to plant trees along the Cynwyd Trail. Nine out of ten respondents to the direct mail public

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opinion survey reported that they use Township parks. Favorite activities are walking, playing in the parks, enjoying nature, cycling, and fitness. They would like to have more programs for families and adults. Most of all, they want to know more about recreation facilities, parks, trails, and programs. Access to timely information will be an important way to expand recreational opportunities for the residents. More than 50 organizations in this community voiced a common theme: their love of community and willingness to work in partnership to make it even better.

Based upon input from the citizens and community organizations, research and extensive field work conducted for this plan, five themes emerged for Lower Merion Township to address over the next ten years: parks and recreation facilities, natural resource conservation, community hubs, programs and services and supporting parks and recreation. By addressing these areas, the Township will advance the goal of achieving a premier parks and recreation system.

Parks and Recreation Facilities
The parks are treasured and heavily used. However, they are somewhat tired and need to be refreshed with amenities. The citizens want such things as more places to sit and socialize, facilities for people of all ages, more pathways for safe walking and cycling, dynamic playgrounds, and areas to enjoy nature.

There are not enough sports fields. The existing ones are worn out and overused. A reconfiguration of the ball fields could help. Continued collaboration with the Lower Merion School District will provide joint benefits and support. Potential development near the Schuylkill River could potentially add space for more facilities that could include field lighting because of the remote location away from residences.

Focusing on natural resource management in the parks will be important over the next ten years. Adding more street trees, perennials & grasses for color, and trees for shade will help to attract more people outside for activity, socialization, and respite. Raising the bar on design in the parks is essential. Just as the Township did for Belmont Hills, the Ardmore Pool, and Linwood Park, focusing on great design in tandem with community involvement is a winning combination that will benefit citizens now and into the future.

Environment
Since the 1996 Park & Recreation Plan, the conservation of Lower Merion Township’s natural resources has emerged as a major community focus. Citizens and community groups are actively involved in projects such as tree planting, streambank stabilization, and beautification. Organizations are offering training opportunities designed to increase the expertise of volunteers in conservation. Natural resources, the scenic beauty of the community, and the outstanding tree canopy of Lower Merion Township are extremely important to the citizens. Working partnerships between the Township and conservation organizations such as Riverbend Environmental Center and the Lower Merion Conservancy are vital. New groups such as the Park Friends umbrella organization are forming with a strong focus on environment. Citizens want more access to natural areas. Providing convenient ways for citizen to get into public places to experience nature can include trail maps, signage, benches for waiting and resting, loop trails for hiking and walking, and parking. By helping people to enjoy nature, the Township will inspire future generations of park stewards.

Parks offer opportunities to solve environmental problems such as flooding, erosion, and deteriorating stream corridors through design and maintenance practices that emphasize environmentally sensitive solutions. Rain gardens can help with storm water management. Riparian buffer plantings along streams will stabilize streambanks and filter pollutants.

Community Hubs
Lower Merion is a large township that consists of multiple communities and neighborhoods, each of which has its own strong identity. The most intensely developed of these areas are those that typically formed around
the original Pennsylvania Railroad station stops and include Bryn Mawr, Ardmore, Bala Cynwyd and the City Avenue District. The Township has undertaken separate master planning efforts focused on revitalization and enhancement of these areas. The planning efforts provide detailed recommendations focused on strategic recommendations for targeted investment and physical improvements. The result will be the introduction of new residents in Lower Merion Township in environments focused heavily on the walkable and transit-oriented lifestyle. Parks and recreation needs of the future residents as well as those already living within the transit-oriented hubs of the Township will, like all Township residents, have the ability to use recreation facilities of varying types located throughout the Township. Residents in these areas, however, will also by the very nature of their “metro-lifestyle” look to fulfill their recreational needs in places that are walkable and in close proximity to their residences. As already found in residential preferences in these hubs, the residents most likely will not want to drive to enjoy parks and recreational opportunities and in some case, car ownership may be much lower for this population. This is important to consider, since the argument could be made that the housing types proposed represent opportunities for younger professionals, possibly those that grew up in the Township and want to live in the Township, yet cannot afford a single-family home. The opportunities extend to empty nesters anxious to enjoy an active lifestyle without all the work or expense required by larger single-family homes. It is important that the Parks and Recreation Plan Update acknowledge the potential spaces and to present that these spaces could be programmed for uses which best serve neighborhood and some case broader Township needs. 

Programs and Services
Since 1996, organized recreation programs in Lower Merion Township have increased fourfold. Over 53,000 participants attended programs, visited Township pools, and enjoyed the Ardmore Avenue Community Center in 2010. Participation has been steadily increasing over the last 15 years. Program participants consistently rate the programs as good to excellent. The Parks and Recreation Department’s three-pronged approach to public recreation opportunities includes:

- Providing organized scheduled programs, events, and activities;
- Facilitating programs and activities sponsored by other community organizations such as the 16 community sports leagues, 17 civic associations, and other volunteers; and
- Encouraging self directed recreation opportunities by providing information and facilities that are safe, clean and ready to use. Such activities include walking, bicycling, taking the family pet to dog friendly areas, pick-up games, socializing in the playgrounds, river based recreation for fishing and boating, and many other activities.

Services are evolving in recognition of fiscal challenges. The Township has established a policy of recovering the cost of recreation programs through user fees and charges, which is supported by the public. The Township initiated a fee for the Summer Playground Program. The Department has established partnerships with commercial and non-profit providers to offer public recreation programs. This has enabled the Township to avoid staff and facility costs while still offering a broad range of community recreation activities.

The future direction of recreation will be continued service to youth with more service for families and adults in the areas of nature, fitness, and wellness. Active healthy living in a green and sustainable environment will be a guidepost. Establishing the Parks & Recreation Department as the “go to” source of information about parks, recreation facilities, programs, and self-directed opportunities will become more important. Providing strong customer service focus is key. Offering convenient ways and friendly customer service to meet and exceed citizen expectations will be the path to garnering public support that is vital to the fu-
ture of parks and recreation in Lower Merion Township.

**Supporting and Sustaining Parks and Recreation**

Lower Merion Township has demonstrated a strong commitment to its parks and recreation system. In the last 15 years, the Township has invested $10.4 million in capital improvements from grants from many sources in addition to township funding including Montgomery County Open Space program, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, TreeVitalize and the Keystone Community Partnership Program of the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. The Township appropriates four to five percent of its operating budget to Parks and Recreation annually. While the investment of $51 per capita annually in parks and recreation operations is more than Pennsylvania’s statewide average of $30, it is less than the national average of $65. The positive ratings by the public on the high quality of maintenance, beautiful appearance of the parks, and clean and attractive facilities attest to the Department’s diligence and commitment to park maintenance. The Township invests significantly in park maintenance and implemented the recommendation from the 1996 Parks and Recreation Plan to unify parks and recreation. Due to the size of the park system, the extensive recreation facilities and natural resources, park maintenance has been operating primarily in response to immediate needs and issues and less so within a framework of a planned written maintenance management system. The pressure and real-time demands on the park maintenance division for service has not enabled management to take the time to develop a formal maintenance management system. Having a maintenance management program in place will be vital to the sustainability of the parks and recreation system in the future including resource protection, responsible public use, and financial support. In the lifetime cost of a park, three out of every four dollars are spent on maintenance and operations. Just as the Township overall operates with fewer staff, so does Park Maintenance. Three positions are currently unfilled. The present level of work exceeds the current capacity of the staff. Past practices of adding capital improvements and features with complex mechanics need to evolve to include discussions about how those facilities will be supported in the future in terms of staff and budget. Every park plan and capital improvement project should outline a maintenance and financial plan for long-term support. Park maintenance management plays a central role in determining how to continue to keep up the parks efficiently through such alternative means as public/private partnerships, contracting out specialized maintenance functions, and even exploring a new approach to volunteerism as an organized program.

**With a goal of having a park friends group for every park.** In order to attain this goal of maximizing volunteer involvement, it is important to recognize that volunteers are not “free”. They come with a cost. Volunteers must be recruited, trained, monitored, supervised, and recognized. Volunteers generate many telephone calls; requests for services, materials, equipment and supplies; staff support and assistance; need for coordination; and problems that require resolution. Volunteers have a level of expectation that Township staff will provide what they need when they need it. Ideally volunteer efforts should create less, not more, work for the Township. However, they do need a basic level of support in order to make their efforts worthwhile and productive. The Township needs a volunteer coordinator to manage the large cadre of volunteers and meet the Township’s goal of expanded community volunteerism.

**Core Values, Vision, Mission and Goals**

The core values, vision, mission and goals serve as the foundation for planning, decision-making, and the allocation of resources in the future.

**Core Values**

As the qualities prized by the community of Lower Merion, the core values are embodied in the mission, vision, and recommendations for parks and recreation. All policies and actions should be rooted in the core values.

- **Community Enrichment** – Enrich lives through recreation.
- **Leadership** – Provide a central unifying force in the community to assemble partners in the public and private sectors working to serve the public; conserve natural resources; and establish a premier parks and recreation system.
- Fun – Deliver fun to customers.
- Exceptional Customer Service – Provide service to our residents that are convenient, stress reducing, time-sensitive, responsive to their needs, and friendly.
- Health and Wellness – Promote healthy lifestyle opportunities.
- Quality – Strive for quality in all aspects of parks and recreation.
- Diversity – Model diversity in vendors, employees, and customers.
- Safety – Ensure safe and secure environments.
- Accessibility – Provide accessible and affordable options and a variety of offerings.
- Stewardship – Preserve and conserve cultural, natural, and historical resources.
- Building a Legacy – Create a vision for the future while sustaining the park system.
- Community Identity – Strengthen the sense of community here through parks and recreation in supporting Lower Merion Township as a special place in which to live.

**Goals**

The goals are based upon the community values, vision, mission, and themes that emerged in the planning process.

**Goal 1:** Enrich parks and recreation facilities as community destinations where residents can have fun, experience nature, socialize, and exercise.

**Goal 2:** Conserve our natural resources by using best management practices in the parks for conservation, public education, and partnerships.

**Goal 3:** Ensure that a wide variety of recreation opportunities is available to people of all ages and interests in the community.

**Goal 4:** Work in collaboration with Township planners on the redevelopment of the villages regarding parks and recreation to ensure that public recreation facilities, opportunities, and partnerships in management are incorporated into the improvements.

**Goal 5:** Provide operational excellence and financial sustainability that will garner widespread public support for parks and recreation.

**Objective 1**

Increase the number and quality of sports fields.

**Recommendations**

1. Reconfigure the sports fields as follows:
   - Bala Cynwyd Park – Convert a 90’ ballfield to a 60’ ball field.
   - Gladwyne Park – Re-establish a 60’ ballfield in a preferred orientation.
   - General Wayne Park – Eliminate the 60’ ballfield and re-establish a 75’ or 90’ ballfield.
   - Penn Wynne Park – Develop two 60’ ballfields. Complete a master plan for the park to define ballfield and other facilities locations.
   - Polo Field – Establish one 90’ ballfield and two 60’ ballfields. Complete a master plan for the park to define ballfield and other facilities locations.
   - South Ardmore Park – Convert a 60’ ballfield to a 90’ ballfield and re-establish a 60’ ballfield to eliminate overlapping outfields with other facilities.
   - Vernon Young Memorial Park – Convert a 90’ ballfield to a 60’ ballfield to eliminate overlapping outfields.
   - Maximize the size and number of multipurpose fields at existing parks to eliminate multipurpose fields overlapping ballfield infield areas.

*Goal 1: Enrich parks and recreation facilities as community destinations where residents can have fun, experience nature, socialize, and exercise.*
Objective 2
Continue to work with Lower Merion School District on joint planning, development, use and maintenance of ballfields and game courts.

Recommendations
1. Work with the Lower Merion School District in partnership in improvement of use Polo Field.
   - Develop a park master plan for Polo Field. Investment in this park has been inhibited due to lack of control and ownership. Understandably, the Township is reluctant to invest in a property without clear ownership and control.
   - Consider the potential of developing this site as a sports complex with a synthetic turf field and lighting. Additional synthetic (multipurpose and ballfields) fields should be maximized on the site as possible with consideration of parking needs and areas for support facilities. The facilities would serve the School District, the Lower Merion Township Parks and Recreation Department, and community sports leagues.
   - Plan the park to serve as a community park to serve the public well beyond the organized sports. The addition of trails, sitting areas, play equipment and landscaping would entice people to use this park for a variety of active outdoor recreational activities.

Objective 3
Work with developers on potential location of additional recreation facilities near the Schuylkill River

Recommendations
1. Continue to discuss opportunities for riverfront recreation with private sector enterprises.
2. Strive to obtain land for additional general recreation, sports fields, paths, and amenities that enable citizens to use the riverfront to recreation. Explore the potential to locate synthetic turf fields with field lighting here.
3. Evaluate the potential to add an indoor year round recreation facility along the riverfront.
4. Strive to obtain linkages for walking and bicycling trails in conjunction with any riverfront development.

Objective 4
Explore the potential of Flat Rock Park as a crown jewel in the Lower Merion Township parks and recreation system.

Recommendations
1. Develop a Friends of Flat Rock Park group.
2. Create a specific park management plan for Flat Rock Park that includes programs, events, maintenance, an on-site presence during peak hours, and educational programs to teach residents how to engage in water based recreation activities.
3. Consider this as a chief park site that could host river related recreation programs and events.
4. Address the control of geese in this park.

Objective 5
Develop a playground planning and improvement program.

Recommendations
1. Plan playground improvements that are unique to Lower Merion Township, themed for different locations.
2. Develop a natural area. Consider Penn Wynne Park as a potential location for the playground and tie the natural theme to the wooded portion of the park and the small stream that traverses the site. Another potential location is Wynnewood Valley Park.
3. Replace or revitalize playgrounds every 15 years or sooner in compliance with evolving safety, accessibility and technology guidelines or requirements. U.S. Product Safety Commission, the American Society of Testing Materials, and the U.S. Justice Department continuously update their guidelines and standards. Keeping pace with these changes will enable Lower Merion Township to provide for the health safety and welfare of the residents through excellent public service, maintain appropriate standards of safety and accessibility, and reduce the municipality’s exposure to liability.

Objective 6
Ensure that all parks include an environmental component as part of the park, design, operation, and programming.

Recommendations
1. Penn Wynne Park – Develop a nature trail to explore the full extent of the park site. Enhance the
riparian buffer along the small stream by removing invasive species and introducing native riparian buffer plantings. Consider planting meadow grasses outside of recreation use areas to expand the riparian buffer to filter pollutants and minimize mowing. Consider establishing a small native plant nursery on the south side of the stream for municipal purposes.

2. **Polo Field** – Plant deciduous trees throughout the park to provide shade and create a sense of enclosure. Introduce shade trees in parking areas to minimize heat island effect and near spectator areas to create comfortable areas for viewing activities.

3. **Richie Ashburn Ballfield** – Enhance the streambanks south of the ballfield by removing invasive species and introducing native vegetation as a riparian buffer along the stream. Install a pedestrian bridge to link to the adjacent Kenealy Nature Park.

4. **South Ardmore Park** – Introduce rain gardens to infiltrate stormwater runoff from courts and impervious surfaces. Add trees in non-programmed areas of the park for shade and to create intimate areas for informal enjoyment of the park.

5. **Vernon Young Park** – Introduce rain gardens to infiltrate stormwater runoff from courts and impervious surface areas. Plant deciduous trees near the playground and Ardmore Community Center and street trees along the park’s frontage for shade and to create a sense of place. Communicate with PALM to explore opportunities for introducing raised-bed gardens in the park that could be planted and tended by the Seniors of PALM.

6. **Bala Cynwyd Park** – Remove invasive species along the Cynwyd Heritage Trail corridor and add native plantings.

7. **Gladwyne Park** – Plant deciduous trees for shade.

8. **General Wayne Park** – Establish rain gardens to infiltrate stormwater runoff from courts. Plant deciduous trees to create a picnic grove and enhance the riparian corridor with native plantings.

9. **McMoran /Lewis J. Smith Parks** – Plant deciduous trees to provide shade and create a sense of place. Remove any invasive species found in the wooded area and reforest as necessary.

10. **Sharpe Park** – Continue to work with the Friends of Sharpe Park in their efforts to create environmentally sound improvements and programs here.

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**Objective 7**

Evaluate, design and upgrade parks with consideration of safety and security of users.

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**Replacements**

1. Follow the principles of CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) including the following recommendations. Work with Township police on this effort.

2. Maintain clear sight lines into the parks from public streets and sidewalks. Avoid locating facilities in isolated areas to promote safe recreation environments.

3. Locate recreation facilities for safety. Provide safety zones, separation and physical barriers between parking and roadways, and avoid conflicts between park users and pedestrians and vehicles.

4. Provide physical barriers between adjacent roadways and parking areas.

5. Limit vehicle penetration into park sites, as possible to avoid pedestrian/vehicle conflicts and safety issues.

6. Provide trails of adequate width for the intended users.

7. Provide adequate safety zones surrounding ball fields. Do not locate trails, playgrounds, and other facilities in foul ball zones of the softball and baseball fields. Separate spectator seating from ball fields with fencing.

8. Continue to work towards meeting Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) Guidelines for Public Playground Safety in all playgrounds. Provide play equipment that meets the safety and age-segregation criteria. Develop play areas with safety surfaces that is contained in edging to ensure the proper depth of safety surface material is maintained. Maintain a phased implementation schedule for bringing all play areas into compliance with the CPSC.

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**Objective 8**

Provide accessible trails, viewing areas, and other accommodations to meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

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**Replacements**

1. Develop trails within all parks to provide accessible routes from parking areas and sidewalks to recreation and support facilities.

2. Provide stabilized handicapped parking spaces in each parking area.

3. Provide accessible viewing areas adjacent to activity areas that are connected to an accessible route. Ballfields must have accessible viewing areas.

4. Consider the needs of the athlete with disabilities. Provide clear openings at gates and along fence lines. Provide other accommodations to enable use of recreation facilities by persons with disabilities.

5. Develop playgrounds with play
equipment that offers play options for children who are physically challenged.

6. Offer site amenities that accommodate persons with disabilities. Provide picnic tables that area ADA compliant. Develop benches along trails with a stabilized space for wheelchair adjacent to the bench. Offer ADA compliant drinking fountains.

**Objective 9**

Design, plan and implement a Township-wide signage system for parks and recreation facilities.

**Recommendations**

1. Build upon the Township’s signage system to establish a readily identifiable signage system for way finding, park and facility name, directions, rules and regulations, interpretation, and information.
2. Create a uniform signage system for all park signs that conveys the image of a premier public park system.
3. Use the design and standards of the Lower Merion Township way finding system as the basis for the park and recreation facility signage system.
4. Maintain uniform size, color, layout, materials, and graphic image. The signage system should include signs for the park name, facility names, directions, field names or numbers, regulations, information, and interpretation.

**Objective 10**

Continue to work on improvements to public restrooms.

**Recommendations**

1. Establish policies for review, design, development, and management of facilities.
2. Prioritize conservation of the natural environment in the design process. Consider the designs for Belmont Hills Swimming Pool and Linwood Park as models for guidelines.
3. Strive to undertake improvements to the parks that are holistic and not piecemeal in order to provide a sense of presence and accomplishment in the public view.
4. Provide support and accessory facilities that create premier recreation facilities such as dugouts; picnic areas designed as a unit with grills, picnic tables, horseshoe pits, shaded areas, and water; restrooms in high use parks; and benches at game courts.
5. Enhance parks with landscaping for color and interest and trees for shade.
6. Plan for long term maintenance as part of the design process. Consider the value of high technology in improvements vs. the long-term maintenance costs required to support the technological features. This includes items such as lighting, sinks for hand washing, toilets and so on. Involve the Park Superintendent in the planning and design process.
7. Coordinate facility planning with other Township departments such as Building and Planning for projects to be the responsibility of the Parks and Recreation Department.

**Objective 13**

Improve and expand indoor recreation facilities.

**Recommendations**

1. Develop a plan to improve the Bala gym.
Objective 14  
Continue to monitor large parcels of land for potential changes in use that could present opportunities to add more public parkland.

Recommendations  
1. Conduct a feasibility study for PALM and the Ardmore Community Center together.  
2. Monitor St. Charles Borromeo Seminary for opportunities to work with the Archdiocese of Philadelphia on the future of the property for recreational use.  
3. Work with developers along the riverfront and in community redevelopment projects to secure public recreational space and facilities.

Goal 2: Conserve our natural resources by using best management practices in the parks for conservation, public education and partnerships.

Objective 1  
Develop convenient access areas for passive parks.

Recommendations  
1. Create trail heads for:  
   a. Kenealy Nature Park,  
   b. Henry Lane Park, and  
   c. Mill Creek Valley Park  
2. Select a location with high public visibility from the road.  
3. Provide a small stabilized parking area; benches; information kiosk with trail maps and park information, and trail signs for each trail head.  
4. Add benches or a few scattered picnic tables in larger parks to accommodate visitors who are meeting to enjoy the park trails together.  
5. Consider composting toilets, bike racks, a small pavilion, and interpretative signs in selected appropriate locations.  
6. Continue to work with the Bridlewild Trail Association to maintain trail easements across private property. The Association maintains miles of trails in the community that are available for pedestrian and equestrian use.  
7. Seek additional access easements from residential areas to passive park sites to create safe pedestrian linkages. This would be with willing landowners.

Objective 2  
Increase public awareness about how to access and use passive parks.

Recommendations  
1. Provide information about the passive parks on the Lower Merion Township website. Identify the roads where parking areas for access are located. Develop trail maps that can be downloaded for use exploring trails on the properties.

Objective 3  
Establish a philosophy of environmental sustainability in the parks.

Recommendations  
1. Design parks to be sustainable (minimal site disturbance, consider orientation for solar and prevailing wind, reuse previously disturbed areas).  
2. Incorporate green infrastructure (stormwater infiltration, solar power, geo-thermal heating/cooling).  
3. Incorporate green facilities (composting restrooms, porous pavements).  
4. Use sustainable materials (recycled materials, natural stone, wood grown in sustainable managed forests).  
5. Consider long-term maintenance requirements (no-mow/low-mow areas, native plants, metal roofs for buildings).  
6. Consider life-cycle costs (roof replacement, playground equipment replacement, trail repaving).  
7. Incorporate landscapes for learning (interpretative signs, demonstration projects, habitat areas).
Objective 4
Improve Lower Merion Township’s parks for environmental sustainability.

Recommendations
1. Rolling Hill Park – Eradicate invasive species and monitor areas to deter re-establishment. Close trails that are unnecessary and are located on steep slopes.
2. Kenealy Nature Park – Stabilize the streambank and provide a connection to Richie Ashburn Field. Remove invasive species and plant native vegetation to expand the wood cover.
3. Henry Lane Park – Introduce native vegetation as edge planting to expand the wood cover.
4. Shortridge Park – Stabilize stream and add riparian buffer planting on full length of stream in the park. Consider adding wildflower meadow planting along wooded edge of park to minimize maintenance. Add habitat area.
5. Sharpe Park – Stabilize steep slopes with native vegetation to address stormwater runoff eroding the pathways.

Objective 5
Address environmental issues on Lower Merion Township’s parks.

Recommendations
1. Manage stormwater and enhance water quality through infiltration of runoff. Utilize BMP’s (Best Management Practices) such as broad grass swales, porous pavement surfaces, and rain gardens to promote infiltration of stormwater runoff that will minimize erosion and filter pollutants.
2. Continue to stabilize streambanks:
   - Remainder of Shortridge Park,
   - West Mill Creek Park,
   - Wynnewood Valley Park,
   - Penn Wynne Park,
   - Harriton Park,
   - Merion Botanical Park,
   - Eco-Valley Nature Park, and
   - Flat Rock Park.
3. Develop and implement a plan to remove invasive species from the parks.
   - Work with the Lower Merion Conservancy and volunteers to eradicate invasive species, as possible, in the parks and monitor the parks for new outbreaks.
4. Develop and implement a plan to stem the loss of the tree canopy in Lower Merion Township.
5. Promote and participate in Tree-Vitalize.
   - Provide information about this important program to residents through the Township website.
   - Continue to plant trees throughout the community, especially in the parks.

Ecological Benefits of Riparian Buffers
- Stabilize Stream Banks – Deep-rooted vegetation binds the soil along stream banks, stabilizing the banks and preventing erosion during periods of high runoff.
- Improve Water Quality – Vegetation along streams traps and treats sediment, nutrients, and pollutants before they enter the stream or groundwater.
- Enhance Wildlife Habitats – Trees, shrubs, and grasses along streams provide habitat, shelter, and travel corridors for many aquatic and land species.
- Reduce Flooding and Sedimentation – Vegetation retains stormwater runoff longer, improves infiltration, and filters sediment from flowing downstream during floods.
- Keep Streams Cooler and Healthier – Shade from riparian buffers cools the stream waters, increasing the food, oxygen, and habitat for aquatic life.
- Enhance Scenery – Vegetation along streams adds beauty and diversity to the landscape.
Objective 6
Develop strategies for solving Township environmental problems through solutions in the parks.

Recommendations
1. Develop a strategic plan for stormwater management and streambank stabilization in the parks in collaboration with the Public Works Department. The aim of this project is to demonstrate opportunities to implement green infrastructure practices in publicly owned large pervious areas. Further, the work of this project will help develop a site evaluation process that can be used by Lower Merion Township to inform landowners Township-wide about green infrastructure design strategies and benefits. This should benefit the Township in numerous ways including park improvements, providing solutions for erosion and flooding, and in the MS4 Plan requirements. The plan could include illustrative concept level BMP plans, narrative describing environmental site design compared to conventional design, stormwater capture calculations, and cost comparisons.
2. Use a civil engineering firm that has expertise and experience in sustainability in parks and an understanding of natural conditions. Their work should be guided by the principle of designing with nature to create places that are beautiful and healthy for people to live in, work in, and enjoy.

Goal 3: Collaborate with Township planners on the redevelopment of the villages and on land development applications throughout the Township to ensure that public recreation facilities, opportunities and partnerships in recreation facilities, programs and management are incorporated into the improvements.

Objective 1
Incorporate parks and recreation planning into the Ardmore Redevelopment Area.

Recommendations
1. Undertake a combined park master plan and community center feasibility study that includes both PALM and the Ardmore Avenue Community Center. These studies should only be performed together and not as separate activities since the future success of this park and the community centers is tied closely to interrelated relationships between indoor and outdoor facilities.
2. Explore opportunities to combine facilities for the PALM Senior Facility and the Ardmore Avenue Community Center into a single facility. Since the times of operations for these facilities barely overlap it would appear that each user group could benefit from joining forces.
3. Consider the two residential properties located adjacent to the Ardmore Avenue Community Center for acquisition. These lots could accommodate the equivalent of the current Ardmore Avenue Community Center building, gym and swimming pool.
4. Consider the edge treatments and access points into the park in order to better engage the design of the park with its surrounding context. The parks should feel like a community green or a town square and not a utilitarian athletic complex that had no relationship with the surrounding neighborhood from a visual, architectural, or circulation perspective.

Objective 2
Incorporate parks and recreation planning into the Bala Avenue Master Plan (2000) and Bala Cynwyd Retail Strategy (2006) implementation.

Recommendations
1. Develop a site-specific master plan that includes the Bala Gym and Bala Playground sites. The project should consist of both a site master plan and indoor gym/community recreation center
feasibility study. These studies should only be performed together and not as separate activities since the future success of this park is tied closely to inter-related relationships between indoor and outdoor facilities.

2. Explore opportunities to redevelop the Bala Gym site with ground floor commercial (at the Bala Avenue street-level) with potentially recreation facilities located on an upper floor that takes advantage of the rise in elevation of Union Avenue and be consistent with the Bala Avenue planning documents. The potential to develop new, high quality facility through a public-private partnership would be in keeping with the Township’s philosophy of generating alternative revenue sources to support recreation facilities and services.

3. Consider the entire Bala Avenue frontage of both the Bala Gym and Bala Playground sites. This would ensure that a visually cohesive streetscape is provided. It would compliment the both the commercial activities located in the adjacent blocks and the predominately residential dwellings located across Bala Avenue.

Objective 3
Incorporate parks and recreation planning into the Bryn Mawr Master Plan.

Recommendations
1. Develop procedures to afford the Township’s parks and recreation staff the opportunity to review and provide input into how proposed public spaces could be programmed and comment on how designs could best serve community needs should be included in the planning commission review of any proposed land development plan for this area.

2. Incorporate a review and negotiation for site maintenance by the private sector partner, not the Township.

Objective 4
Incorporate parks and recreation planning into planning for the City Avenue District.

Recommendations
1. Consider legal provisions to be placed on the developments through covenants that ensure a maximum level of public accessibility to privately constructed public spaces if they are to remain privately owned. This effort should also include determining boundaries for rules of conduct imposed by private owners, so they are not simply imposing rules by their own will.

2. Consider procedures that allow for the transfer of privately created public spaces to the Township, should it be desirable for the public good.

3. Establish procedures to provide the Township’s parks and recreation staff with the opportunity to review and provide input into how proposed public spaces could be programmed and designed to best serve the community needs.

4. Negotiate guarantees for a specific level of maintenance to ensure that public spaces are maintained to a high level by the private partner.

5. Make provisions for Township review of any future modifications to approved public space design plans to ensure that originally approved conditions are continuously met or only modified based on sound planning decisions, and not at the sole discretion of the private landowners.

Objective 5
Ensure the effective implementation of the recreation provision in §135-50.1 of the Subdivision and Land Development Code of Lower Merion Township in order to establish and maintain meaningful recreation facilities.

Recommendations
1. Work with developers to create useful, active on-site recreational facilities as part of their developments. In cases where adequate land is not available on-site to meet recreation requirements, work with developers to create active off-site recreational facilities in adjacent parks and trails, in neighborhood parks accessible to the development by walking or biking or within Township-oriented parks accessible to the development via the planned Township-wide Bicycle and Pedestrian network.

2. Provide facilities that accommodate the particular needs of the anticipated residents of the proposed development such as families with young children, individuals with disabilities, and seniors.

3. Enhance the ability to access the Township’s open space network by creating linked bicycle/pedestrian pathways or trails, in addition to the required sidewalks, where possible.
Goal 4: Engage the citizens in recreation to enrich their lives.

Objective 1
Develop a program management plan.

Recommendations
1. Establish a three-year program management plan. This plan would be similar to a park master plan and enable the Department to take a step back from pressing day-to-day responsibilities in order to examine and plan for programs in a systematic fashion and with respect to the implementation of the Park and Recreation Plan Update. The program management plan should include a mix of programs and self-directed recreation opportunities. For the organized programs, set goals for desired outcomes for the participants as well as the number and types of programs to be offered. Prepare a Township revenue policy with guidelines for fees and charges that are reasonable and attainable. Take into consideration the program type, facilities, and staff resources. Continue the goal of cost recovery based upon this policy. Typically such a goal reflects the percentage of the operating budget that is supported with non-tax dollars generated through fees and charges, donations, and other means.
   - Focus on effective customer service meeting the needs and lifestyle of the citizens of Lower Merion rather than on a “cafeteria-style” menu of programs.
   - Determine goals and parameters for contracting with commercial recreation providers for public recreation programs.
   - Adopt a formula of 50 percent repeat programs, 30 percent seasonal programs and 20 percent new programs annually.
2. Broaden the perspective on service delivery from organized scheduled programs to providing opportunities for self-directed recreation. This will enable the community to expand recreation opportunities without increasing demands on staff time.
3. Determine how to rejuvenate the Summer Playground Program. Involve the participants and playground staff in the process. Ensure that this process is rooted in positive and open discussion about possibilities to promote change and new ideas. Explore and try out new ideas - exploration will result in success and failure. which will contribute, to generating important new ways of sustaining and enriching this important community service.
4. Include the role of “information broker” in which the recreation staff presents ideas for how people can spend their leisure time on their own. This could be a feature on the Recreation Department’s website, in the Lower Merion Recreation Brochure and in brochures for “cross-marketing.”
5. Work on developing services for an active aging population. The traditional model of a Senior Citizens Center is likely to change radically over the next decade as Baby Boomers retire and expect to spend their time engaged in interesting, educational and active experiences to fulfill their interests.
6. Continue to use four programming seasons annually and promote them via the Internet and social media.

Objective 2
Focus on convenience and customer service as a way to make participation in community recreation opportunities an enjoyable, stress-free experience.

Recommendations
1. Develop and implement a credit card payment system. Offering this method of payment will increase participation in programs.
2. Develop and implement on-line program registration.
3. Hold focus groups and conduct interviews with participants and non-participants to determine how to enhance their experience in Township recreation programs.
4. Consider the need to provide Spanish-speaking support through staff, materials, and other means as the community diversifies. Focus on neighborhoods where this is most important including Ardmore, Bryn Mawr, Bala and Cynwyd. Work with the Lower Merion School District to determine needs and methods to undertake this effort.
5. Work towards creating “customers for life” by engaging people in community recreation throughout their lifetime and on an expanded basis when they retire.

Objective 3
Develop and implement an advertising program to enhance and increase community awareness about parks and recreation.

Recommendations
1. Increase outreach and awareness about community recreation opportunities. The public opinion survey found that lack of awareness was the chief block to participation in community recreation programs and advertising received the lowest rating for parks and recreation program features.
2. Continue to use the website and Recreation Brochure as ways to
increase program awareness as citizens identified that these are the most preferred ways for them to get information.

- Explore how to enhance the website to make it more fun and interesting as a way to engage people. Consider the use of photographs to illustrate the recreation opportunities and the joy people have in participating in them.

- Consider how to modify the Recreation Brochure to pique the reader's interest in recreation and drive them to the website to get detailed information on programs and opportunities. Strive to create the understanding among the citizens that the website is the "go to" place for information about facilities, programs and recreation opportunities.

- Begin to focus on social media to reach citizens who are increasingly using social media as their principle form of communication and getting information.

3. Create a customer database. Information about customers is informal and general now. Develop information about customer preferences, interests, and demographic characteristics. Knowing who the customers are and their characteristics is essential to expand and position services effectively. This can be done through registration, program evaluations, focus groups, and intercept surveys in the parks, special events or programs.

4. Strive to make direct contacts with the best customers of the Recreation Department throughout the year. Set a goal of 12 direct contacts annually with the Department’s "best customers". This is the method by which the Township will expand services to a larger group of citizens.

Objective 4
Develop and implement a marketing strategy for parks and recreation

Recommendations
1. Recognize that needs assessment is ongoing. It need not be expensive or complex. Obtain public input from a variety of means including:
   - A community-wide needs survey every three years. Build upon the recent community survey conducted for this. Use this plan as the basis for the next survey.
   - Letters and telephone calls from residents. Suggestion boxes. The website for parks and recreation.
   - Focus groups. Community boards and organizations including the sports groups, environmental associations, service organizations, people with special needs, and others.
   - Periodic interviews in parks with park visitors in each season.
2. Continue to participate in community advisory groups and organizations as a liaison to parks and recreation. This has worked well with trails and regional trail planning efforts.
3. 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. Target both leaders and participants for the evaluations. Ask for testimonials and permission to use the testimonials in advertising. Include evaluations during programs for mid-course improvements and upon completion.

Objective 5
Build upon community nature based recreation opportunities.

Recommendations
1. Focus on creating self-directed nature based recreation experiences in the community. Continue to work with Riverbend and the Lower Merion Conservancy to plan and offer nature-based programs collaboratively. Use community volunteers to expand program offerings and activities to foster increased appreciation and understanding of the environment.
2. Promote recreational experiences that people can enjoy at their own discretion for relaxation, nature study, photography, and bird and wildlife watching year round.
3. Encourage group use of environmental areas of the parks. Work with groups such as scouts, school groups, day care centers, senior centers, and other community organizations to conduct their own self-directed programs and experiences.
4. Plan for nature and environmental education as a program area. Start with existing programs such as the summer playground programs and camps. Add a nature activity each week into each of these programs in order to fos-
Objective 6

Continue to provide and promote recreation opportunities aimed at improving lifelong fitness and wellness.

Recommendations

1. Adopt a multi-faceted approach that includes facilities, services, promotion, and partnerships.
2. Promote and advertise facilities such as pathways, year-round recreation, and scenic natural areas to entice people to participate.
3. Promote the need for an active lifestyle, its role in disease prevention, and how Parks and Recreation can help citizens to engage in regular physical activity for health and enjoyment.

Objective 7

Take a leadership role in providing a forum for collaboration among community sports organizations.

Recommendations

1. Hold an annual forum or semi-annual meetings for community sports organizations. Invite all organizations to the forums to discuss topics of common interest such as fields, scheduling, permitting, common issues and opportunities, potential areas of collaboration, and other topics that may emerge. Determine an action plan to foster future collaborative efforts.
2. Work with the sports organizations to set standards for community sports. The purpose of these standards is to provide a framework by which youth sports programs are designed and executed. Consider using a national system, such as the National Alliance for Youth Sports, as a model. Involve the sports organization in the development and implementation of this standard for Lower Merion Township.
3. Continue to help facilitate community recreation services by other providers.

Recommendations

1. Supporting community recreation efforts such league sports and community special events offered by other groups requires dedicated staff time of the Parks and Recreation Department. Assess the availability of staff time and the estimated time requirements of a proposed project or program when a community organization needs assistance and use that information to determine if the Township has the capacity to support that effort. Determine the present workload in serving community organizations and assess the potential to modify services so that the Department can prioritize staff time and resources.
2. Monitor and evaluate public/private partnerships with commercial recreation providers in offering public recreation opportunities. This provides an important public service as well as operates as a feeder program to strengthen local recreation type businesses. The important thing to do is to make sure that the level of service and staff time accomplishing this supports departmental goals.
3. Continue to provide support and advertisement in the Recreation Brochure for community groups with their contact numbers.
4. Monitor trends to determine how services can be enhanced or rejuvenated.

Goal 5: Provide operational excellence and financial stability that will garner widespread public support for parks and recreation.

Objective 1

Develop a written formalized maintenance management system.

Recommendations

1. Develop quality standards for the parks and recreation facilities.
2. Develop a workload cost tracking system.
3. Procure software such as the TRIMS program. Track resources and generate reports on maintenance related cost centers, activities and services.
4. Develop a formal, written maintenance plan. Include planning, directing, controlling, and evaluating park and recreation system maintenance.
5. Use the information generated from the workload cost tracking to make decisions about park planning, resource allocation, fees and charges, staffing, and other important functions.
6. Explore the potential for contracting out park maintenance functions that are repetitive, routine, specifically definable, and quantifiable. Such tasks ideal for contracting out include custodial care of restrooms, grass mowing and trimming, high tree work, and trade work such as plumbing.

7. Incorporate maintenance planning in all major capital improvement projects or volunteer programs that require Parks and Recreation Department support and staff time. Use the Management Impact Statement Tool shown in Figure 1 for this purpose.

8. Recognize that park maintenance management requires a great deal of work that often exceeds the hours of the workweek. It is vital to provide the time and support to the Park Superintendent to undertake a major project on the scale of developing a maintenance management system. The development of the maintenance management system cannot just be added to existing responsibilities; provisions to free up some of the Superintendent’s time to focus in a dedicated manner on the maintenance management plan must be made. This will require creativity and ingenuity.

9. Consider potential means to obtain outside assistance for this including the following:
   - PA DCNR Peer grant to undertake a study to develop the maintenance management system. The $10,000 grant would require a $1,000 match to retain a professional skilled in park maintenance management system development and operation.
   - Assistance from DVIT (Delaware Valley Insurance Trust, the Township’s insurance carrier) in getting funding and/or technical assistance to develop the planned maintenance management system. Such a system is a powerful tool in reducing the Township’s exposure to liability and as such would benefit DVIT as well.
   - Work with college campus and grounds managers to develop the system.
   - Continue to work with the Buildings and Grounds Department of the Lower Merion School District to undertake this project.

10. Visit other departments in the area to look at their maintenance management systems.

11. Consider the skills necessary for future park maintenance workers in planning the maintenance system.

Objective 2

Establish a Parks and Recreation Board for Lower Merion Township

Recommendations

1. Establish the Parks and Recreation Board in conformance with the First Class Township Code enables Lower Merion Township to vest the authority to operate, manage and program parks and recreation facilities in a park or recreation board including the following responsibilities:
   - Supervise, maintain and regulate parks,
   - Equip, operate and maintain the parks, recreation areas and facilities, and
   - Employ play leaders, recreation directors, supervisors, superintendents, or other officers or employees.

2. Appoint five or seven members including two who are members or appointees of the Lower Merion School Board. The Board of Commissioners would appoint the other five members. Consider appointing a Township Commissioner to this Board as a liaison in order to continue the present tradition of Township Commissioners serving as advisors to the Parks and Recreation Department. Terms of office are five years. The members elect their own chairperson, secretary and all other officers for a one-year term.

3. The Parks and Recreation Board would be advisory to the Board of Commissioners that set policy as the chief elected body. The Parks and Recreation Board would have the power to adopt rules and regulations for the conduct of all business related to parks and recreation within the Township. The Board would submit an annual report to the Township Commissioners, including an analysis of community recreation areas, facilities and leadership with particular reference to the extent and adequacy of the program and its effectiveness in view of the public expenditure involved and the public needs to be met. The Board of Commissioners has the power to levy a tax or use general funds for parks and recreation.
MIS
Management Impact Statement

Purpose
1. To assess the impact of a significant proposed project or a major program on operations and management. Consider the capital and operating costs including human resources and the effect the project or program would have on other parks and recreation facilities and services.

2. To use the assessment to make an informed decision about feasibility and viability of the proposed project.

Method
Determine:
1. Capital cost of the proposed project.

2. Operating costs of the proposed project. Include:
   - Number of staff hours required
   - Cost of the staff hours
   - Cost of materials and supplies
   - Miscellaneous costs
   - Volunteer support over the long term

3. Impact on other facilities and programs with the implementation of the proposed project.
   - Will the project/service require funds needed for other facilities/programs?
   - Will the project/service require staff time needed for other services/programs?
   - How will the project impact the quality of service in Lower Merion Township?
   - Will the project require resources from the community and are they available?

4. Revenue Sources
   - Grants
   - Donations
   - Municipal funds – additional appropriation
   - Municipal funds – within current budget
   - Non-tax funds to be generated from the project/program

Decision-Making
Based upon the above information, does Lower Merion Township have the staff and budget to support the project or program or are alternative means in place to assume the responsibility for the project’s maintenance and management?
Objective 3
Establish a Volunteer Coordinator position.

Recommendations
1. Establish a Volunteer Coordinator who would be responsible for recruiting, managing, training, supporting, recognizing, and evaluating volunteer efforts in Lower Merion Township. This investment in this position is likely to be offset by the value of volunteer services supporting parks and recreation projects without cost to the Township.
2. Pursue the establishment of a Friends of Lower Merion Township Parks group. Strive to establish a Friends Group for each park and trail. It is important to note that these groups require support for their activities and functions from Lower Merion Township staff.
3. Consider additional functions of this position to include partnership and sponsorship development, community awareness, customer service management, and customer database development and management.

Objective 4
Develop an annual report for parks and recreation.

Recommendations
1. Use future recreation and maintenance software to generate data for analysis and information production. Include documentation of the benefits and outcomes of investment in parks and recreation.
2. Incorporate ongoing needs assessment and services evaluation system into reporting. Ensure that reporting emphasizes outcomes, benefits and quality standards as well as the facts and figures of the numbers for participation, revenues and expenditures.
3. Distribute this report widely. Use it strategically to make the case for how important parks and recreation is to Lower Merion Township including the benefits to this community.

Objective 5
Establish a five-year employee development program.

Recommendations
1. Undertake an assessment to determine the skills and expertise the parks and recreation system will need in the future. Include development of skills such as natural resource management, use of Township computer software for workload and cost tracking, programming, maintenance, and other functions to be identified in the assessment. Involve staff in the assessment to include their interests and professional development as part of this program.
2. Develop a five-year employee development program. Include a mix of strategies and methods such as conferences, seminars, training programs, school classes, WEB-based programs, networking and visiting other departments, brown bag lunches, a speaker series and others.
3. Target one to two percent of the operating budget for the Employee Development Program.

Objective 6
Make outstanding customer service a departmental goal and requirement of every position in the Parks and Recreation Department.

Recommendations
1. Establish a Task Force for customer service. Include key management, staff and board members to address customer service in an organized, formal manner.
2. Identify the issues related to customer service. Incorporate a segment of addressing customer service with the public by involving citizens in a discussion about how the Department can provide outstanding service. Strive to get recommendations as specific as possible.
3. Target specific actions to all levels of staff and management including part-time and seasonal employees.
4. Incorporate outstanding customer service as a component of job responsibilities and a factor in performance evaluations.
5. Incorporate customer service as an on-going training function.
with at least one program annually for all management and staff including full and part-time employees in both recreation and parks. Strive to make it interesting and important so that participants recognize and understand how vital excellent service is to the long-term sustainability of public parks and recreation.

Objective 7
Re-configure the administrative staff to support future directions in parks and recreation such as on-line registration, credit card payments, WEB based promotion, and development of a customer data base on which to build a marketing program.

Recommendations
1. Move away from administrative positions and into Program Coordinators. The use of technology should be encouraged to facilitate program and service specialists to undertake their own data processing and reporting.
2. Transfer administrative-oriented tasks and positions into Customer Service Representatives. These could be part-time positions on hand during peak seasons, days of the week and hours of the day.
3. Use these reconfigured positions to expand and enhance recreation programs and services to identified client groups such as families, active aging seniors to teens as well as in target areas such as nature, fitness and the arts.

Objective 8
Develop a management plan for the park security force.

Recommendations
1. Establish a formalized vision and mission for the park security staff.
2. Identify issues in the parks and recreation facilities that could be addressed through the park security force.
3. Create a five-year plan of action for park security including target goals with specific actions for the first year.

Objective 9
Continue to support parks and recreation through a mix of public and private funding.

Recommendations
1. Continue to support parks and recreation through a mix of public and private funding.
2. Strive to maintain the investment in parks and recreation at a budget ratio of five percent of the Township’s operating budget.
3. Establish a fees and charges policy. Although the Township sets forth fees, this policy would include cost recovery measures for administrative, facility and advertising costs in addition to direct costs of instructors, materials and supplies. Make provisions for citizens in need of financial assistance.
4. Use the Management Impact Statement as a financial planning tool as well as for maintenance and management planning.
5. Develop a gifts catalog for parks and recreation.
6. Develop a gifts and donations policy. This will support Township practices and responsibilities regarding the long-term maintenance requirements often generated by gifts and donations.
7. Consider working with the private sector on major community development improvement projects such as riverfront recreation facilities and the improvement or re-building of indoor recreation facilities suggested in this plan. Use the Township’s expertise in financial planning to
determine the best methods and appropriate amount to improve parks and recreation facilities in the future.

8. Work with partners such as the Lower Merion School District and sports leagues for facility improvements.

**Objective 10**

Adopt a new organizational structure as shown in Figure 2 to reflect the changes to be phased into the Parks and Recreation Department during the implementation of this plan over the next ten years.

**Recommendations**

1. Change the classification of the Parks Supervisor and Recreation Supervisor to Assistant Directors of Parks and Recreation. They would remain in charge of their respective areas for parks and recreation.

2. Establish three functional areas in the Parks Division and the Recreation Division:

   **PARKS DIVISION**
   - Facilities & Grounds Maintenance
   - Natural Resource Management
   - Planning, Design & Operations

   **RECREATION DIVISION**
   - Active Healthy Living
   - Recreation in Nature
   - Recreation Facilitation

3. Provide for the administrative support of park maintenance management especially with respect to the development of the Maintenance Management System. The administrative support could provide assistance with the plethora of calls and contacts generated through community projects that require maintenance support. This would free maintenance staff to do the actual work while the administrative coordinator would manage the public outreach and service.

4. Create a Volunteer Coordinator position to manage the organizations and individuals involved in providing programs, maintenance, activities and events related to parks and recreation in Lower Merion Township. Investing in this position could be offset in the volunteer services and partnerships generated by an effective Coordinator.

5. Change the administrative positions into Program Manager and Customer Service Representative positions.

6. Establish Park Planning as a functional area to call out its importance in terms of both planning and coordination with other Township departments and organizations exploring park development or improvements. Ensure that park maintenance is part of the planning process.

7. Work with Riverbend Environmental Education Center and the Lower Merion Conservancy to determine how these organizations and the Parks & Recreation Department could work together in sharing functions, programs and responsibilities. Since the Township contributes to the support of the three organizations it would make sense to determine how to streamline functions to prevent duplication of services and fill in the gaps in community services where needed.
The Lower Merion Township Parks and Recreation Plan Update sets forth a vision that builds upon the Township’s successful parks and recreation system. Since the previous plan of 1996, Lower Merion Township has improved parks and recreation facilities, conserved open space and natural resources, and quadrupled recreation programs. In the public opinion survey for this plan, 90 percent of the respondents indicated that they use Township parks and recreation facilities and another 10 percent indicated that parks and recreation are important event though they don’t use them.

The Update fosters active healthy living and environmental conservation. Recreation and conservation efforts that integrate Lower Merion Township’s values for community, health, natural beauty, and sustainability are the hallmark of this plan. The successful implementation of the previous plan took 15 years to accomplish; the time frame for this plan is 2012 - 2022. The Action Plan featured in this chapter is grounded in taking the parks and recreation system from “good to great”. Improvements are largely rooted in solving pressing problems, making the best use of existing resources, and creating new efficiencies and effectiveness through management system planning and implementation.

Low to moderate cost items for facility revitalization such as ballfield improvements could be supported through a combination of partnerships, sponsorships, grants, and township funding. Since the recommendations for major recreation improvement projects are significant, they rest in partnerships rather than Township support alone. While there is significant use of parks and recreation facilities and services along with support for parks and recreation, the Update respects public sentiment regarding sound use of taxpayer funding. Recommendations for indoor recreation facilities and riverfront recreation are vested in recruiting private sector partners to undertake re-development efforts in which public recreation improvements can be included as part of the development project.

Every incremental success, no matter how small, will advance Lower Merion Township’s vision for the future. The intent of this implementation plan is to lay out a course of action that is pragmatic and achievable and that also allows for larger scale projects should the opportunities emerge. Tables 3 through 7 provide direction for the organization and start-up of each recommendation listed in Chapter 3 and supported by the analyses shown in Chapters 5 through 10, respectively. A suggested time-frame, lead and support partners, and effort and resources, which include cost estimate ranges are outlined for each recommendation. Also included is information about the importance for undertaking the actions and expected benefits for Lower Merion Township.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
<th>Leadership</th>
<th>Effort and Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Objective 1: Increase the number and quality of sports fields.</td>
<td>Short Term, 2012-2014</td>
<td>LMT Parks and Recreation Department</td>
<td>Staff time of Parks &amp; Recreation Director.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Consultation with key partners such as Lower Merion School District, sports leagues, and Civic Associations. Include conservation organizations and others on a site-by-site basis.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>LMT Parks and Recreation Department and professional park planning consultant to develop site plans.</td>
<td>Planning costs and development costs will vary by site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>LMT Parks and Recreation Department and professional park planning consultant to develop master plans.</td>
<td>Planning costs will vary by site (Penn Wynne Park - $15,000 – 25,000, Polo Field $50,000) and development costs will be defined by the master plan. Join with Haverford Township on the Polo Field master plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance</td>
<td></td>
<td>To meet the need for additional sports fields for leagues with over 11,000 participants, not including a new league for girls softball established in 2011 or adult leagues that play other than Sundays.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td></td>
<td>To enable all citizens who want to play ball to have facilities and prevent waiting lists in leagues. Elimination of overlapping fields where possible to allow full use of existing/planned facilities. Increased recreation opportunities through expanded facilities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### GOAL 1: ESTABLISH PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES AS COMMUNITY DESTINATIONS WHERE CITIZENS CAN HAVE FUN, EXPERIENCE NATURE, SOCIALIZE, AND EXERCISE (CONTINUED).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective 2: Continue to work with Lower Merion School District on joint planning, development, use and maintenance of ballfields and game courts.</th>
<th>Short Term, 2012-2014 and ongoing</th>
<th>LMT Parks and Recreation Department and LM School District</th>
<th>Staff time of Parks &amp; Recreation Director and Park Superintendent and LM School District Operations Director.</th>
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<td>Importance</td>
<td>To maximize the public benefit of publicly funded recreation facilities in the community.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Benefits</td>
<td>Cost savings, realize efficiencies, expand recreation opportunities, avoid duplicative planning and development, reduce costs, and seize opportunities.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective 3: Work with developers on potential location of additional recreation facilities near the Schuylkill River.</th>
<th>Medium Term, 2014-2016</th>
<th>LMT Parks and Recreation Department</th>
<th>Staff time of Parks &amp; Recreation Director and Buildings and Planning Department planners.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Importance</td>
<td>Cost savings through partnerships to incorporate recreation facility development as part of subdivision and land development planning occurring in Lower Merion Township.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td>Opens the potential of expanding recreation offerings as land along the Schuylkill River is redeveloped. May provide opportunity for facility lighting and indoor recreation facilities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective 4: Explore the potential of Flat Rock Park as a crown jewel in the Lower Merion parks and recreation system.</th>
<th>Long Term, 2018-2021</th>
<th>LMT Parks and Recreation Department</th>
<th>Staff time of Parks &amp; Recreation Director.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Importance</td>
<td>Flat Rock Park offers a unique recreation experience in the community and provides a scenic setting for self-directed leisure outings.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td>Flat Rock Park offers open areas for programmed and non-programmed activities. The river is a community asset that is difficult to access and enhancing Flat Rock Park will draw visitors to enjoy this resource.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## GOAL 1: ESTABLISH PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES AS COMMUNITY DESTINATIONS WHERE CITIZENS CAN HAVE FUN, EXPERIENCE NATURE, SOCIALIZE, AND EXERCISE (CONTINUED).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective: Develop a playground planning and improvement program.</th>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Safety guidelines and accessibility requirements for playgrounds change over time and existing playgrounds must be upgraded or replaced to align with these specifications. Playgrounds should be developed to spark the imagination of children and incorporate opportunities for fitness, imaginative play, education, and social interaction. Playgrounds need to be reselected to continue to provide engaging play opportunities. Playgrounds in the community should have unique designs or themes that relate to the neighborhood.</td>
<td>Parks and especially playgrounds are one place that residents come together to socialize and spend quality time with children in healthy outdoor activities. Improved safety and reduction in the Township’s exposure to liability.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective: Ensure that all parks include an environmental component as part of the park design, operation and programming.</th>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Enhance streambanks and riparian areas at Penn Wynne Park, Riddle and Jovial Fields, Wynnewood Valley Park.</td>
<td>Add native plantings and street trees at Penn Wynne Park, Riddle and Jovial Fields, South Ardmore Park, Tabor Acres Park, Lower Merion School District, Civic Associations, and professional park planning consultants.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**LMT Parks and Recreation Department, Parks Superintendent, and professional park planning consultant to develop site plans.**

Implementation costs will vary by site. Volunteers could offset the labor cost.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Plan</th>
<th>Department/Location</th>
<th>Costs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify, remove, and monitor invasive species in Penn Wyne Park, Richie Ashburn Ballfield, Bala Cynwyd Park, and Lewis J. Smith Park.</td>
<td>LMT Parks and Recreation Department, Parks Superintendent, and consulting ecologists.</td>
<td>Costs will vary by site. Volunteers could offset the labor costs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop rain gardens to infiltrate rainwater and enhance water quality at South Ardmore Park, Vernon Young Park, and General Wayne Park.</td>
<td>LMT Parks and Recreation Department, Parks Superintendent, and consulting park planners.</td>
<td>Costs will vary by site. Volunteers could offset the labor costs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Importance**
Enhance natural functions of ecosystems in parks that are sustainable and demonstrate effective natural resource management. Build next generation of park and environmental stewards.

**Benefits**
Ecosystem enhancements that are sustainable can lower ongoing maintenance costs and provide environmental benefits as well as examples of natural resource management that demonstrate best practices to the general public. Facilitates MS4 plan solutions.

**Objective 7: Evaluate, design and upgrade parks with consideration of safety and security of users.**
Short Term, 2012-2014 LMT Parks and Recreation Department Civic Associations, LMT Police Department

**Importance**
Enhance the safety and security of park users and reduces potential for litigation.

**Benefits**
Reduces the Township’s exposure to liability.
GOAL 1: ESTABLISH PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES AS COMMUNITY DESTINATIONS WHERE CITIZENS CAN HAVE FUN, EXPERIENCE NATURE, SOCIALIZE, AND EXERCISE (CONTINUED).

Objective 8: Provide accessible trails, viewing areas, and other accommodations to meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

- **Importance**: Meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- **Benefits**: Improve the accessibility of the parks for users with disabilities as well as for seniors, visitors with strollers, maintenance crews, park security, and the general public.

Objective 9: Design, plan and implement a Township-wide signage system for parks and recreation facilities.

- **Importance**: Enhance awareness of Park and Recreation Department facilities and clearly communicate information.
- **Benefits**: Establish a readily identifiable signage system for the parks that will heighten awareness of park sites and recreation opportunities and provide a standard for sign design. Build on LMT's signage system that provides a sense of place and community here.

Objective 10: Complete the improvements on the park restrooms with only one remaining.

- **Importance**: Provide upgrades needed to meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act and offer up-to-date facilities that are fresh, clean and vandal resistant.
- **Benefits**: Meets a public need for fresh, clean restroom facilities as expressed throughout the public involvement process.

Objective 11: Create destinations in...
### Action Plan

#### Goal 1: Establish Parks and Recreation Facilities as Community Destinations Where Citizens Can Have Fun, Experience Nature, Socialize, and Exercise (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parks where people can go to many different parks throughout the community to gather and socialize. Prioritize adding pavilions in General Wayne Park, Polo Field, Penn Wynne Park, Ashbridge Park, South Ardmore, Wynnewood Valley Park, and the Cynwyd Trail shelter.</td>
<td>Provide community spaces that promote socializing and provide shade and shelter for users.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Objective 12: Raise the bar on the design and construction of parks and recreation facilities. Preserve facilities that contribute to community character. | Expand the use of the park for more citizens by providing a shelter for picnics, birthday parties, reunions, athletic team meetings, tournament registration, and other uses. Enhance opportunities for social interaction in the parks. Generate revenue through rentals. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Importance</td>
<td>Benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Staff time of Parks &amp; Recreation Director. Planner/landscape architect costs will vary by site. Select designer based upon specific expertise required by the facility or project i.e. sports field experts, sustainability experts etc. Evaluate proposals based upon expertise, capability, and price.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Staff time of Parks &amp; Recreation Director. Architect and parks &amp; recreation planner costs will vary by building.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Replace facilities such as PALM, Ardmore Community Center and the Bala gym that have exceeded their life expectancy and struggle to meet community needs due to space limitations, accessibility, configuration and demand of users that exceeds capacity.</td>
<td>Potential to work with developers and partners through community development planning. Meet changing needs of population likely to use indoor facilities more as the population ages with active, healthy senior population in which the tradition senior center model no longer works. Indoor center will be used inter-generationally throughout the lifetime rather than single purpose senior centers.</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Staff time of Parks &amp; Recreation Director. Architect and parks &amp; recreation planner costs will vary by building.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Chapter 4
### Action Plan

**Goal 2: Conserve our natural resources by using best management practices in the parks for conservation, public education, and partnerships.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
<th>Leadership</th>
<th>Effort and Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Objective 1: Develop convenient access areas in Kenealy Nature Park, Henry Lane Park, and Mill Creek Valley Park.</td>
<td>Medium Term, 2015-2018</td>
<td>LMT Parks and Recreation Department</td>
<td>Staff time of Parks &amp; Recreation Director. Park planner costs will vary by site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Civic associations and profession park planner.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Importance</strong></td>
<td>Expand the park offerings by making passive parks accessible for use.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Benefits</strong></td>
<td>Meet the top public interest of experiencing nature close to home as identified in public participation process.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective 2: Increase public awareness about how to access and use passive parks.</td>
<td>Short Term, 2012-2014</td>
<td>LMT Parks and Recreation Department</td>
<td>Staff time of Parks &amp; Recreation Director and Information Technology specialist. Work toward making the website very easy for the public to use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>LMT technology staff.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Importance</strong></td>
<td>Eliminate the chief block to use of public parks and participation in recreation: the lack of public awareness about them.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Benefits</strong></td>
<td>Public satisfaction with easy access to information about municipal parks, facilitate citizens’ engagement in nature and building the next generation of stewards of the environment.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective 3: Establish a philosophy of environmental sustainability in the parks. Undertake demonstration projects and workshops in the parks.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>LMT Parks and Recreation Department with EAC as support.</td>
<td>Staff time of Parks &amp; Recreation Director and Park Superintendent. Park planning consultant costs will vary by task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>LMT Park Superintendent, civic associations, conservation organizations, and park planner.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Importance</strong></td>
<td>Promote a green, sustainable approach to park development and maintenance that can be demonstrated to the general public. Stormwater management and other environmental improvements that serve as green infrastructure help to improve parks and open other funding sources from agencies such as the EPA.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Benefits</strong></td>
<td>Cost savings, enhanced natural areas, reduced maintenance, and positive image.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective 4: Improve Lower Merion</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>LMT Parks and Recreation Department</td>
<td>Staff time of Parks &amp; Recreation Director. Park planners’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Township’s parks for environmental sustainability, especially for water quality.</td>
<td>LMT Parks and Recreation Department</td>
<td>Civic associations, conservation organizations, and professional park planners.</td>
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<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Importance**

To enhance the natural functions of ecosystems in the parks and provide outdoor environments that are sustainable and demonstrate appropriate natural resource management.

**Benefits**

Ecosystem enhancements that are sustainable can lower ongoing maintenance costs and provide environmental benefits as well as examples of natural resource management that demonstrate best practices to the general public.

**Objective 5: Address Township environmental issues through Lower Merion Township’s parks.**

**Importance**

To enhance the natural functions of ecosystems in the parks and provide outdoor environments that are sustainable and demonstrate appropriate natural resource management. Addressing these issues that involve both Parks and Recreation and Public Works in a strategic and holistic manner would be cost effective in planning and implementation.

**Benefits**

Provide solutions to environmental issues in LMT, help with the MS4 plan, lower ongoing maintenance costs and provide environmental benefits as well as examples of natural resource management that demonstrate best practices to the general public.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Develop a strategic plan to deal with stormwater management and streambank stabilization.</th>
<th>Short-Term</th>
<th>LMT Parks and Recreation Department and LMT Public Works Department</th>
<th>$40,000 for civil engineering specialist with specific expertise and experience in sustainability and water quality including developing solutions for environmental problems through parks. Seek grant funding.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Importance**

To enhance the natural functions of ecosystems in the parks and provide outdoor environments that are sustainable and demonstrate appropriate natural resource management.
### Goal 3: Collaborate with Township Planners on the redevelopment of the villages to ensure that public recreation facilities, opportunities and partnerships in recreation facilities, programs and management are incorporated into the improvements.

#### Leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
<th>Leadership</th>
<th>Effort and Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Short Term, 2012-2014 and Ongoing</td>
<td>Lower Merion Township Economic Development and Parks and Recreation Departments and Private Developers selected by the Township to lead redevelopment activities</td>
<td>Parks and Recreation Department staff should be involved in the review of proposed development projects to ensure that proposed public spaces are designed to meet the needs of existing and future local users, especially for the Cricket Avenue Site and the redesign of Schaufele Green. Public/Private management and maintenance agreements should be negotiated to ensure that public access to new public spaces is maintained in perpetuity. Clear and reasonable maintenance responsibilities should be placed upon the developers or a fee structure should be in place to support the additional costs to the Township for maintenance and upkeep of any new public spaces directly attributed to new developments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Ensure that the Parks and Recreation Department is engaged in the review of public and private economic development projects.</td>
<td>Building &amp; Planning Department</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Development model public/private public space ownership, access, management and maintenance agreements.</td>
<td>The Ardmore Initiative</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ardmore Business Association</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Private Developers</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

#### Importance

- Undertaking this effort as development if planned prior to construction allows for the greatest potential integration of public spaces to fit into the Township’s Parks and Recreation System.

#### Benefits

- Development will be designed and constructed that achieves the maximum potential to serve the needs of the new residents/users as well as the neighborhood context and will be done in a manner that ensures that it will be maintained to a high quality with undue long-term burden on the Township.
| Objective 2: Vernon V. Young Memorial Park and the Ardmore Avenue Community Center. | Lower Merion Township Parks and Recreation Department | Pursue PADCNR grant funding for Programming and Site Master Planning activities
Institute more direct engagement between the AACC and the Township Parks and Recreation Department on Programs, Management and Maintenance of the AACC and Vernon V. Young Park
Consider short-term opportunities to utilize the PALM facility for off-hours utilization by the Township and AACC for programs.
Identify short-term aesthetic improvements to the perimeter of the park including better fencing, minor modifications to entrances to create gateways and additional plantings. |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Undertake a Comprehensive Programming and Site Master Planning Process for Vernon V. Young Memorial Park and the Ardmore Avenue Community Center and consider including the PALM Senior Facility into the effort.  
2. Prepare a policy for adjacent property acquisitions should the opportunity arise.  
3. Improve the neighborhood/park interface through perimeter park improvements. | Ardmore Avenue Community Center Board (including AACC Staff)  
Positive Aging in Lower Merion (PALM) Board (including Staff) | |
| Importance | Vernon V. Young Memorial Park is over-programmed with facilities, based on its size and the AACC is nearing the end of its useful life span and requires major upgrades. At some point in the future, it will become more cost effective replace the existing AACC building than continue to invest in its repair and the existing facilities don’t meet the current needs or capacity of the AACC programs. |
| Benefits | Strategically looking at the full picture of opportunities to combine facilities (including PALM) could allow for a better utilization of premium space with Vernon V. Young Memorial Park, be more cost-effective long term versus continuing to invest in the current outdated facilities and better serve current community needs. |
### Objective 3: Use Parks and Recreation as a Potential Tool to Advance Economic Development Goals of the Bala Avenue Master Plan.

| Short Term, 2012-2014 to Long Term (2019+) | Lower Merion Township Economic Development and Parks and Recreation Departments and Private Developers selected by the Township to lead redevelopment activities | Initiated discussions between the Township’s Economic Development and Parks and Recreation Departments’ staff to determine a process for undertaking a public/private partnership redevelopment project on the Bala Gym site, similar to the one undertaken for the Ardmore Area.

- Develop a specific list requirements and commitments (both for developers and for those the Township is willing to provide) as part of a developer deal.
- Explore additional economic tools, such as tax abatements, TIFs and site infrastructure funding to enhance the economic model for a potential joint development project.

#### Importance

The current Bala Gym is outdated and does not meet current standards for such facilities, yet the Township needs indoor gym space and indoor recreation facilities to serve the large number of citizens using indoor recreation facilities. LM School District facilities are fully scheduled and cannot meet the need for the level of public recreation participation underway in the community.

#### Benefits

Pursuing a strategy that outsources the development investment to the private sector by providing the value of the land to the project, potentially allows the Township to obtain modern recreation facilities with no upfront financing investment and can also spur economic development and commercial vibrancy to the Bala Avenue corridor at the same time.
| Objective 4: Maximize the Parks and Recreation Effectiveness of the Bryn Mawr Master Plan. | Short Term, 2012-2014 to Lower Merion Township Economic Development and Parks and Recreation Departments and Private Developers selected by the Township to lead redevelopment activities | Parks and Recreation Department Staff should be involved in the review of proposed development projects to ensure that proposed public spaces are designed to meet the needs of existing and future local users, especially for any redevelopment plan on Lot 7 which should include a major central public space as part of the its overall design. Public/Private management and maintenance agreements should be negotiated to ensure that public access to new public spaces is maintained in perpetuity. Clear and reasonable maintenance responsibilities should be placed upon the developers or a fee structure should be in placed to support the additional costs to the Township for maintenance and upkeep of any new public spaces directly attributed to new developments.

| Importance | Undertaking this effort as development is planned, prior to construction, allows for the greatest potential integration of public spaces to fit into the Township’s Parks and Recreation System. |

<p>| Benefits | Development will be designed and constructed which achieves the maximum potential to serve the needs of the new residents/users as well as the neighborhood context and will be done in a manner that ensures that it will be maintained to a high quality with undue long-term burden on the Township. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective 5: Maximize the Parks and Recreation Effectiveness of the Proposed City Avenue Overlay District Zoning Process and Future Implementation Projects.</th>
<th>Short Term, 2012-2014 to Long Term (2019+)</th>
<th>Lower Merion Township Economic Development and Parks and Recreation Departments and Private Developers selected by the Township to lead redevelopment activities. Use the Official Map as a tool for advancing the City Avenue projects.</th>
<th>Parks and Recreation Department Staff should be involved in the review of the proposed City Avenue Overlay District Zoning and any resultant development projects to ensure that proposed public spaces are designed to meet the needs of existing and future local users. Public/Private management and maintenance agreements should be negotiated to ensure that public access to new public spaces is maintained in perpetuity. Clear and reasonable maintenance responsibilities should be placed upon the developers or a fee structure should be in placed to support the additional costs to the Township for maintenance and upkeep of any new public spaces directly attributed to new developments.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Ensure that the Parks and Recreation Department is engaged in the review of public and private economic development projects.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Development model public/private public space ownership, access, management and maintenance agreements.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Avenue Special Services District Private Developers</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Importance**

The Township is currently undertaking the development of an Overlay Zoning District that could allow for a significant amount of new residential units built in a fairly urban format. The Parks and Recreation Department should be aware and engaged in the process of developing the Overlay Zoning in order to understand its future implications on the need to provide recreation programs and more importantly ensure that parks and public open spaces that are created by new development are developed in a manner that is most effective long-term for the Township and can be maintained.

**Benefits**

Considering the long-term quality-of-life aspects of future development upfront, as well as the immediate tax-benefit and financial pro formas of the project, protects the character and high standard of living that exists within the Township. If properly planned, infill development can enhance the economic and social aspects of the community and not provide an initial economic boost with a long-term financial drain as result of increased management and maintenance demands.
### GOAL 4: ENGAGE THE CITIZENS IN RECREATION TO ENRICH THEIR LIVES.

#### Objective 1: Develop a program management plan.
- **Recommendations**: Develop a program management plan.
- **Timeframe**: Short Term, 2012-2014
- **Leadership**: LMT Parks and Recreation Department
- **Support Partners**: Lower Merion School District, sports leagues, conservation organizations, Civic Associations, and others.
- **Effort and Resources**: Staff time of Recreation Coordinator and Parks & Recreation Director.

#### Importance
To enable the Department to focus program management strategically to focus on customer service, introduction of new program areas, revenue generation, partnerships, and program facilitation.

#### Benefits
Enhanced public service, increased recreation opportunities for underserved groups such as active aging seniors, responsiveness to citizen interests in fitness and nature-based recreation, and sustain the playground program effectively in the future.

#### Objective 2: Focus on customer service and convenience.
- **Recommendations**: Focus on customer service and convenience.
- **Timeframe**: Ongoing
- **Leadership**: LMT Parks and Recreation Department lead by the Director with full participation by all management and staff members.
- **Effort and Resources**: Staff time.

#### Enable citizens to pay for programs and services via credit card
- **Recommendations**: Enable citizens to pay for programs and services via credit card.
- **Timeframe**: Short Term, 2012-2014
- **Leadership**: Parks and Recreation Director working with Finance Department.
- **Effort and Resources**: Costs to be offset with increasing revenues.

#### Enable on-line registration
- **Recommendations**: Enable on-line registration.
- **Timeframe**: Short Term, 2012-2014
- **Leadership**: Parks and Recreation Director working with Finance Department, Recreation Coordinator working with Department’s software company technical support.
- **Effort and Resources**: Costs to be offset with increasing revenues.

#### Develop and implement on-going methods of organized citizen input including focus groups, interviews and surveys.
- **Recommendations**: Develop and implement on-going methods of organized citizen input including focus groups, interviews and surveys.
- **Timeframe**: Short Term, 2012-2014 and Ongoing
- **Leadership**: Parks & Recreation Department management and staff
- **Effort and Resources**: Staff time. Budget for survey in 2016 of $15,000.
### Chapter 4: Action Plan

#### Goal 4: Engage the Citizens in Recreation to Enrich Their Lives

**Importance**
Credit card payments are today’s norm in purchasing. Enabling credit card payment will improve customer service and convenience for the citizens. Responds to life styles of the residents.

**Benefits**
Dramatic increases in program participation with program growth following as a result of more citizens participating is likely to occur. This directly responds to citizens indicating that they are interested in participating in Township recreation programs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective 3: Develop and implement a promotional program to increase public awareness.</th>
<th>Short Term, 2012-2014</th>
<th>LMT Parks and Recreation Department</th>
<th>LMT Public Information Office</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continue to use the Recreation Brochure while adapting its content to shepherd readers to the website.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>LMT Parks and Recreation Department</td>
<td>LMT Information Technology Department &amp; LMT Public Information Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adapt the website to be the “go-to” place for parks and recreation.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>LMT Parks and Recreation Department</td>
<td>LMT Information Technology Department &amp; LMT Public Information Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop methods to use social media to serve the residents through parks and recreation.</td>
<td>Short Term, 2012-2014</td>
<td>LMT Parks and Recreation Department</td>
<td>LMT Information Technology Department &amp; LMT Public Information Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop and use a customer database to inform residents about parks and recreation opportunities.</td>
<td>Short Term, 2012-2014</td>
<td>LMT Parks and Recreation Department</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Importance**
The majority of survey respondents indicated that they’d like to know more about parks and recreation. The major block to participation in parks and recreation opportunities reported by the citizens is their lack of awareness about them. Most citizens indicated that they refer to get their information from the website and the Recreation Brochure.

**Benefits**
Enhanced public service. Increased participation in recreation opportunities. A better-informed citizenry will gain understanding of the Township’s parks strengthening support. Cost savings and increased revenues through use of the WEB rather than print media.
### Objective 4: Develop a marketing strategy for parks and recreation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Short Term, 2012-2014</th>
<th>LMT Parks and Recreation Department</th>
<th>Use of existing resources.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>LMT Public Relations Department</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Focus on regular assessment of citizen needs and community trends.**
- LMT Parks and Recreation Department
- Other recreation providers and LM School District
- Use staff and partners to conduct focus groups and interviews. Conduct on-site interviews in the parks. Explore outreach to non-participants. Staff time.

**Develop and implement a program evaluation system.**
- LMT Parks and Recreation Department
- Include a post program as well as interim evaluation system. Use findings to improve programs. Conduct outreach to determine factors in any major change in participation. Staff Time.

**Importance**
By focusing on citizen needs and lifestyles, the Department can become customer focused in providing not only programs and services but also on what program support services would serve them well such as hours, family care, fees and charges, advertising and other important factors that affect service delivery.

**Benefits**
Citizens would have their needs met more effectively thus reducing their stress and increasing their happiness in through participation and the enhanced sense of community resulting.

### Objective 5: Build upon community nature based recreation opportunities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Short Term 2012 – 2014 and ongoing</th>
<th>LMT Parks and Recreation Department with Riverbend and Lower Merion Conservancy</th>
<th>Pennsylvania Department of Education has established standards for environmental education as part of the school district curricula.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower Merion School District</td>
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</table>

**Work with Riverbend and Lower Merion Conservancy to develop a strategic plan for providing community environmental services and programs.**
- Medium Term 2015 -2018
- LMT Parks and Recreation Department with Riverbend and Lower Merion Conservancy
- Work to streamline operations among the three program providers in LMT: Parks & Recreation Department, Riverbend Environmental Education center, and Lower Merion Conservancy.

**Provide environmental programs as part of other programs such as the Playground Program.**
- Short Term 2012 – 2014 and ongoing
- LMT Parks and Recreation Department with Riverbend and Lower Merion Conservancy
- Collaborate with Riverbend to do joint programming at Playground sites.

**Promote environmental opportunities and facilities to enable citizens to experience nature close to home.**
- Short Term 2012 – 2014 and ongoing
- LMT Parks and Recreation Department
- Focus on opportunities that citizens can undertake on their own.
GOAL 4: ENGAGE THE CITIZENS IN RECREATION TO ENRICH THEIR LIVES

Chapter 4
Action Plan

Importance

About 84 percent of the survey respondents indicated that enjoying nature is one of the activities in which they participate or are interested in participating. Many citizens are engaged in environmental pursuits so it is a major area of interest among the citizenry.

Benefits

Engaging citizens in nature based recreation helps to build stewards for conservation and public service. This is vital for the conservation of the Township’s natural resources over the long term. It is likely that this will also increase volunteerism that will result in cost savings and improved conservation and public service.

Objective 6: Continue to provide recreation opportunities aimed at active healthy living.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Ongoing</th>
<th>LMT Parks and Recreation Department</th>
<th>Staff time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Include active healthy living programs as segment of the program management plan. Also seek partnerships with health care providers including local hospitals and other health care providers for recreation programs and services.</td>
<td>Medium term 2015-2018</td>
<td>LMT Parks and Recreation Department</td>
<td>Staff time with goal of seeking alternative means of supporting Township parks and recreation services for active healthy living programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bryn Mawr Hospital, Lankenau Hospital, Main Line Health and other health care providers</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

Importance

Recreation is the preferred choice of citizens as their venue for engaging in fitness and wellness. The U.S. Surgeon General has stated that communities can play an important role in fostering regular exercise that will result in nationwide cost savings.

Benefits

Citizens will have the benefit of adding years to their lives and saving money on health care. In the public opinion survey 77 percent of the respondents indicated that they participate or are interested in participating in exercise and fitness activities.

Objective 7: Take Leadership role in facilitating collaboration among sports leagues and Parks and Recreation Dept.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective 7: Take Leadership role in facilitating collaboration among sports leagues and Parks and Recreation Dept.</th>
<th>Short Term 2012 – 2014 and ongoing</th>
<th>LMT Parks and Recreation Department</th>
<th>Staff time.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seek partnerships in facility, maintenance, and programming improvements.</td>
<td>Short Term 2012 – 2014 and ongoing</td>
<td>LMT Parks and Recreation Department</td>
<td>Staff time. Likely to result in increased support from other partners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 organized sports leagues in LMT</td>
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</table>
### Objective 8: Continue to facilitate recreation services supplied by other providers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One of the main roles of the Parks and Recreation Department is supporting the efforts of other providers in offering public recreation opportunities. This expands public service exponentially but still requires Township parks and recreation staff support. It is important to recognize that even volunteer efforts are not free and come with the cost of staff time for coordination, management, training etc.</td>
<td>Many more recreation opportunities are available in the community because the Township supports these efforts. These programs would not be possible with Township resources alone. Therefore facilitating recreation provided by other organizations is a very cost effective way to deliver public recreation opportunities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Action Plan

### Goal 5: Provide operational excellence and financial stability that will garner widespread public support for parks and recreation.

**Leadership**

- **Lead Partner**: LMT Parks and Recreation Department
- **Support Partners**: Potentially other campus type maintenance managers from public and private schools could serve as a task force for this project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
<th>Effort and Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Objective 1: Develop a formalized maintenance management system.</td>
<td>Short Term, 2012-2014</td>
<td>Staff time and assistance from outside parks maintenance professional. Seek grant from PADCNR Peer Program of $10,000 with match of $1,000 provided by LMT. Seek additional support from DVIT. Crucial to free time for Parks Superintendent to focus on development of system.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Importance**

Formalized maintenance management system will increase efficiency and effectiveness by establishing methods to plan, direct, control, and evaluate park maintenance functions. By making operations as routinely scheduled as possible, human and financial resources can be allocated in the most effective manner. Exploration of the potential to contract out routine functions such as custodial services for restrooms, traffic island maintenance and grass mowing and trimming could result in cost savings in staff and equipment.

**Benefits**

- Cost savings by making majority of work routinely scheduled rather than reactionary. (Maintenance tasks performed in a reactionary mode cost seven times as much as a routinely scheduled task.) Increased productivity of existing work force and identification of skills needed for active recreation facility maintenance and natural resource management in the future as the work force evolves.
- Enhanced appearance, safety and playability of recreation facilities as well as better protection of natural areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective 2: Establish a Stakeholders Advisory Panel for Lower Merion Township. Include colleges and universities as partners.</th>
<th>Short Term, 2012-2014</th>
<th>Time of elected and appointed officials and volunteers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LMT Board of Commissioners</td>
<td>LMT Administration and Parks and Recreation Department</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Importance**

Providing an organized way for citizens and organizations such as higher education with related interests in parks and recreation to provide their input and support will generate community and stakeholder involvement efficiently and effectively. Community input is significant yet fragmented at a time when the number of organizations and citizens involved in recreation, conservation and volunteer is significantly increasing. A stakeholder panel would centralize community parks and recreation input and support.

**Benefits**

Centralizing stakeholder involvement by having the representatives of different community and parks and recreation interests working together on an ongoing basis, as an umbrella organization for parks and recreation will make the best use of time and resources.
**Objective 3: Establish a Volunteer Coordinator position.**

| Short Term          | LMT Board of Commissioners, LMT Administration and LMT Parks and Recreation Department | $20,000 to 40,000 and benefits depending on part or full time status. Investment in this position should yield the benefit of volunteer services that will exceed the salary of the position. |

**Importance**
Volunteerism has become a major positive aspect of parks and recreation. The number of organizations and individuals offering volunteer services has become so large that it is beyond the capacity of the Parks and Recreation Department to manage the range and number of volunteers. Volunteerism is expected to increase in the future. It is essential to manage volunteerism in order to plan direct, sustain and grow ways to support community recreation in an alternative manner to tax dollars. Volunteers are not free, they come with a cost.

**Benefits**
Investment in this position should yield volunteer contributions that will support tasks and functions that the Township could not afford to pay for on its own.

**Objective 4: Develop an annual report for parks and recreation.**

| Short Term          | LMT Parks and Recreation Department | Staff time |

**Importance**
Conveying the accomplishments, opportunities and challenges of the public parks and recreation system is crucial in informing key stakeholders about the state of parks and recreation in Lower Merion Township. Increased public awareness and understanding will help to build support for the system in everything from policies and planning to partnerships and programs thereby enabling the most effective allocation of resources.

**Benefits**
Key stakeholders would understand the complexities and challenges of managing a public recreation system as well as how parks and recreation contributes to the quality of life and benefits the community.

**Objective 5: Develop a five-year employee development program.**

| Medium Term         | LMT Parks and Recreation Department | Staff time and one to two percent of the parks and recreation operating budget. |

**Importance**
Salaries are the single largest cost of the public parks and recreation system. Investing in employee development to increase their expertise will result in enhanced productivity, cost savings and improvements in facilities, programs, conservation and public service.

**Benefits**
Cost savings, increased productivity, staying current with technological and legal requirements to protect the health safety and welfare of the public and care of the public parks and recreation properties and assets.
### Objective 6: Make outstanding customer service a departmental goal and requirement of every position in parks and recreation.

| Importance | Excellent public service helps to build a sense of community and enriches the quality of life here. It is what the people of Lower Merion Township expect. |
| Benefits | Increased support and participation in parks and recreation by the community. |

| Objective 7: Re-configure administrative staff to support future directions in parks and recreation. |
| Importance | It is essential to create administrative support that reflects the changes of the 21st century including the increase use of technology, the provision of real-time information through the Internet and social media, increased work production by program staff, and growing importance of responsive and effective customer service for Lower Merion Township citizens. |
| Benefits | Increased productivity, stronger public service, decreased costs, more efficient use of existing budget and staff time, increased capacity to undertake programs and projects that are not possible with current configuration of staff, potential to reach Generations X and Y through social media, reduced costs in printing and enhanced ability to respond to changing needs and emerging opportunities |

<p>| Objective 8: Develop a management plan for the park security force. |
| Importance | Defining the rangers to be fully in line with the Department’s philosophy of the rangers being “Park Ambassadors” will be the foundation for a management plan that reflects this philosophy. |
| Benefits | Better use of existing resources, more effective structuring in order to use the park rangers to help meet the goals of this plan in terms of customer service, increasing public awareness and providing more programs. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective 9: Continue to support parks and recreation through a mix of public and private funding.</th>
<th>Ongoing</th>
<th>LMT Commissioners, Administration and Parks and Recreation Department</th>
<th>Continue to support operating budget and capital improvement funding. Undertake management plans in order to focus on where efficiencies can be captured and implemented. Tapping additional talent and support from organizations and individuals in the community will require focused attention in developing strategies for outreach. The development of partnerships and sponsorships require dedicated, persistent time and effort.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Importance</td>
<td>Protecting the public parks and recreation facilities and ensuring that they are safe, clean, and ready to use requires ongoing management and financial support. With the Township’s philosophy of strong fiscal accountability, undertaking planning to make sure all tax dollars are wisely spent to protect Township property and serve the citizens is crucial. Building upon the Parks &amp; recreation Department’s success in generating non-tax support and partnerships to offset costs will help the Township to control costs make the best use of tax money.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td>Increased efficiency and effectiveness in the allocation of Township tax funds for the maximum benefit of the community. Generation of funds from private resources and partners. Research shows that for every dollar communities spend on public recreation, another $1.26 to $1.42 is generated in non-tax support. Parks and recreation increases property values, deters crime and antisocial behavior, influences the positive development of youth, saves money on health care costs, and creates healthy family bonds, the foundation of our society.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 5 – Parks & Recreation Facilities
Chapter 6 – Conservation of Natural Resources & Scenic Beauty
Chapter 7 – Community Hubs & Recreation
Chapter 8 – Recreation Programs and Services
Chapter 9 – Management and Operations
Chapter 10 – Parks & Recreation Financing
Lower Merion Township has 47 parks with 701.1 acres of parkland. The parks offer a wide range of recreation opportunities, from active parks that host competitive play and traditional playgrounds to passive parks for enjoying nature and the Township’s scenic beauty. Facilities include ballfields, tennis and basketball courts, playgrounds, a pavilion, sitting areas, trails, community meeting rooms, a community center, areas for dogs, an indoor gym, gazebo for performing arts, two swimming pools, a banquet facility, an arboretum, historic sites, community gardens, a wildlife preserve, nature areas, horticultural plantings, and bird sanctuaries. Lower Merion Township parks are extremely popular with nine out of ten survey respondents indicating that they use Township parks, including 32-percent that visit the parks weekly.

**SIGNIFICANT PARK IMPROVEMENTS SINCE 1996**

Since the 1996 Parks and Recreation Plan, Lower Merion Township has undertaken significant park planning projects and made important additions and improvements to the parks and recreation system:

- **Park Master Planning:** The Township developed park master plans for Linwood Park, Flat Rock Park, Ashbridge Park, Vernon Young Park, the Cynwyd Trail as well as the Township-Wide Pedestrian and Bicycle Network Plan.
- **Trail Planning, Development, and Support:** The Township-wide Pedestrian and Bicycle Network feasibility study established how Lower Merion Township could create a trail system for citizens to get around by bicycling or walking. From this plan, the Cynwyd Heritage Trail was planned with development undereway. The Township acquired the trail corridor, a segment of the former SEPTA R-6 commuter rail line between Cynwyd Station and the Manayunk Bridge, through purchase, donation, or lease. The Cynwyd Heritage Trail is a two mile linear park that winds through residential areas, between two large cemeteries, and along the Schuylkill River. It is an open-space treasure of natural flora and fauna. The Township is working in partnership on the restoration of the Manayunk Bridge to connect the trail to the Manayunk section of Philadelphia. The Friends of the Cynwyd Heritage Trail is a non-profit organization formed to raise awareness and community involvement in the construction and maintenance of the Trail. The Friends assist Lower Merion Township by organizing volunteers for the Township’s trail workdays, providing design feedback, and working with members, partners, sponsors, and donors to raise money for permanent Trail improvements and amenities.
- **Park Improvements:** The Township has an established capital improvement program that has been funding improvements to the parks over the last 15 years. Improvements to Flat Rock Park help to increase access to the Schuylkill River for the community. Belmont Hills Pool and the Ardmore Pool were renovated with new amenities added in keeping with the public’s desire to retain the flavor of a true community pool. Belmont Hill Pool captured the 2009 “Best of Philly” award in Philadelphia Magazine for Best Public Pool. Other major projects included the improvements to Vernon Young Park, development of the playground in Ashbridge Park, and the revitalization of public restrooms that is in
PARKS & RECREATION PLAN UPDATE

Chapter 5
Parks & Recreation Facilities

progress. The Township has been conducting ongoing cyclic repair and replacement of park and recreation facilities.

- Park Development: Lower Merion Township converted a parking lot into Linwood Park that garnered prestigious design awards. Ashburn Field includes a baseball field and a playground.

- Naturalization of the Parks: Since the 1996 Plan, many citizens have become interested and engaged in naturalizing Lower Merion Township’s parks. Community groups have come together to work on tree planting, stream bank stabilization, gardens, environmental education and training. This has helped to conserve natural resources, solve some environmental problems, and reduce long-term maintenance and repair costs.

Although the 1996 Plan found that additional recreation land was needed for active recreation, only 5.7 acres of non-trail parkland have been added for Richie Ashburn Field as well as the land for the Cynwyd Heritage Trail. The need for additional parkland for active recreational use continues. However, high land costs and limited Township resources hinder further land acquisition. The great demand on the parks and recreation facilities, which has existed for decades, puts stress and wear and tear on the system. The parks are wonderful assets and highly valued by citizens, but many are showing signs of overuse and need to be refreshed.

ANALYSIS

Table 8 provides an inventory of Lower Merion Township’s parks. Twenty-four (24) of the parks are devoted to resource protection with 511.7 acres of land. The 23 parks and recreation facilities for active recreation have 192.4 acres of land. Only 28 percent of Lower Merion Township’s 701 acres of parkland is for active recreation supporting sports, fitness, playground activities, indoor recreation, programs, community events and other active recreation pursuits. Informal self-directed recreation opportunities such as picnicking and walking are limited at most active parks.

It is important to note the configuration of Lower Merion Township’s parks for active recreation. Only two of the 23 parks are over 20 acres, 28.8-acre Ashbridge Memorial Park and 24.3-acre Flat Rock Park. Sixteen of the parks are less than 11 acres including seven that are less than one acre. Generally community parks are at least 25 acres, preferably ranging upwards of 50 acres. Sports complexes have 50 acres of parkland or more.
## Table 8 - Lower Merion Township Parks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Park</th>
<th>Acreage</th>
<th>Park Type</th>
<th>Facilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rolling Hill Park</strong></td>
<td>103.0</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Nature park, hiking and equestrian trails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mill Creek Valley Park</strong></td>
<td>88.6</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Nature park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kenealy Nature Park</strong></td>
<td>87.0</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Nature park, hiking and equestrian trails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pencoyd Park</strong></td>
<td>57.8</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Undeveloped open space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cynwyd Heritage Trail</strong></td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>2Mile trail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Henry Lane Park</strong></td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Nature park, hiking and equestrian trails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appleford Estate</strong></td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Arboretum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Merion Botanical Park</strong></td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>Nature park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Harriton Park</strong></td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>Historic site and nature park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shortridge Memorial Park</strong></td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>Nature park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>West Mill Creek Park</strong></td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>Nature park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Guilley Run Park</strong></td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Picnic facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Black Rock Road Park</strong></td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>Undeveloped open space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eco Valley Nature Park</strong></td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>Undeveloped open space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fuller Property</strong></td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Undeveloped open space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Williamson Road Site</strong></td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>Mini</td>
<td>Undeveloped open space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Austin Memorial Park</strong></td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Mini</td>
<td>Nature park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sharpe Park &amp; Bird Sanctuary</strong></td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Mini</td>
<td>Bird sanctuary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Packer Park</strong></td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Mini</td>
<td>Community gardens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Simpson Island</strong></td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Wildlife preserve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Merion Square Road Site</strong></td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>Mini</td>
<td>Undeveloped open space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Righters Mill Road Site</strong></td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Mini</td>
<td>Undeveloped open space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cynwyd Station Park</strong></td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>Mini</td>
<td>Nature park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wynnewood Station Park</strong></td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>Mini</td>
<td>Undeveloped open space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total – 24</strong></td>
<td>511.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parks for Active Recreation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ashbridge Memorial Park</strong></td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Tennis, playground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Flat Rock Park</strong></td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Picnic areas, boat launch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>South Ardmore Park</strong></td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>Baseball, basketball, soccer, tennis, playground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>General Wayne Park</strong></td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>Baseball, tennis, playground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Polo Field</strong></td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>Baseball, basketball, soccer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gladwyne &amp; M.W. Braun Mem. Park</strong></td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>Baseball, soccer, tennis, playground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bala Cynwyd Park</strong></td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>Baseball, basketball, tennis, playground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>McMoran Park</strong></td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Baseball, basketball, tennis, playground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wynnewood Valley Park</strong></td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>Basketball, tennis, playground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Penn Wyne Park</strong></td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>Baseball, basketball, tennis, playground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lewis J. Smith Park &amp; Pool</strong></td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Swimming pool, street hockey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vernon V. Young Memorial Park</strong></td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>Basketball, baseball, pool, playground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bryn Mawr Community Center</strong></td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>Tennis, meeting rooms, senior citizens ctr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bala Avenue Park &amp; Gym</strong></td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>Gym, tennis, playground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Linwood Park</strong></td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Mini</td>
<td>Garden, open space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Richie Ashburn Field</strong></td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Baseball, playground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Warner Avenue Tot Lot</strong></td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>Mini</td>
<td>Basketball, playground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ardmore Avenue Community Center</strong></td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>Gym, library, meeting rooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Belmont Hills Community Center</strong></td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>Mini</td>
<td>Meeting rooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>St. Paul’s Tot Lot</strong></td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>Mini</td>
<td>Playground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bala Cynwyd Senior Center</strong></td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>Mini</td>
<td>Senior citizens center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Roberts Road Tot Lot</strong></td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>Mini</td>
<td>Playground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PALM Center</strong></td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Senior citizens center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total – 23</strong></td>
<td>192.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The small size of the parks limits the development of sports facilities. In Lower Merion Township, parks are uniquely classified based upon use, size, and facilities. Some very small parks draw visitors from the whole community. For example, Richie Ashburn Field is three acres but serves a major community wide purpose for baseball league play and scholastic sports of the Lower Merion School District. The size and configuration of the parks presents a problem to the community with typically sized neighborhood parks serving as community parks with organized scheduled events such as sports league play.

Existing parks are fully developed and, in most cases, cannot accommodate additional facilities or use areas. Participation in sports leagues increased from 7,050 to 11,045 since 1996, an increase of 56 percent. There are not enough ballfields to support the leagues and there is a concern that players may be relegated to a waiting list in the future. Some leagues already have waiting lists. In 2011, Lower Merion Little League added a girls’ softball league (not included in the 11,045 participation figure) generating the need for more field time. Sports fields for adult users are limited due to lack of field availability. Two adult leagues use the fields on Sundays for softball and flag football. Athletic fields in the municipal parks are used to capacity. The Township has not been able to accommodate requests for the use of fields by private schools in the community due to lack of capacity. Field use is tightly scheduled with schools using fields after school immediately followed by community league play. When school games run longer than expected, the recreation leagues have a shorter time to play as darkness sets in resulting the early termination of the game. This is a tough situation for players that are paying a league fee to play. The Township has recently begun to take fields out of service for maintenance, rest, and rehabilitation, which will improve field conditions, playability, and safety. The Parks and Recreation Department is planning to quantify the maintenance impact on ballfields by schools in order to request defined support required for field readiness for scholastic play by private schools that do not provide any support or field maintenance for their field use. Numerous baseball fields have overlapping outfields, which prevent two games from occurring simultaneously. Soccer teams use baseball outfields resulting in dual season scheduling conflicts.

Compounding these issues is school district use of park facilities, much of it necessitated by the school construction program that will end upon completion of the renovations. Nevertheless, the Lower Merion School District itself does not have enough facilities and is currently using some Township parks (South Ardmore, McMoran, Bala, Vernon Young, and Gladwyne) to support its programs. Although some Township fields may not be needed after the High School construction projects are completed, several sites including South Ardmore will remain and continue to support the school sports program.

Additional parkland for active recreation is the best solution to meet the current and future demand for recreation facilities. Unfortunately, opportunity to acquire additional parkland is limited by the cost, available Township funding, physical characteristics and the developed nature of the community. Creative solutions and partnerships are the keys to meeting recreation needs in Lower Merion Township.

Because of the overwhelming need for sports fields, the parks are maximized. The parks have been developed over time to meet the increasing needs of organized groups and have not always incorporated inviting areas for the casual park user. There is only one picnic pavilion in the parks. Gathering areas to socialize and informally enjoy the park settings are limited. Creating places and facilities where friends and families can gather and socialize will expand park use for people of all ages beyond competitive sports and sports spectators. The majority of the active parks were designed on a “formula” basis with similar facilities (playground, basketball court, ballfield, and tennis courts)
but lacking individual unique character. The public opinion survey for recreation provides a clear picture of facilities desired by residents: trails, areas to play and socialize, and opportunities to enjoy nature. Focus groups with children, senior adults, and conservation interests echoed general public sentiment asking for more space to socialize and spend the day, more colorful play areas, pavilions, tables, shade, and clean attractive restrooms.

The playgrounds are important facilities in the parks. The success of the new playground at Ashbridge Memorial Park provides a framework for planning future playground enhancements. The basketball and tennis courts in most of the larger active parks are well used and valued by residents. Facility upgrades must also include improvements to achieve full accessibility as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Accessible routes, parking spaces, spectator areas, bench seating areas, and other accommodations should be incorporated into each park.

**STRENGTHS**

The existing active parks are extensively developed with facilities that target the basic needs of residents. Although additional facilities are needed, the parks, in most instances, have been maximized to make best use of the available areas for active recreation. Desired support facilities such as restrooms are provided in most active parks. The park settings, many with mature trees, small steams, and lawns are attractive locations to spend time outdoors. Residents value the parks and give them high marks for safety, cleanliness, and attractiveness.

Lower Merion Township has formulated a design-conscious approach to planning new park facilities and rejuvenating existing ones. Linwood Park, the Cynwyd Heritage Trail, the Ashbridge Playground, Bryn Mawr Gazebo, and the Belmont Hills and Ardmore Pools stand in testimony to the Township’s high standards for design and the creation of attractive public spaces.

The Lower Merion School District facilities play an important role in community recreation. The Lower Merion Parks and Recreation department schedules school district facilities for recreational use during non-school hours. The Township and the School District have a collaborative working relationship in planning, developing, maintaining and using their facilities for educational and recreation purposes that greatly benefit this community with limited land for active recreation.

**CHALLENGES**

The main challenges in Lower Merion Township’s parks and recreation facilities include:

- Working with the limited number and size of parks that can accommodate active recreation facilities.
- Maintaining them. Park maintenance tasks include mowing, trimming, forestry, sports turf management, natural resource management, swimming pool maintenance, custodial care of buildings, setting up and taking down for events, playground safety inspections, pavement sweeping and cleaning, leaf removal, snow removal, capital improvement project, supervision and management of outside contractors performing park work, coordination of volunteers, collaboration with community organizations on park projects, public response, coordination of events. Over the lifetime of a park, 75 percent of its cost is in maintenance.
- High cost of land, limited availability of land and constrained Township resources. An example to illustrate just how difficult it is to accommodate sports in Lower Merion Township is Villanova University’s construction of a baseball field eight miles away in Plymouth Township. Conflicts with neighbors over the use of public parkland and private schools for recreation, mainly organized sports.
- Indoor recreation centers are small, outdated and have architectural barriers that impede accessibility.
- Balancing the scheduling of facility space for reserved use and program with time and space for drop-in use.

A population of about 58,000, high participation in athletic programs, and lack of space sufficient to accommodate general public recreation use necessitate that every potential area for active recreation be pursued. The residential context of many of the active parks requires sensitivity in providing recreation facilities in the neighborhood setting. The characteristics of the land throughout much of Lower Merion Township offer additional challenges. The land is steeply sloped and, in many areas, wooded which further limits the development of active recreation facilities.
OPPORTUNITIES

Lower Merion Township has a capital improvement program to undertake the cyclic improvement of recreation facilities. The Township focuses on community needs, safety, and adherence to laws and guidelines. Future renovations could also focus on sustainability and energy efficiency. With emerging funding sources for sustainability, grants could be available to support Township efforts that would result in long-term payback. The following strategies outline an approach to improve parks and recreation facilities.

Continue to Look for Opportunities for Additional Parkland

It is important to monitor current privately owned large parcels of land to determine how Lower Merion Township could obtain additional parkland. St. Charles Borromeo Seminary is a significant property with open space. The Township could work with the Archdiocese of Philadelphia to explore its conservation and use if the Archdiocese contemplates a change in ownership or other arrangement in which the Township could secure the right to use acreage here for recreation. Another area for exploration is along the Schuylkill River. The Township could work in partnerships with private developers to secure property, easements and/or the development of public recreation facilities as part of the development process.

REVITALIZE AND UPGRADE EXISTING PARKS

Many parks need upgrades to meet the requirements of the ADA. While making these necessary improvements, opportunities to upgrade park facilities and recreation areas should be undertaken to target improvements desired by residents and address facility life-cycle replacement needs.

- Create barrier free parks. Accessible walkways should connect facilities to an accessible parking space where parking is provided. Spectator and gathering areas must be accessible and a percentage of site improvements must have accessible accommodations. Benches along trails should have a wheelchair resting area next to it. A portion of picnic tables provided should have wheelchair accommodations.

- Make playgrounds interesting and unique to Lower Merion. Playgrounds are some of the most dynamic facilities in community parks. Trends in playground design include adding play value by customizing the design of the resilient pavement safety surface as an extension of the play equipment, including music equipment, and featuring educational elements. The playground equipment and play areas in the majority of Lower Merion Township parks are “formula” based with similar color schemes, equipment and layout. Older playgrounds should be upgraded to have new equipment that is compliant with the latest safety and accessibility standards, colorful, and dynamic to engage children in play. Play areas should be designed to also incorporate improvements for caregivers and small group use such as seating areas and convenient access to shade.

- Consider a non-traditional natural play area with enhanced landscaping. Combine landscape elements, movement corridors, sun paths, weather patterns, drainage courses, plant groupings, and other site amenities with carefully chosen natural materials, structures, and features to create safe, accessible, age-appropriate play, social, and learning opportunities in natural play areas that look and feel like they’ve been there forever. Use the National Wildlife Federation’s Natural Play & Learning Area Guidelines Project in identifying ways to make nature more a part of children’s play and learning areas. These guidelines are under development and are expected to help with the design and management of play areas with a nature focus.

- Incorporate places for people to gather and socialize in the parks. Picnic pavilions, plazas, and scattered benches promote social activities and encourage visitors to spend time at parks. Add pavilions throughout the parks to accommodate a variety of activities. Pavilions near playgrounds provide shade for caregivers, offer shelter for storytelling activities and summer playground programs, and create lunchtime gathering areas for day care groups. Pavilions near sports field and courts offer shade and gathering areas for team meetings and celebrations. Pavilions in natural areas and open lawn areas provide shelter for traditional picnicking. Picnic hubs should be developed where possible with nearby horseshoe pits and sand or lawn volleyball courts, grills,
and picnic tables. Add plazas with seating outside of courts and near playgrounds and garden areas. Explore opportunities to add places for teens to gather. Hanging out is one of the main activities teens enjoy. Teen areas should be located where there is complete visual access, separate from other areas but part of the main park. Where possible teen areas for socializing should be informal, using low sitting walls or rocks for seating and near facilities teens enjoy like basketball and volleyball courts.

- **Enhance the parks with color.** Colorful plantings create an inviting setting for parks. Low maintenance perennials and grasses can enhance park entrances and sign areas. Wildflower and grasses can add color and interest to wood and riparian buffer edges. Work with the Civic Associations to see if there is interest in developing garden areas in parks that could be planted and tended by volunteers.

- **Provide pathways for walking and bicycling in the parks.** In the Township’s public opinion survey, 75 percent of the respondents indicate that they walk as a recreational activity. More than half of the respondents indicated that they bicycle. Adding trails and pathways to parks will provide opportunities for residents to participate in these activities. Trails should explore the full extent of each park, as possible, and configured with loops for various walking circuits. To facilitate easily meeting accessibility requirements, trails should be developed at a maximum five-percent slope. Benches should be located at convenient intervals along trails.

- **Continue to develop master plans for the parks.** The best approach to revitalize and upgrade the existing active parks is to complete master plans for the parks. Because the Township has previously completed master plans for several of the parks, an abbreviated approach that targets specific opportunities and facilities may be appropriate; public involvement should be part of the process as well. Consider updating park master plans that are over three years old or sooner if special circumstances or opportunities warrant. Each park should be designed to have a unique character that responds to the site and neighborhood.

### MAXIMIZE EXISTING PARKS AND RECREATION SITES

Land available for recreation in Lower Merion Township is limited which creates program challenges for the Parks & Recreation Department, sports leagues, and the Lower Merion School District. By default, the best approach to accommodating the recreation needs of the community is to achieve the maximum use of existing park, school, and other recreation sites.

- **Athletic fields for baseball, softball, soccer, and lacrosse should be reconfigured to maximize use and address needs.** Analysis of the baseball field configuration exposed several opportunities to make changes to field layout that will maximize the total number of baseball fields and target the current mix of field sizes needed for programs by eliminating overlapping fields, changing field size, and adding fields. Refer to Appendix D for schematic site plans and a field calculation matrix that outlines proposed changes to several parks to maximize athletic fields.

  - The Parks & Recreation Department’s partnership with Lower Merion School District should continue in sharing athletic facilities at the parks and school campuses for the benefit of both the Township and School District. Explore opportunities to cooperatively develop facilities that maximize use such as turf fields and field and court lights. The size, configuration, and location of Polo Field make it a good park candidate for development of turf field(s) with lights. There may be school sites that also have turf field and light potential. The issue of the Lower Merion Township/Haverford Township partnership at Polo Field should be investigated to see if there is an approach to developing the tract for community benefit. Involve the Lower Merion School District as a potential partner in Polo Field improvements.

- **Explore opportunities for creating school parks with the Lower Merion School District.** Work cooperatively with the School District to develop community park facilities (playgrounds, trails, benches, etc.) at school athletic sites that are programmed for community recreation. Adding these features will maximize the use of the schools for recreation, beyond traditional athletic activities.

- **Work with developers to add recreation facilities as part of their development projects where possible.** This would be particularly important in areas of the Township where field lighting would be compatible.

### INCREASING PARK SUSTAINABILITY AND STEWARDSHIP

The survey results show that residents want additional areas to enjoy nature in parks. This may be as simple as adding a trail that explores an entire park, weaving among mature trees and accessing stream edges where available. The following sus-
Sustainability initiatives offer suggestions for nine major active parks in Lower Merion Township.

- **Penn Wynne Park** – Develop a nature trail to explore the full extent of the park. Enhance the riparian buffer along the small stream by removing invasive species and introducing native riparian buffer plantings. Consider planting meadow grasses outside of recreation use areas to expand the riparian buffer to filter pollutants and minimize mowing. Consider establishing a small native plant nursery on the south side of the stream for municipal purposes.

- **Polo Field** – Plant deciduous trees throughout the park to provide shade and create a sense of enclosure. Introduce shade trees in parking areas to minimize heat island effect and near spectator areas to create comfortable areas for viewing activities.

- **Richie Ashburn Ballfield** – Enhance the streambanks south of the ballfield by removing invasive species and introducing native vegetation as a riparian buffer along the stream. Install a pedestrian bridge to link to adjacent Kenealy Nature Park.

- **South Ardmore Park** – Introduce rain gardens to infiltrate stormwater runoff from courts and impervious surfaces. Add trees in non-programmed areas of the park for shade and to create intimate areas for informal enjoyment of the park.

- **Vernon Young Park** – Introduce rain gardens to infiltrate stormwater runoff from courts and impervious surface areas. Plant deciduous trees near the playground and Ardmore Community Center and street trees along the park’s frontage for shade and to create a sense of place. Communicate with PALM to explore opportunities for introducing raised-bed gardens in the park that could be planted and tended by seniors of PALM.

- **Bala Cynwyd Park** – Remove invasive species along the Cynwyd Heritage Trail corridor and add native plantings.

- **Gladwyne Park** – Plant deciduous trees for shade.

- **General Wayne Park** – Establish rain gardens to infiltrate stormwater runoff from courts. Plant deciduous trees to create a picnic grove and enhance the riparian corridor with native plantings.

- **McMorran /Lewis J. Smith Parks** – Plant deciduous trees to provide shade and create a sense of place. Remove any invasive species found in the wooded area and reforest as necessary.

- **Design park master plans and facility enhancements from an environmental conservation perspective – design with nature.**

- **Protect and enhance natural resources of the parks.**

- **Provide buffer areas around sensitive natural resources that should have limited or no public access.**

- **Enhance riparian buffers along streams and stabilize streambanks.**

- **Locate facilities with consideration of prevailing wind and solar orientation.**

- **Use native plant material to enhance wildlife habitats and minimize maintenance.**

- **Consider the site soil, 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 natural features such as wetlands and rock outcrops into park designs.**

- **Develop parks using Best Management Practices for erosion control and stormwater management.** Rain gardens, broad grass swales, porous pavements and other strategies should be considered.

- **Consider using recycled and green materials. Consider life-cycle replacement costs of facilities.**

- **Use solar power, geo-thermal heating/cooling, water recycling, and other strategies for park infrastructure.**
RAISE THE BAR ON DESIGN

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 the great design of new and expanded parks and the sensitive, thoughtful master planning of existing parks. The recent improvements to the Belmont Hills swimming pool and the overall park design and finishes at Linwood Park have set a high bar for park appearance in the Township commensurate with the community character. As parks are enhanced, particular attention should be paid to the design, materials, finishes, and amenities.

Following are several strategies to enhance the overall design of the parks:

- Establish design guidelines that provide unified principles, concepts, furnishings, materials, colors, and so on for all Township parks. Establish policies for review, design, development, and management of facilities. Prioritize conservation of the natural environment in the design process. Evaluate designs for Belmont Hills Swimming Pool and Linwood Park as a point of departure for establishing guidelines.

- Establish a readily identifiable image in the community for public parks. Create a uniform signage system for all park signs that conveys the image of a premier public park system. Use the design and standards of Lower Merion Township way finding system as the basis for the park and recreation facility signage system. Maintain uniform size, color, layout, materials, and graphic image. The signage system should include signs for the park name, facility names, directions, field names or numbers, regulations, information, and interpretation.

- Provide street trees along park road frontage and park drives.

- Plant attractive, low-maintenance landscaping at key park locations such as entrances and plazas.

- Strive to undertake improvements to the parks that are holistic and not piecemeal in order to provide a sense of presence and accomplishment in the public view.

- Provide support and accessory facilities that create premier recreation facilities such as dugouts for baseball fields; picnic areas designed as a unit with grills, picnic tables, horseshoe pits, shaded areas, and water; restrooms in high use parks; and benches at game courts.

- Enhance parks with landscaping for color and interest and trees for shade.

- Create great playgrounds that promote fun, socialization, learning, creativity, and integration with nature. Playgrounds should be provided in each active park.

- Design parks with consideration of safety and security of users:
  - Provide visual access into the parks from surrounding streets and sidewalks. Avoid designs that create “hidden” areas.
  - Provide physical barriers between adjacent roadways and parking areas. Avoid use of chain link fence as barriers where a landscape strip or ornamental metal fence could be used. Replace the chain link fence at the South Ardmore Park playground with an ornamental metal fence.
  - Where possible and practical, limit the extent of vehicle penetration into the site and vehicular/pedestrian conflict areas. Many of the parks rely on visitors walking to the park or parking on-street and this should continue as practical so that park area is not taken up by parking. Polo Field and Richie Ashburn Field are good examples of parking located without pedestrian vehicular conflicts. A similar scenario is suggested for the proposed parking at Penn Wynne Park as shown in Appendix D.

- Provide trails of adequate width for the intended user groups. Several of the existing trails are too narrow and should be expanded to a minimum of six-feet wide for pedestrian use only or minimum eight-feet wide where multiple uses are anticipated.

- Provide adequate safety zones surrounding ballfields, especially with consideration of foul balls. Do not locate trails, playgrounds, and other facilities in foul ball zones. Spectator seating at ballfields should be separated from the field of play by fencing.
Lower Merion Township’s scenic beauty, open space, and significant natural resources are high on the list of reasons why people value living here. The pastoral landscape is a defining element of Lower Merion Township. Large wooded areas, the Schuylkill River, and streams play a critical role in the character of the community. Open space enhances the livability of the residential areas. A major finding of the public input process for this plan update was the importance of the environment. Citizens value the natural areas conserved by Lower Merion Township as open space and passive parks. They want more access and opportunities to enjoy nature. The environmental movement that has evolved nationally over the last decade has been embraced in Lower Merion Township. Environmental issues and the need to promote conservation initiatives throughout the park system and the municipality as a whole are high priorities among citizens.

**ANALYSIS**

Lower Merion Township has been a leader in Pennsylvania in open space protection and conservation. It was among the first municipalities to adopt Conservation By Design Principles through its Open Space Preservation District Ordinance. The Township has developed and implemented a variety of policies, programs, and projects to protect and manage public and private open space in the community. The Township has established public/private partnerships in addressing conservation and open space issues and opportunities.

Seventy-three percent of Lower Merion Township’s parkland (512 acres) is devoted to resource protection and passive recreation. While the majority of these areas are open for public use for walking, hiking, and enjoying nature, numerous properties are undeveloped parcels of open space with limited or inconvenient access. The parkland for resource protection encompasses some of the most environmentally sensitive lands of the municipality: lands with wooded cover, steep slopes, and stream corridors. Protection of these lands is critical for both the environmental health of the community and retaining the green, natural context of the Township. The top recreation pursuits in which residents are interested include: walking, enjoying nature, playing in the parks, and exercise and fitness. These are activities that can readily occur in many of the passive parks and, when thoughtfully planned and sensitively accommodated, are compatible with the goal of resource protection.

**STRENGTHS**

Lower Merion Township’s extensive natural land holdings dedicated to conservation comprise 71 percent of the municipal parkland. As a system, these lands are significant both in number of sites and in acreage. On an individual basis, parks like Rolling Hill Park, Kenealy Nature Park, and Mill Creek Valley Park have sufficient acreage to sustain and protect natural resources. Many of the natural parks connect, creating corridors of natural open space. Larger tracts and connected tracts of natural areas are important because they provide the greatest ecological benefits.

An important strength of the community is the significant interest of citizens in environmental issues and their willingness to become involved in community environmental initia-
In 2010 over 300 residents volunteered to plant vegetation along the Cynwyd Heritage Trail, an indication of community interest and commitment to environmental projects. The Township has an active Environmental Advisory Committee and Shade Tree Commission and park friends groups for Linwood Park, General Wayne Park, Sharpe Park, and other parks.

Planning, management, and maintenance of conservation projects is a multi-departmental collaborative effort involving the Parks and Recreation Department, Building and Planning, and Public Works. Open space and conservation play a major role in Township planning from the Comprehensive Plan to ordinances regarding manufacturing and industrial districts.

**CHALLENGES**

While Lower Merion Township owns and protects significant acreage, the majority of important natural resources and environmentally sensitive areas are privately held and vulnerable to development and degraded environmental value. A large amount of open space is privately owned and could be developed at any time. Responsible public use of many key open spaces is difficult due to the isolation of the site, limited or nonexistent ways for the public to access it, and lack of public awareness of its existence. Establishing the connections between natural areas in many developed sections of the community is difficult due to the lack of sidewalks and pathways and concerns of neighbors about public access. A significant concern is the cost of managing, maintaining, and sustaining natural areas and resources as healthy ecosystems.

**OPPORTUNITIES**

The natural resources and open spaces of Lower Merion Township afford the residents the opportunity of experiencing nature close to home. The Township's successful history of public private partnerships in many conservation and open space projects, programs and initiatives bodes well for similar efforts in the future. The Township's open space and natural resources are part of its green infrastructure that could be used to help solve storm water management problems.

**Promotion of Environmental Stewardship**

An active environmental community plays an important role in conservation in Lower Merion Township. The Lower Merion Conservancy, Natural Lands Trust, Friends of Saunders Woods, Riverbend Environmental Center, and other groups promote conservation of natural areas of the Township. These organizations advance the stewardship of specific properties, provide environmental education, and undertake conservation projects. A forum of conservation stakeholders revealed significant interest in Lower Merion Township regarding conservation issues. The organizations identified many ideas and challenges that they share. An outcome of the forum was the recognition that collaboration and sharing of resources among the Township, conservation organizations and parks friends groups will advance environmental objectives community-wide.

- **Continue to team with environmental organizations.** Work with the organizations to identify and select projects to address environmental issues. The Township should continue to work closely with these organizations to enhance municipal parkland.

- **Spearhead ongoing collaboration among environmental organizations.** Lower Merion Township could serve as the central clearinghouse for information and communications. Develop a program for environmental education and project volunteer opportunities using the Township website, newsletter, e-mail, and other media.

- **Incorporate environmental education components into parks.** The purpose would be to communicate conservation strategies and the importance of conservation to residents. Demonstration projects educate landowners and inspire them to undertake similar projects on their properties.
- Develop demonstration projects and interpretative signs that illustrate conservation techniques. Demonstration projects could include composting bins, rain barrels, rain gardens, porous pavements, etc. Landscaping that enhances habitats for native wildlife, butterflies, and birds could be planted with signs to describe the food and shelter aspects of the vegetation. Interpretative signs could identify invasive species and explain their threat to native vegetation.

- Develop and incorporate environmental programming as a focus area in the program management plan for Parks and Recreation. Work with the Lower Merion Conservancy, Riverbend Environmental Center, and the Lower Merion School District to develop a strategy for environmental programs and outreach in the parks and to design the interpretative signs and conservation messages.

Improved Access to Natural Areas

Citizens have indicated that they would like improved access to natural areas, additional trails for walking, and convenient locations to enjoy nature. The 24 passive parks and open space parcels, including the Cynwyd Heritage Trail offer over 500 acres of natural area for residents to enjoy. Unfortunately, only a fraction of these natural areas are readily accessible for public use. Rolling Hill Park and West Mill Creek Park are frequent destinations but many of the other passive parks have limited visitation due to lack of access areas or limited knowledge about the sites.

- Develop convenient access areas for passive parks. Parks like Kenealy Nature Park, Henry Lane Park, and Mill Creek Valley Park would have higher visitation if well-developed access areas were integrated into the sites. Access areas or trailheads should be located to be visible from roads and provided with a small stabilized parking area, information kiosk with trail maps and park information, and trail signs. Benches or a few scattered picnic tables should be added in larger parks to accommodate visitors who are meeting to enjoy the park trails together. Composting toilets, bike racks, a small pavilion, and interpretative signs may be appropriate in some locations.

- Provide information about the passive parks on the Lower Merion Township website. Identify the roads where parking areas for access are located. Develop trail maps that can be downloaded for use exploring trails on the properties.

- Continue to work with Bridlewild Trail Association to maintain trail easements across private property. The Bridlewild Trail Association maintains miles of trails in the community that are available for pedestrian and equestrian use.

- Seek additional access easements from residential areas to passive parks to create safe pedestrian linkages. This would be with willing landowners.

Upgrade Existing Parks for Environmental Conservation

Lower Merion Township parks provide a showcase for demonstrating environmental conservation initiatives and promoting stewardship. These public lands offer areas that can be improved to solve environmental problems and mitigate concerns, demonstrate "green" alternatives for improvements, and enhance the natural setting of the community.

- Promote "green" alternatives through park improvements. Use a sustainable, environmentally sensitive approach to land development for park improvements and enhancements. The Sustainable Sites Initiative™ (SITES™) is an interdisciplinary effort of the American Society of Landscape Architects, the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, and the United States Botanic Garden. Their goal is to create voluntary national guidelines and performance benchmarks for sustainable land design, construction, and maintenance practices. SITES offers guiding principles, shown in Figure 3, that Lower Merion Township should consider as park improvements are undertaken. These guiding principles strive to reduce the harm done to the environment as well as to preserve...
and renew natural and cultural resources.

- **Incorporate sustainable strategies into the parks as they are developed, expanded, and renovated.** Sustainable strategies include:
  - Design parks to be sustainable (minimal site disturbance, consider orientation for solar and prevailing wind, reuse previously disturbed areas).
  - **Incorporate green infrastructure** (stormwater infiltration, solar power, geo-thermal heating/cooling).
  - **Incorporate green facilities** (composting restrooms, porous pavements).
  - Use sustainable materials (recycled materials, natural stone, wood grown in sustainable managed forests)
  - Consider long-term maintenance requirements (no-mow/low-mow areas, native plants, metal roofs for buildings)
  - Consider life-cycle costs (roof replacement, playground equipment replacement, trail repaving)
  - **Incorporate landscapes for learning** (interpretative signs, demonstration projects, habitat areas)

- **Use the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Publication on Sustainable Parks as a Reference in Park Planning.** *Creating Sustainable Community Parks—A Guide to Improving Quality of Life by Protecting Natural Resources* offers additional strategies and information about developing and managing sustainable parks.

- **Use the specific park initiatives for environmental conservation in active parks as outlined in Greening of Active Parks section of this plan.** Natural resource protection strategies and environmental enhancements could be undertaken in each passive park and open space parcel. A few of the potential environmental enhancement projects include:
  - **Rolling Hill Park**—Eradicate invasive species and monitor areas to deter re-establishment. Close trails that are unnecessary and are located on steep slopes.
  - **Kenealy Nature Park**—Stabilize the streambank and provide a connection to Richie Ashburn Field. Remove invasive species and plant native vegetation to expand the wood cover.
  - **Henry Lane Park**—Introduce native vegetation as edge planting to expand the wood cover.
  - **Shortridge Park**—Stabilize stream and add riparian buffer planting on full length of stream in the park. Consider adding wildflower meadow planting along wooded edge of park to minimize maintenance. Add habitat area.
  - **Sharpe Park**—Stabilize steep slopes with native vegetation to address stormwater runoff eroding the pathways.
  - **Pencoyd Park**—Eradicate invasive species and replant with native vegetation.

- **Explore opportunities for conservation easements on land contiguous to parks.** Conservation easements will expand conservation areas and protect important natural resources. Explore linear conservation easements to provide protected green linkages between park properties for wildlife corridors and resource protection.

### Address Environmental Issues in Lower Merion Parks

Parkland can be managed and enhanced to help address local and regional environment issues. Downstream flooding, streambank erosion, proliferation of invasive species, loss of mature forest are environmental issues that can be addressed, in part, in municipal parks. Parks alone cannot totally solve these problems, but parks can provide a dual approach to addressing issues: initially with physical enhancements and then through communication of these issues and solutions as demonstration projects to the public.

- **Manage stormwater and enhance water quality through infiltration of runoff.** Utilize BMP’s (Best Management Practices) such as broad grass swales, porous pavement surfaces, and rain gardens to promote infiltration of stormwater runoff that will minimize erosion and filter pollutants.

- **Continue to stabilize streambanks.** Streambank stabilization is an issue that is beginning to get attention in Lower Merion Township. Streambank restoration projects have been completed in Ashbridge Park and along a portion of the stream in Shortridge Park. These projects stabilized the streambanks with rocks and native vegetation to mitigate erosion and improve water quality. Additional riparian buffer vegetation planted along the stream corridor improves water quality and infiltrates runoff. Other parks in the Township that could benefit from streambank restoration include: the remainder of Shortridge Park, West Mill Creek Park, Wynnewood Valley Park, Penn Wynne Park, Harriton Park, Merion Botanical Park, Eco-Valley Nature Park and Flat Rock Park.

- **Develop and implement a plan to remove invasive species from the parks.** The Lower Merion Conservancy indicates that invasive species are a significant problem in almost every natural
**FIGURE 3: GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THE SUSTAINABLE SITES INITIATIVE**

- **Do No Harm** – Make no changes to the site that will degrade the surrounding environment. Promote projects that occur where there has been previous disturbance or development that presents an opportunity to regenerate ecosystem services through sustainable design.

- **Precautionary Principle** – Be cautious in making decisions that could create risk to human and environmental health. Some actions can cause irreversible damage. Examine a full range of alternatives – including non-action – and be open to input from all affected parties.

- **Design with Nature and Culture** – Create and implement designs that are responsive to economic, environmental, and cultural conditions with respect to the local, regional, and global context.

- **Use a Decision-Making Hierarchy of Preservation, Conservation, and Regeneration** – Maximize and mimic the benefits of ecosystem services by preserving existing environmental features, conserving resources in a sustainable manner, and regenerating lost or damaged ecosystem services.

- **Provide Regenerative Systems as Intergenerational Equity** – Provide future generations with a sustainable environment supported by regenerative systems and endowed with regenerative resources.

- **Support a Living Process** – Continuously re-evaluate assumptions and values and adapt to demographic and environmental change.

- **Use a System Thinking Approach** – Understand and value the relationships in an ecosystem and use an approach that reflects and sustains ecosystems services; re-establish the integral and essential relationship between natural processes and human activity.

- **Use a Collaborative and Ethical Approach** – Encourage direct and open communication among colleagues, clients, manufacturers, and users to link long-term sustainability with ethical responsibility.

- **Maintain Integrity in Leadership and Research** – Implement transparent and participatory leadership, develop research with technical rigor, and communicate new findings in a clear, consistent, and timely manner.

- **Foster Environmental Stewardship** – In all aspects of land development and management, foster and ethic of environmental stewardship – an understanding that responsible management of healthy ecosystems improves the quality of life for present and future generations.

Ecological Benefits of Riparian Buffers

- **Stabilize Stream Banks** – Deep-rooted vegetation binds the soil along stream banks, stabilizing the banks and preventing erosion during periods of high runoff.

- **Improve Water Quality** – Vegetation along streams traps and treats sediment, nutrients, and pollutants before they enter the stream or groundwater.

- **Enhance Wildlife Habitats** – Trees, shrubs, and grasses along streams provide habitat, shelter, and travel corridors for many aquatic and land species.

- **Reduce Flooding and Sedimentation** – Vegetation retains stormwater runoff longer, improves infiltration, and filters sediment from flowing downstream during floods.

- **Keep Streams Cooler and Healthier** – Shade from riparian buffers cools the stream waters, increasing the food, oxygen, and habitat for aquatic life.

- **Enhance Scenery** – Vegetation along streams adds beauty and diversity to the landscape.

and passive park in the Township. Invasive species choke out native species and degrade native environments that provide important habitat for wildlife. Japanese knotweed, multi-flora rose, mile-a-minute weed, bittersweet, grape vine, Norway maple, and other invasive vegetation are in the parks. The Township should work with the Lower Merion Conservancy and volunteers to eradicate invasive species, as possible, in the parks and monitor the parks for new outbreaks.

- **Develop and implement a plan to stem the loss of the tree canopy in Lower Merion Township.** Environmental organizations have noted that there has been tree canopy loss in the Township. Protecting wooded areas is important from a scenic perspective as well as from a natural resource protection perspective. Woodlands provide diversity to the landscape and whatever the season, provide visual interest and beauty. Woodlands stabilize slopes; provide habitat for shelter, nesting, and food for wildlife; protect groundwater by protecting headwaters and filtering stormwater runoff; and improve air quality and sequester large amounts of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere every year. Woodlands provide critical habitat for many interior forest birds and habitat loss and fragmentation are cited by the Audubon Society as one of the most serious threats facing birds in Pennsylvania. Selecting the proper species of trees for this program is crucial to ensure that the canopy is enhanced and sustained.

- **Promote and participate in TreeVitalize** – The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources has launched TreeVitalize, a public-private partnership to increase public awareness of the importance of community trees. The five-county region including and surrounding Philadelphia suffered a loss of 8% of heavy tree cover (34,000 acres) in only 15 years. A reduction in tree canopy cover translates to an increase in storm water runoff, an increase in energy costs, and a loss of air quality.¹ TreeVitalize Philadelphia provides trees directly to qualified groups and rebates are available for homeowners looking to plant native trees. The Township should provide information about this important program to residents through their website.

Lower Merion Township is a large township that consists of multiple communities and neighborhoods, each of which has its own strong identity. The most intensely developed of these areas are those that typically formed around the original Pennsylvania Railroad station stops. Generally, the mostly densely populated areas within the Township, they have traditional commercial cores with mixed-use development and housing of various types and densities. These areas are what could be referred to in planning terms as community “hubs.”

The Township has undertaken separate master planning efforts focused on revitalization and enhancement of several of these areas including Ardmore, Bala Cynwyd, Bryn Mawr and the City Avenue District. These planning efforts provide detailed recommendations focused on strategic ordinance recommendations as well as areas for targeted investment and physical improvements. In general, these planning documents include recommendations that could result in the increase of residential units in these traditional mixed-use areas. It is this aspect that is especially relevant to this planning effort focused on parks and recreation facilities.

**ANALYSIS**

The various planning documents advocate focusing on multi-family units as the housing typology since the hubs are relatively densely developed. These would result in the introduction of new residents in environments focused heavily on the walkable and transit-oriented lifestyle. Parks and recreation needs of the future residents as well as those already living within the transit-oriented hubs of the Township will, like all Township residents, have the ability to use recreation facilities of varying types located throughout the Township. Residents in these areas, however, will also by the very nature of their “metro-lifestyle” look to fulfill their recreational needs in places that are walkable and in close proximity to their residences. As already found in residential preferences in these hubs, the residents most likely will not want to drive to enjoy parks and recreational opportunities and in some case, car ownership may be much lower for this population. This is important to consider, since the argument could be made that the housing types proposed represent opportunities for younger professionals, possibly those that grew up in the Township and want to live in the Township, yet cannot afford a single-family home. The opportunities extend to empty nesters anxious to enjoy an active lifestyle without all the work or expense required by larger single-family homes.

In all cases, the planning documents prepared for these areas provide recommendations and guidelines for considering the amount, location and quality-of-design of public spaces as part of any development project. It is important in the case of the parks and recreation plan to acknowledge the potential spaces and to think about how the spaces could be programmed for uses which best serve neighborhood and some case broader Township needs.

The acknowledgement that Lower Merion is a very diversely developed community with a wide range of development conditions and densities means that there is a need, desire, and value for parks and public spaces that many suburban townships would not likely consider. Example of these special park and public space typologies include:

- **Public Squares and Plazas:** These are places that can serve daily needs of residents and work-
ers to retreat to the outdoors for lunch, to read, or meet with neighborhoods and friends. These spaces are typically larger and could also serve as event spaces for programmed events by the Township or community groups and organizations.

- **Courtyards/Pocket Parks/Playgrounds:** These spaces are more compact and could be created as public spaces within proposed developments or as retrofits of existing under-used spaces.
- **Green Connectors/Green Streets:** Since bicycle and pedestrian movement and circulation is an extremely important component to the success of the community hub areas, the elevation of minor circulation routes, such as alleys, short or low-trafficked neighborhood streets could serve as venues for greening projects, including enhanced landscaping, green streets, sharrows and rain gardens, as well as settings for small impromptu events.
- **Parking Courts:** Parking is a premium in more densely developed areas, yet peripheral areas around parking lots could have public enhancements that both buffer parking from their surrounding context and also create small, desirable public spaces.

In addition to these park and public spaces, many of the traditional types of recreation facilities are still very much needed. Opportunities to incorporate active recreation facilities can be much more challenging in the community hub areas, due to the compact nature of the development pattern; however, this premium value placed on land makes active recreation facilities all the more needed. This means that in most cases, larger community parks located within a ¼ mile radius of the center of community hubs should incorporate a balance of designed public spaces as well as recreation facilities such as ballfields and courts.

**ARDMORE REDEVELOPMENT AREA**

The Ardmore Revitalization Plan (2001) emphasized the importance of the providing public space facilities for celebrations and events and specifically targeted Vernon V. Young Park for improvements. Subsequent documents and plans have been prepared as an outcome of the 2001 plan, including the Ardmore Area Redevelopment Plan (2005). This plan highlights the opportunity to create public open/plaza space on Schaufele Green across Lancaster Avenue from the targeted Ardmore Transit Center and potential combined private mixed-use redevelopment. Detailed redevelopment alternatives are currently being studied for both the transit center and for the current Cricket Avenue parking lot. As of May 2011, the preferred option of the several options studied includes creating 112 new apartment units on the Cricket Avenue parking lot site. This plan proposes an urban courtyard to be located at the core of the development plan, which would be located above parking that is below grade.

**Opportunities**

- The programming and design of the central public space within the proposed Cricket Avenue Mixed-Use Development Project is important both to the success of the proposed development and ensuring that the development “meshes” with the overall neighborhood context. Therefore every attempt should be made to allow this public space to be a true amenity and not a walled off enclave. This includes requiring public gateways and sight lines into the space from the surrounding streets and designing the actual space with a mixed of soft and hard surfaces to accommodate the potential intensity of use as well to provide a park-like feeling.

- Procedures to provide the Township’s parks and recreation staff the opportunity to review and provide input into how proposed public spaces could be programmed and comment on how designs could best serve community needs should be included in the planning commission review of any proposed land development plan for this area.

**Vernon V. Young Memorial Park and the Ardmore Avenue Community Center**

This is a heavily utilized 5.2-acre park. As additional development occurs with the Ardmore Redevelopment Area and other infill areas in the vicinity, such as the infill townhomes constructed along Cobblestone Drive, further pressure will be placed on the Vernon V. Young Memorial Park. In 2003 a regulation sized basketball
court was reconstructed, several other courts were resurfaced and ADA access to the park was improved. In 2006 and 2007 the softball field was renovated. New protective and perimeter fencing was installed, a maintenance truck access was created and the pool complex was renovated including the replacement of the swimming and wading pools and the construction of the new filter building.

Findings
- The park is over-programmed with active recreation facilities causing conflicts between activities and extensive visual clutter.
- The view from the neighborhood into the park is one of a chain-linked stockyard due to the extensive fencing including perimeter fencing and fencing around the various courts and active facilities within the park boundaries.
- Entrances into the park do not align with access points from the surrounding context. For example the terminus of the vista into the park from nearly every street is of a 12’ high chain link fence and the new ADA ramp along Ardmore Avenue aligns with a private driveway across the street creating no sense of a gateway into the park.
- The support facilities for the pool including grassy areas, shade, tables and benches are undersized or insufficient to meet the demand during peak periods. Residents report having to get to the pool first thing to get a space or they do not go as there is not enough room for them. This is a common concern of senior adults who provide care for children and youth in the family.
- The Ardmore Avenue Community Center building’s size and configuration do not effectively serve the current needs of those that use the facility.
- The gym is heavily used and is too small to adequately meet current needs along with providing any ability for spectators to watch activities.
- The Ardmore Avenue Community Center building is not oriented in a manner that engages it with the park context or the neighborhood. It visually looks very utilitarian and therefore detracts from the aesthetic qualities of the park and the neighborhood.
- The Ardmore Avenue Community Center building has already exceeded its useful lifespan. The building systems are antiquated and do not meet modern efficiency standards.
- The location of the pool filter building blocks views from the Ardmore Avenue Community Center into the park preventing the staff from monitoring activity in the park from the building.
- Parking on the street surrounding the park during the summer months can be very challenging, especially when the aquatic facilities are at peak utilization.

Opportunities
- Opportunities to combine facilities for the PALM Senior Facility and the Ardmore Avenue Community Center into a single facility should be explored. Since the times of operations for these facilities barely overlap it would appear that each user group could benefit from joining forces.
- The two residential properties located adjacent to the Ardmore Avenue Community Center at 120 and 118 Ardmore Avenue should be considered for acquisition. These lots would accommodate the equivalent of the current Ardmore Avenue Community Center building, gym and swimming pool.
- Consider the edge treatments and access points into the park in order to better engage the design of the park with its surrounding context. The parks should feel like a community green or a town square and not a utilitarian athletic complex that had no relationship with the surrounding neighborhood from a visual, architectural, or circulation perspective.
- A combined park master plan and community center feasibility study that includes both PALM and the Ardmore Avenue Community Center should be performed. These studies should only be performed together and not as separate activities since the future success of this park and the community centers is tied closely to inter-related relationships between indoor and outdoor facilities.

Bala Cynwyd

The core of the community hub of Bala Cynwyd is Bala Avenue. Two significant planning documents guide planning and revitalization for the area. The Bala Avenue Master Plan (2000) and Bala Cynwyd Retail Strategy (2006) focus on the revitalization and enhancement of the Bala Avenue Corridor between Montgomery and City Avenues. This corridor includes two Township operated parks and recreation facilities, the Bala Gym and the Bala Avenue Playground; both are located at the northeast corner of the intersection of Bala Avenue and Union Avenue. The planning documents focus on a series of recommendations regarding the rehabilitation of existing structures as well as the promotion of more mixed-use residential development.

The proposed site plan for a six-story residential building consists of more than 80 units to be located at 10 Union Avenue, adjacent to the Bala Gym site. The site plan would be consistent with the planning studies,
in that it proposes an introduction of new multi-family housing along the Bala Avenue Corridor that could also take advantage of the two SEPTA stations located in close vicinity to the project. The proposed plan also recommends an access through the Bala Gym parcel to serve the residential units, possibly impeding the future redevelopment potential of the Township's gym site.

Findings
- Although it is heavily used, the current Bala Gym building facility is out-dated and does not meet current standards or demands for indoor recreation facilities.
- The location of the gym building on the site results in underutilized lands surrounding the building.
- Although demand for parking is high when the gym is being used, the site is dominated by parking.
- The perimeter views of the gym parcel, especially along Bala Avenue, are unattractive and are not consistent with the streetscape recommendations in the Bala Avenue planning documents.
- There is no integration of the Bala Gym site with the Bala Playground site even though they are adjacent facilities. The narrow utility easement that exists today creates a barrier between the facilities, as it exists in its current state.
- The proposed adjacent six-story residential building is visually and physically separated from the Bala Gym, mostly likely due to the current orientation and visual condition of the facility.

Opportunities
- A site-specific master plan should be pursued that includes the Bala Gym and Bala Playground sites. The project should consist of both a site master plan and indoor gym/community recreation center feasibility study. These studies should only be performed together and not as separate activities since the future success of this park is tied closely to inter-related relationships between indoor and outdoor facilities.
- Opportunities to redevelop the Bala Gym site with ground floor commercial (at the Bala Avenue street-level) with potentially recreation facilities located on an upper floor that takes advantage of the rise in elevation of Union Avenue and be consistent with the Bala Avenue planning documents. The potential to develop a new, high quality facility through a public-private partnership would be in keeping with the Township's philosophy of generating alternative revenue sources to support recreation facilities and services.
- Considerations should be given to the entire Bala Avenue frontage of both the Bala Gym and Bala Playground sites. This would ensure that a visually cohesive streetscape is provided. It would complement both the commercial activities located in the adjacent blocks and the predominately residential dwellings located across Bala Avenue.

BRYN MAWR
Bryn Mawr, as with the other community hubs, is heavily focused around its transit-oriented development potential. The Township undertook the Bryn Mawr Master Plan (2006) that focused heavily on the redevelopment potential of the Bryn Mawr train station areas, especially the Township-owned municipal parking Lot 7. A key aspect of this planning effort, which was gleaned through the community, was the desire to create a traditional town or “village green” in the center of Bryn Mawr on Lot 7. Ironically Lot 7 is located at the site of a former town green. The Township received this property from the Pennsylvania Railroad, now Amtrak, with certain use restrictions and a potential reversion provision. Development of this property for anything other than a municipal use would require agreement with Amtrak. The redevelopment of Lot 7 can serve as a catalyst for transit-oriented development in downtown Bryn Mawr. The proposed Bryn Mawr Master Plan suggests replacing current parking on Lot 7 with parking additions at the commuter lot to allow Lot 7 to be used for mixed use development compatible with the Village Zoning development criteria. The provision of significant public space at the core of how Lot 7 could be redeveloped is shown in the graphic representations in the plan.

Opportunities
- Procedures to provide the Township’s parks and recreation staff the opportunity to review and provide input into how proposed public spaces could be programmed and comment on how designs could best serve community needs should be included in the planning commission review of any proposed land development plan for this area. This review should also include provisions for site maintenance by the private sector partner, not the Township.

THE CITY AVENUE DISTRICT
The City Avenue District is less of a defined community hub today than the other areas discussed. However, the proposed district is currently being studied for a rezoning that would allow for an increase in residential development in the form of mixed-use that combines residential, institutional, and commercial uses in close proximity to each thus supporting a potential decrease demand on auto-dependency. The proposed ordinance sets provisions for development within distinct areas that form the overall
City Avenue District. A key aspect of the proposed ordinances is the creation of privately developed public open space.

Establishing the importance of public parks and open spaces within new developments as an important component of a community’s infrastructure, especially within denser residential developments, is an achievement. Requiring private developers to create these spaces as part of their overall development projects is also a major advancement, albeit not necessarily a new one in many communities. As the Township continues to develop ordinances that support denser developments and increased infill and transit oriented projects, it should consider the full spectrum of issues associated with such procedures including the following.

**Opportunities**
- Legal provisions should be placed on the developments through covenants that ensure a minimum level of public accessibility to privately constructed public spaces if they are to remain privately owned. This effort should also include determining boundaries for rules of conduct imposed by private owners, so they are not simply imposing rules by their own will.
- Procedures should be considered to allow for the transfer of privately created public spaces to the Township, should it deem such an action desirable for the public good.
- Procedures to provide the Township’s parks and recreation staff to review and provide input into how proposed public spaces could be programmed and design to best serve the community needs.
- Guarantees for a specific level of maintenance to ensure that public spaces are maintained to a high-level by the private partner.
- Methods for Township review of any future modifications to approved public space design plans to ensure that originally approval conditions are continuously met or only modified based on sound planning decisions, and not at the sole discretion of the private landowners.
Recreation is an important part of a well-balanced lifestyle. People who are engaged in active healthy lifestyles live longer, are less in danger from heart disease and stroke, are at significantly reduced risk of cancer, and have improved chances of combating a wide range of chronic conditions such as diabetes, arthritis, asthma and depression. Participation in a broad range of leisure activities has the potential to improve physiological and mental health. It contributes to personality development and improves psychological well-being by reducing anxiety and stress. Recreation participation increases sense of well being, deters addictions, and assists in the social learning of tolerance and respect for others.

Recreation helps to promote a strong sense of community by providing settings for people to socialize, share common interests and being a major driver of community interaction and pride. Recreation facilities make an important contribution to the physical infrastructure of communities. They provide a social focus for the community and affect people’s perception of their neighborhood. It is widely accepted that parks and recreation influences how a community looks, feels, and functions.

In 2009, the U.S. Center for Disease Control enlisted local communities in the fight against diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and hypertension by offering easier, plentiful, and convenient places and programs that will help citizens to increase physical activity. This will help to reduce national health care costs, one of our country’s most pressing challenges. Today public recreation is considered to be public health. Walking for 30 minutes daily has benefits to your heart, weight, and mental health, and has recently been found to stave off Alzheimer’s Disease. Cancer does not kill most Americans: the lack of physical exercise and a poor diet do. Public recreation has a prominent role in creating healthy people, healthy families, and healthy communities.

**ANALYSIS**

Since 1997, Lower Merion Township has been working successfully in increasing public recreation programs. The Department of Park and Recreation operates under a program philosophy of offering a variety of programs to introduce citizens to many different kinds of recreation interests with good quality at a reasonable price. The aim is to help the people of Lower Merion Township experience activities in which they may be interested and perhaps develop a life-long interest in that pursuit. The foundation of active healthy lifestyles starts in childhood. Research shows that what people do as adults they usually participated in as a child or youth.

The Parks and Recreation Department management team researched and provided information to the

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One out of two survey respondents is interested in participating in programs offered by Lower Merion Township.

consulting team on the recreation programs and services. Together, they examined the trends, nature of the programs, client groups, and support mechanisms such as registration, advertising, and evaluations. From this, important aspects emerged that could be addressed in the future and that form the foundation for program recommendations.

Positive Growth in Programs

Overall, the Parks and Recreation Department provides a tremendous number of scheduled and facilitated programs and services. Figure 4 presents the dramatic growth in the number of programs offered by the Department of Parks and Recreation since 1997 by operating under this philosophy. The Department has more than tripled the public recreation programs available in 12 years. Over 56,000 people participants are engaged in programs offered and facilitated by the Department.

According to the public opinion survey, about 25 percent of the survey respondents reported participating in programs offered by Lower Merion Township. This is a relatively high number as the benchmark is typically 22 percent.

Core Programs

The Department focuses on four core program areas: Sports and Fitness, Swimming Pools, Recreation and Education, and facilitation of programs provided by other providers such as the sports leagues. PALM, the Ardmore Community Center, the 18 Civic Associations and the Federation of Civic Associations, park friends groups, and others. It is important to underscore that the Department’s facilitation of programs and coordination of major facilities and activities covering two swimming pools and four community centers is a major work element not typical of similarly sized recreation staffs.

Top Activities for Participation

The top five activities in which the residents participate according to the survey findings are: walking (71%), playing or socializing in Township parks (63%), nature enjoyment (60%), bicycle riding (49%), and exercise and fitness (44%).

Top Activities of Interest

The top five activities in which the residents are interested according to the survey findings are: programs offered by Lower Merion Township (47%), adult classes (45%), events offered by the Civic Associations (45%), boating on the Schuylkill River (37%), and the arts (36%). It is important to note that 34 percent of the survey respondents indicated that they do not volunteer but would be interested in doing so.

Service to Client Groups

Organized programs serve males and females, pre-schoolers, youth ages five-14, adults over the age of 19, and senior adults. In addition, the Department serves families although there is no category for families addressed in promotional materials. Activities such as family nights at the swimming pools are treasured events by the participants. The Civic Associations provide significant family oriented events such as movie nights and markets.

The residents’ requested more programs for youth ages four, five, and six as well as pre-school programs.

The Township’s bus is an important means for getting senior adults to the centers and programs. Transportation is a major issue for the non-driving citizenry.
Service to Youth Ages Five – 14

Consensus is that youth ages five through 14 are well served with a host of community recreation and school-related opportunities. It is important to keep serving them, especially in focusing on programs beyond sports. The sports services are particularly strong in Lower Merion Township.

Interest of Adults and Families

According to the survey the two groups most likely to participate in programs offered by Lower Merion Township include adults (48%) and families (43%).

Hispanic Population

While there is not a present need for Spanish speaking staff and information on parks and recreation, it is likely that addressing the needs of the Spanish speaking population will be important in the future. Field visits found park visitors particularly in Ardmore speaking Spanish as their primary language.

Program Life Cycle

Programs have life cycles that run from the introductory stage through growth, maturation, and decline. The Department has largely been in program growth mode since hiring a Recreation Coordinator after the previous plan. The Department has been introducing more lifetime sports, fitness, and instructional programs. A major focus is aquatics. Of concern is the Playground Program, which has been in decline since 1996. Although the program has about 20 percent of the participation it had fifteen years ago, the program is important to households in the community that desire more non-structured opportunities for their children as well as for those households that might not be able to afford more expensive summer camps. In 2011, the Township began to charge for the playground program that had historically been free. Participation plummeted to half of what it was in 2010. Other municipalities that have instituted substantial fees for playground programs that had been without charge saw similar results in declining participation but then saw increasing participation in subsequent years. Informal conversations between staff and residents that had formerly participated described issues regarding a large fee related to the amount of time their children used the program; the cost for multiple children; and the difficulty in paying fees. Although the Township offers discounted fees, residents are reluctant to come forth to ask for such assistance. The concept of a fee-based summer playground program should be re-explored for the future. One thing to consider if the Township continues to charge is that the program should be “re-invented” so that it has major noticeable improvements that would be viewed as essentially a “new program”. Even a change in the name of the program would convey a fresh approach would help should the fee continue.

Other Recreation Providers

The Lower Merion Parks and Recreation Department facilitates the provision of major recreation opportunities in the community. These important activities serve thousands of participants annually. Lower Merion Township would not be able to afford to provide this level of service without the public private partnerships.

Lower Merion School District

The Lower Merion School District and the Parks and Recreation Department have a collaborative and most progressive relationship. The Parks and Recreation Department schedules the use of school facilities for recreation during non-school hours. This includes all sports fields and gymnasiums. The
# TABLE 9 - SPORTS ORGANIZATIONS IN LOWER MERION TOWNSHIP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>1996 Participation</th>
<th>2011 Participation</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ashbee Lacrosse</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>400+</td>
<td>Males &amp; Females. Grades 1-8</td>
<td>Waiting list.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Merion Girls Lacrosse</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haverford Soccer</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>600 – 3,000 per season: est. of 4,600</td>
<td>Males &amp; Females. Grades 1-12. Adults over 30.</td>
<td>200 on waiting list each fall. Shorter waiting list in the spring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Merion Soccer</td>
<td>2,600</td>
<td>2,700</td>
<td>Males and females. Ages 4 – 18.</td>
<td>Stabilized by restricting age groups. Could expand if more space were available and would add age groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Merion Little League</td>
<td>1449</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td>Males and Females Ages 5 - 18</td>
<td>Waiting list of 150.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Merion Aquatic Club</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>Males and Females Ages 6 - 18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Merion High School Ultimate Frisbee</td>
<td>Did not exist</td>
<td>80+</td>
<td>Males and Females 13 - 19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Merion Ultimate Frisbee</td>
<td>Did not exist</td>
<td>100+ varies</td>
<td></td>
<td>New and growing by word of mouth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Touch Football</td>
<td>Did not exist</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>Males and Females. Ages 25+</td>
<td>Waiting list and were able to fill it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainline Businessmen</td>
<td>100+</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>Males. Adults</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Merion Synagogues League</td>
<td>Did not exist</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>Males. Adults</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police and Firemen's Adult Softball League</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>150</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
two organizations jointly plan and use sports facilities for recreation and education.

**Main Line School Night**

Since 1996, Main Line School Night has increased its program offerings from 400 to over 500 and increased the number of sites from five to seven. This fall, 109 new programs are being offered. Main Line School Night is committed to enhancing community life by providing adults with opportunities to pursue lifelong learning through a wide selection of affordable stimulating classes and programs that contribute to personal growth and enrichment.

**Private, Non-Profit Community Centers**

The Mainline YMCA and the Jewish Community Center (Kaiserman Branch) operate facilities in Lower Merion Township. Both facilities are landlocked and have limited potential for expansion to grow their extensive programs. They use Township facilities for leagues.

**Private Recreation Providers**

Private recreation facilities in Lower Merion Township include the Philadelphia Country Club, the Philadelphia Skating Club and Riverside Racquet and Fitness Club.

**Sports Organizations**

Sixteen (16) sports organizations serve Lower Merion Township. They operate year round. Combined they serve over 11,000 participants. Table 9 presents the sports organizations, participation trends, and comments. In 2011, Lower Merion Little League proposed starting a Girls’ Softball League. The challenge was that there are not enough ballfields to serve the current demand.

**Civic Associations**

Lower Merion Township has 17 Civic Associations that belong to the Federation of Civic Associations of Lower Merion Township. Some of the civic associations are more than 50 years old. They work to maintain superior civic conditions in their community by considering and taking appropriate action concerning questions relating to the welfare of the community. The Civic Associations are engaged in a broad range of community activities including parks and recreation. They support neighborhood parks and other activities such as art shows, egg hunts, family movie nights, and so on. They are an important provider of public recreation. The Parks and Recreation Department works with the Civic Association’s in supporting their efforts for public recreation.

**Libraries**

Six libraries provide recreation related programs in Lower Merion Township. They include the libraries of Ardmore, Bala Cynwyd, Belmont Hills, Gladwyne, Ludington, and Penn Wynne. They offer year round indoor recreation programs. Hennen’s American Public Library Ratings ranked the Lower Merion Township Library System 20th in the nation in 2009.

**Senior Centers**

PALM, New Horizon Senior Center, and Levering Mill House are the three senior centers of Lower Merion Township. In addition, Township organizations and faith-based institutions offer senior citizen clubs and programs. The Parks and Recreation Department offers the annual Senior Jamboree that has increased significantly in participation since 1996.

**Conservation Organizations**

Riverbend Environmental Center, the Lower Merion Conservancy and Bridlewild Trails Association provide environmental education programs and services. They also manage volunteer programs to support Township environmental facilities and trails, including privately owned trails.

**STRENGTHS**

With a small staff, the Department has developed an innovative and collaborative approach to offering programs.

**Departmental Program Growth**

While the Department has increased its programs from 69 to 196 in 10 years, it also worked on building strategic partnerships. Since the Township renovated the swimming pools, participation has increased from about 8,600 to over 56,000 annually. Important programs such as the Senior Jamboree and participation in the Senior Centers in growing significantly.

**Favorable Ratings by Participants**

As shown in Figure 5, the public opinion survey and interviews found that three out of five of those who participate in Township recreation programs rate them as good to excellent. The ratings were significantly higher by those who participate vs. those who do not. The implication is that increasing public perception about Township recreation programs is important.

**Strategic Partnerships Are Vital**

Since 1996, the Department has worked in partnership with nonprofit providers and private sector providers. It is striking to note that
there are over 50 organizations in the community that directly provide recreation, sports, environmental education and special events – all of whom depend on the Lower Merion Parks and Recreation Department. Departmental support includes: information, facility use, facility maintenance and scheduling, problem solving and promotion. This arrangement does not increase the Township budget yet enables the diversity of recreation programs that would not be possible with in-house Township staff. The providers are community organizations, independent contractors or enterprises with expertise in a particular recreational activity. Residents that participate in Township recreation programs under the auspices of a private provider often then pursue that interest in the private sector resulting in a win-win for the Township and the private business. The Township is able to provide important recreation opportunities to the citizenry businesses in the Township get exposure in the community that leads to increased participation and patronage for their own operations.

Cost Recovery
The Parks and Recreation Department is moving toward more cost recovery in programs and services. For the first time, the Township levied a program fee for the Playground Program. In the past, the Township operated on philosophy of a free summer playground program. For other programs that are scheduled and organized by the Department, the cost recovery rate is 98 percent including the direct cost of the recreation leader and the cost of equipment. This does not include advertising, administration or space/facility. The Township conducts an annual fees and rates study that includes administrative costs for department including Parks and Recreation. The cost split with contractors is 70/30. If attracting effective contractors becomes an issue this formula could be adjusted.

Self-Directed Recreation
Citizens in Lower Merion Township enjoy engaging in recreational activities at their own discretion. Nine out of ten survey respondents reported using Township parks, exceeding the expected finding of about 72 percent. Playing and socializing in Township parks is one of the five top recreation activities in the community according to the survey. Field visitation and observation found that the parks are busy hubs of activity. Supporting this pursuit through excellent parks and promotion is important, as it is a cost effective way of providing recreation opportunities for a broad range of citizens.

CHALLENGES
Customer satisfaction for parks and recreation programs and facilities is high as shown in the survey findings, interviews and focus groups. The challenges listed below are intended to foster the evolution of the Department into higher levels of program and service delivery as well as customer satisfaction.

Information and Public Awareness
The major block to participation in programs and use of facilities is the lack of information by the citizens. Typically survey respondents report being too busy as their top reason for not participating. Here the lack of information was named as the main block. Advertising and promotion received the lowest customer satisfaction ratings in program quality ratings. This is presumably a function of information overload by the public at large combined with not being aware of how to find information about parks and recreation along with departmental methods of outreach and distribution of information.

Recreation Leaders and Customer Service
Given the socio-economic characteristics of Lower Merion Township, many people who live here are used to and expect outstanding customer service. Only one in four survey respondents rated recreation leaders as good to excellent. Among those who participate in the programs, 43 percent rated the leaders as good to excellent. Increasing the capacity of the recreation leaders and staff in involved in customer service is crucial. This can be accomplished through setting standards, hiring, training, on-going evaluation, feedback, and performance reviews.

Evaluation and Customer Satisfaction
No formalized system is in place
for evaluation and determination of customer satisfaction. Developing standards and methods for evaluating programs and customer satisfaction and implementing them will facilitate the Department’s evolution to a higher level of service. At present there is no systematized method in place for evaluating programs and customer satisfaction. The key is to think of evaluation and customer satisfaction as a system and a component of program planning and management. Various techniques can be used surveys, participant evaluations both during programs and upon completion, focus groups, interviews with participants as well as non-participants, and comment opportunities on the website.

Program Planning and Life Cycle

Program life cycle is not a formal part of program planning. The life cycle of programs would be a valuable component of programming for the Township. By addressing where programs are in their life cycle, the Department would be able to adjust programs to give them new life, add new programs, and terminate programs that have outlived community interest. The Playground Program is the program of most concern to the Township. While it is an important program for segments of the population most in need of support, it has dramatically declined in participation over the last 15 years. Finding out why this drop-off has occurred by interviewing former participants would be crucial in re-focusing this program.

Registration Convenience and Efficiency

Participants can register for programs in person or by mail using a check or cash as the form of payment. Moving to registration on line and offering the option of paying by credit card will be more convenient, yield increased participation, and streamline management operations.

Staff Size

It is important to recognize that Parks and Recreation Department has a limited staff. The Recreation Coordinator is in charge of all Township recreation programs for a population of nearly 58,000.

Opportunities

Since the Department's programs receive positive public ratings, the opportunities are intended to refine and polish program operations.

Increase Public Awareness about Parks and Recreation

Develop a formalized work plan for increasing public awareness. Just as master plans are important for park improvements, plans are equally important for major on-going work items. The top three ways that citizens would like to get information about parks and recreation is through the Township website, Township newsletters, and e-mails.

- Website – The Parks and Recreation Department’s website is easy to use and attractive. Including the current program brochure in a prominent location would be helpful. Use photos of participants in programs and using parks. Work with partners to create links on their websites to the Lower Merion Township Parks and Recreation Department website.

- Newsletter – Revise the approach in the newsletter to try to drive people to the website for program information and inspire them to use parks and recreation facilities. Consider the need to list all programs in the brochure in reaching all citizens. Recognize that the brochure is likely to be short-lived in township households vs. the ready availability of program information on-line. Try over time to be website based while using the newsletter as a promotional/inspirational piece.

- Social Media – Consider the use of social media as an important way to reach the community, especially Gen X and Gen Y. This would require staff time and skill in the use of social media.

Program Registration and Payment

- Offer on-line registration.
- Offer Credit card payments. While the Township has issues with credit card and on-line payments, this service is vital public recreation service, especially in a community such as Lower Merion.

Continue Four Program Seasons & Phase In Monthly Schedules

- Continue the four program seasons. The trend is towards more frequent seasons with some departments nationwide moving into monthly calendars. Balancing the capacity of the staff with program seasons is important but adding monthly schedules would
be possible when the program staff increases along with revenues to help offset staffing costs. In moving to web-based program advertising over time, the preparation of schedules will become less daunting than the current newsletter system.

Core Programs and Client Groups
- Maintain the current core programs of Recreation and Education, Aquatics, Fitness and Sports, and Discount Tickets.
- Add Nature and Environment as a core program area.
- Target Families and Adults as principle client groups in programming and promotions.
- Recognize that facilitation is a core program from a management perspective.

- Promote self-directed recreation opportunities. Providing information about what citizens can do for recreation, fitness, experiencing nature based recreation opportunities, trail use, and so on is a vital service.
- Create “customers for life”. The goal is to serve citizens throughout their lifetime fostering their enjoyment of active healthy lifestyles and community engagement.

Evaluation System
- Plan and implement a systematic approach to evaluation of programs and customer service. Expand tracking from numbers of participants and cost recovery to other factors including customer levels of satisfaction with departmental programs, facilities and service; on-going needs assessment; customer retention; customer re-purchase of programs and services; referrals of participants to Township recreation programs.
- Use innovative methods of determining levels of service and customer satisfaction including focus groups, post program evaluations, evaluations while program is in progress, “mystery shoppers”, online commenting, interviews and calls to participants, and intercept surveys in parks and programs. Interview non-participants as well as non-returning participants to determine factors in their non-participation or why they chose to no longer participate.
- Develop an assessment system to ensure that staff is meeting the guidelines for addressing and assessing customer satisfaction. This should include a list of guidelines and minimum standards for customer service and interaction. Use the mystery shoppers, citizen feedback, and other evaluation methods to evaluate services and provide feedback. Incorporate this as a component of job responsibilities and performance appraisals.
- Develop a post-season program report as well as an annual report on recreation programs and services. Include both organized programs as well as facilitated services.
The Lower Merion Township Parks and Recreation Department manages a vast array of complex and challenging functions. These include customer service; planning and delivery of programs and services; park maintenance; financial management and risk management and park planning. This includes 47 parks with 701 acres with a broad range of facilities and a developing trail system, about 56,000 program participants and park visitation by over 20,000 households. The scope of management responsibilities ranges from helping a Boy Scout earn a badge to orchestrating major park improvements. Successful systems are rooted in effective management. While it is important to do things right, it is even more important to do the right things. Determining where to spend the level of effort and allocate appropriate resources to benefit the entire citizenry is essential. Having an effective and efficient system in place to plan, direct, control, implement, and evaluate operations, facilities and services is essential, especially in a community as committed to accountability and quality public service as Lower Merion Township is.

The purpose of the management assessment was to review how parks and recreation is planned, managed, directed and evaluated in terms of meeting community goals and with respect to the Township’s resources.

**Organization**

Lower Merion is a Township of the First Class. The Township operates under the governance of the Board of Commissioners operating with a full-time professional administrative staff. With 422 full-time employees, the Township organization has eleven departments, all headed by experienced career professionals selected by the Township Manager strictly on the basis of merit and ability to perform the required responsibilities.

**Lower Merion Township Government and Administration**

The fourteen-member Board of Commissioners is the decision-making body elected by the citizens according to Ward. The primary mission of the Board is to continually provide the appropriate organizational oversight and policy direction necessary to maintain and enhance the highest possible level of public service delivery and quality of life for Lower Merion Township. Their goal is to accomplish this outside the realm of partisan political concerns and through a commitment toward mutual cooperation in order that the best interests of the community and the maintenance of a quality of life that is second to none can be realized. The Commissioners form committees to serve as advisory groups for Township functions including one for parks and recreation. Figure 6 shows the Township’s organizational structure.

The Township Manager is responsible for the day-to-day management and implementation of the Commissioner’s policies and programs. The Assistant Township Manager provides administrative support for parks and recreation.

**Parks and Recreation Organization and Management**

Figure 7 presents the organizational structure of the Parks & Recreation Department. Partnerships are an essential part of community life here. Important partnerships include other municipal departments, the Lower Merion School District, the four community centers, 17 Civic Associations
and the Federation of Civic Associations, 16 sports organizations, 13 park and trail friends groups and the Coalition for Youth of Lower Merion and Narberth. The Township has a partnership with Haverford Township in joint ownership of Polo Field. A recent initiative is a Healthy Communities. Volunteers provide important parks and recreation services. It is projected that they provide thousands of hours of community service annually that make public parks and recreation possible in Lower Merion Township. The Township could not afford to pay for the value of these hours. Regional partnerships are an essential part of community life here. Collaboration with the Schuylkill River Greenway and regional trail groups such as the Greater Philadelphia Bicycle Coalition have generated important projects and funding such as the bicycle pedestrian Manayunk Bridge project to link the Township to Manayunk via non-motorized transportation.

**ANALYSIS**

Since the last plan, Lower Merion Township has streamlined and reorganized operations. The Township now operates with one Assistant Township Manager instead of two and 11 departments instead of 15.

**Major Findings**

**Merger of Recreation and Parks** - A significant positive change for Parks and Recreation was the reorganization of the Recreation Department and park maintenance. Park maintenance was moved out of the Public Works Department and merged into the Recreation Department to become the Parks & Recreation Department. This has enabled the park maintenance staff to focus on the specific skills unique to parks and distinct from traditional public works functions of roads and buildings. These functions include sports field maintenance, natural resource management, customer service, trails, public swimming pools, and forestry. Figure 7 presents the Parks and Recreation Department Organizational Structure.

**Addition of Recreation Coordinator** – The Recreation Coordinator enabled the Township to increase programs and services to the community. The number of programs has nearly tripled under the auspices of the Recreation Coordinator. Beyond numbers alone, the majority of the participants in recreation programs rate the programs as good to excellent. The programs (aside from the Playground Program) recover their costs through fees and charges.

**Innovative Management Approaches** – The Parks & Recreation Department has established contracting out services as a primary way to offer expanded Township programs without increasing staff or adding facilities.

**Collaboration with Lower Merion Township’s Planning and Zoning Department** – A productive working relationship with Lower Merion Township’s planners has resulted in major advances in the parks ranging from Linwood Park to the Cynwyd Heritage Trail. This relationship should continue and be strengthened by including a focus on maintenance planning for all projects. While the work on Linwood Park and the Cynwyd Heritage Trail produced significant support groups via the Friends...
FIGURE 6 - LOWER MERION TOWNSHIP ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

Citizens of Lower Merion Township

Township Treasurer

Board of Commissioners

Township Solicitor
Township Secretary
Township Manager
Township Engineer
Commissions and Boards*

Assistant Township Manager

Building & Planning
Information Services
Libraries
Parks & Recreation
Parking Services

Finance
Fire
Human Resources
Police
Public Information
Public Works

*Commissions & Boards
Board of Trustees for Employee Retirement Plan
Bid Opening Committee
Cable Television Advisory Committee
Civil Service Commission
Electrical Examining Board
Health Advisory Council
Historical Architectural Review Board
Historical; Commission
Lower Merion Library System
Lower Merion Police Pension Fund
Personnel Review Board
Planning Commission
Shade Tree Commission
Uniform Construction Code Appeals Board
Vacancy Board
FIGURE 7 - LOWER MERION TOWNSHIP PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT ORGANIZATIONAL CHART
Groups for both facilities, the Parks and Recreation Department is still responsible for major maintenance work. Collaborating on planning future facilities in terms of designing for low impact maintenance will be advantageous in terms of creating a sustainable maintenance program with respect to Township staffing and budget.

**Volunteerism** – Citizen involvement in parks, recreation, and conservation efforts is remarkable. Thousands of volunteer hours support parks, recreation, and conservation in Lower Merion Township. Volunteerism has evolved over the last 15 years to include conservation as a major focus. Award winning efforts such as the Trail Truck testify to the level of involvement and creative advancement of volunteerism here. Linwood Park is nearly self-sufficient through volunteer efforts; ensuring their long-term support is crucial. However, these efforts are largely fragmented. While there are many great efforts underway, significant opportunities are being lost due to the lack of organization and communication. For example, several organizations are involved in training that others would participate in if they only knew about the programs and when they are being held. To capitalize on the level of volunteerism here, a volunteer management program needs to be put in place. This program would address volunteerism in a organized manner to recruit, train, coordinate, sustain, and recognize volunteers in the community.

**School District Coordination** – The Parks and Recreation Department and the Lower Merion School District Facilities Division are working together on the joint maintenance of Township sports field improvements and maintenance. The capital improvements and the maintenance provided by the School District for the interscholastic sports programs will also benefit community sports organizations.

**Customer Service** – Customer Service is an area in which the Department strives to meet and exceed public expectations. While across the board, community organizations, citizens and leaders expressed appreciation for the Department management in administration, programs and maintenance, the public outreach process found that the public would like enhanced customer interactions rooted in friendly and positive approaches to interactions delivery, responsiveness, and problem resolution. From a convenience perspective, the addition of online registration and credit card payments would greatly increase the ease of transactions for the customers and no doubt increase participation in programs thereby benefitting Township goals of cost recovery through non-tax revenues.

**Maintenance Challenges** – The most significant finding regarding operations and management of parks and recreation is in park maintenance. Long term, the most significant cost of parks and recreation is in maintenance. Three of every four dollars of the lifetime cost of a park goes to maintenance. Since the last plan, the increase in parks and recreation facilities has not been supported with a commensurate level of maintenance staff and funding. In fact, the maintenance staff is smaller than it was seven years ago.

Ironically, the productive work done by the park maintenance staff has a troubling downside: the amount of work being done exceeds the capacity of the crews at the present time. Sustaining this current level of management effort over time will not be possible. Because the parks have a safe, clean and attractive appearance, there is a tendency to assume that the crews can do more and more. While

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**Park Friends Potential**

One in four survey respondents indicated that they would be willing to join a park friends’ group as a dues paying member.

**Additions to Park Maintenance Responsibilities since 1996**

- Linwood Park
- Ashbridge Playground
- Homeland
- Security requirements
- Cynwyd Trail
- Ardmore Avenue Fountain
- Rolling Hill Park
- Dog Park at Rolling Hill Park
- Dog Park at Mill Creek
- Increase planting beds at General Wayne Park.
- Plantings at pools and playgrounds
- Expanded boat docks at Flat Rock Park
- Increased tree plantings at South Ardmore, Gladwyne, McMorran and General Wayne Parks.
- School district ballfields at South Ardmore and Gladwyne.
- Increased sports field use
- Increased demands resulting from technological advances in lighting, plumbing, and sustainability as well as certification requirements.
Management and Operations

This illustrates the high need for natural resource management practices in the parks maintenance division.

Park maintenance is no longer the simple mowing and litter pick-up operation it once was. There is more exposure to liability. More diverse skills are needed. A high level of customer expectations exists in Lower Merion Township. More certifications are required to meet state regulations. Technological improvements, such as sensors to operate lights and water fixtures, have made maintenance tasks very complex requiring a specialized level of expertise. Lower Merion Township’s wide range of recreation facilities from a bird sanctuary to sports turf management and high-tech amenities involves an equally wide range of skill sets needed in park maintenance.

At present quality standards for parks and recreation facilities are not established. All facilities are maintained at the same high level of service. It is an acceptable and desirable practice to maintain facilities at variable levels in conformance with use, visibility, importance, and facility type. Quality standards serve as the basis for this practice.

No workload cost tracking system is in place for park maintenance. Consequently, decision-making and planning are based upon rudimentary information. It is very difficult to manage an organization in which information about where resources are used is unavailable. As the saying goes, you can’t manage what you can’t count. Having an electronic workload and cost tracking system in place would enable the Park & Recreation Department as well as elected and appointed officials to make decisions on how best to allocate resources; how to set fees and charges to recover costs; and where to invest efforts for the best public service possible. Clerical support is needed for work functions such as review of invoices and bills. This practice reduces costs and uncovers problems.

The Park Maintenance division has adopted practices in response to the demands on their time, their budget and desire to improve identified areas wherever possible. Their successful strategies include the following:

- Establishment of crews for mowing and for athletic field work.
- Reduction in field lining from weekly to every other week.
- Deferring non-essential services.
- Development of practices to control operations such as managing the distribution of keys to Township recreation facilities.
- Identification of related functions that are not park functions such as traffic islands to determine better management practices.
- Determination of functions and tasks in which having an independent contractor such as a plumber on call, especially on weekends, would be advantageous to the Township in terms of efficiency, response time and cost savings.
- Finding ways to accommodate and support volunteer efforts. Often volunteer efforts, such as tree planting, that are important to the community require a higher level of support from the maintenance crews that are already operating beyond capacity. In the tree-planting example, volunteers would plant the trees but the Township crews would have to water them twice weekly. Concerts run by community organizations require set-up and dismantling. In addition to the actual tasks, many hours of coordination with volunteers and community groups are required of the maintenance staff onsite, on telephone responses, and in e-mails. These same issues are present in the Adopt-A-Park model. While groups adopting parks is a good idea and should be beneficial to the Township,
it is important to recognize that these volunteer services are not free: they require management, time, support, coordination, and often materials and supplies. The key to success is identifying the scope of functions, setting guidelines, and outcomes in place as well as processes where appropriate. The efforts need to be focused and directed by Lower Merion Township in order to achieve the desired outcomes and meet community goals.

- Establishment of an equipment replacement inventory for major facilities such as the swimming pools. If an equipment failure occurs, the pools could be down for a significant period of time. While it is theoretically a good idea to avoid carrying inventory, having replacement equipment at hand to repair major breakdowns quickly would be important to consider in avoiding lengthy delays in securing the particular piece of equipment.
- Standardization of equipment including tennis court posts, water fountains, and exploration of contracting out functions.

**STRENGTHS**

The Township’s streamlining of operations to bring parks, recreation, and the Ardmore Avenue Community Center into a combined system is effective. Community support for parks and recreation is evident in the extensive volunteerism in place. Adopting new practices such as planning for maintenance and support while during the planning process for park improvements will serve the Township well. A good example is Linwood Park that had a citizen support group that is continuing for operations, programming, and management. The many community organizations that are in place to support parks, trails, and conservation play an important role in stewardship and cost savings resulting from alternatives to traditional in-house labor. The collaboration of Township departments puts the best and the brightest Township staff together working on projects with diverse aspects. The working relationship among Parks and Recreation, Building and Planning, Information Technology, and Public Works brings a broad range of talent together in supporting public recreation. Innovative management approaches such as contracting out programs have enabled the Township to avoid costs of staff and facilities while continuing to deliver public recreation services to the community.

**CHALLENGES**

The major management challenge lies in park maintenance. The good to excellent ratings of the parks and recreation facilities by the public testify to the dedication and passion the maintenance division has for the parks. However, the parks require a great deal of attention and many tasks cannot be accomplished at present. Management is working extended hours. About half of the work is accomplished on a planned and scheduled basis. There is no formalized maintenance system in place and the division often operates in a reaction to a demand or pressing issue. No workload cost tracking system is in place that could help determine how staff time is being used in meeting the division’s goals. Budget information is mainly based upon the allocation rather than the outcomes. Tracking where financial and human resources go would enable elected and appointed officials to make more informed decisions on staffing levels and performance, how to allocate resources or when to take on a project or to decide not to take on a project because it would overextend the Township work force.

Although interest in volunteerism in the parks is strong and citizens are becoming increasingly engaged in supporting parks and trails as volunteers, there is no coordination of volunteers. Focus groups and interviews revealed that efforts are fragmented,
opportunities are lost, and that there is duplication of service while some things fall through the cracks. Some volunteer efforts are the result of a single individual that has undertaken the effort and puts in the time for creating volunteer opportunities. While this is a most positive situation, if that person decides to end their service, the whole volunteer effort could be in jeopardy. A volunteer coordinator position is needed. Although the Township has been operating without filling vacant positions, this is a position that would generate a payback in terms of getting work done through non-township workforce and expertise.

A second major challenge lies in establishing top-notch customer service. Frontline customer service needs to be enhanced with friendly and convenient service. The frontline staff such as recreation leaders and administrative assistants received the lowest quality ratings of all aspects of Township parks and recreation assessed in the public opinion survey, interviews, and focus groups.

**OPPORTUNITIES**

Developing a maintenance management plan with a workload cost-tracking system would result in enhanced productivity, cost savings, and better information for more informed decision-making. There are several ways to do this including obtaining assistance from the campus maintenance managers at a local university or applying for a DCNR peer study grant. The peer study grant would provide $10,000 with a $1000 match requirement from the Township. It would be used to hire a parks and recreation maintenance professional to help develop the system.

The purchase of workload cost-tracking software such as TRIMS should be considered.

As positions in the Parks Division open up, it would be important to identify the knowledge, skills, and aptitudes of future park maintainers. The Parks and Recreation Department has already instituted a short-to-long range planning in filling positions in a way that fulfills the mission of the parks and recreation system effectively. More specialized skills and expertise in the trades, sports turf management, natural resource management, and technology related to parks would be valuable to consider when filling future job slots.

A reorganization of the front office should be done in conjunction with the development of a plan for using more technology in management and customer service. The merger of Park Maintenance with the Recreation Department has had an impact on clerical staff and maintenance appears to need additional administrative support to perform routine functions such as invoice review. The use of more WEB based registrations, scheduling, analysis, and report development will require adjusting positions, responsibilities and training for operating in a more technology base management system. Consideration should include the establishment of a volunteer coordinator position and how this would fit in to the organizational structure and office space.

Customer service training should be an on-going component of employee development. This needs to extend to all functional areas in including front-line staff in recreation, maintenance, concessions at the pools and include both full-time and part-time staff.
Parks and Recreation provide important public economic, social, environmental and health benefits. Investing in parks and recreation enhances the quality of life in Lower Merion Township. Nevertheless, these are difficult economic times. The public and private sectors are facing major budgetary challenges. The Township’s budget message aptly describes those challenges as follows: Revenue that will not grow without tax and fee rate increases and expenses that grow based upon the economic forces of inflation, infrastructure aging, personnel costs and service expectations.

**LOWER MERION TOWNSHIP’S FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**

In difficult economic times, accountability and transparency in government is imperative. Lower Merion exemplifies this in the Township’s 22 consecutive annual awards earned for Distinguished Budget Presentation, the highest national form of recognition in governmental budgeting. The Township’s operating budget is shown in Table 10. As a result of the Township’s effective financial management, the Township has a Triple A bond credit rating, strong fund balance levels, cost containment strategies, continued upkeep of the community’s infrastructure and equipment, and premier public service. Lower Merion Township levies five taxes to support Township infrastructure and services. These include: real estate, business privilege, mercantile, local services and real estate transfer tax. Unlike 95 percent of the municipalities in Pennsylvania, Lower Merion Township (nor the School District) has not enacted the Earned Income Tax. Studies have found that the tax burden in Lower Merion Township is lower than the norm and among the lowest in the region.

**Lower Merion Township Operating Budget**

Lower Merion Township’s Parks and Recreation Department budget falls into two broad categories, operating budget and capital improvement program.

**Operating Budget**

Table 11 presents the operating expenditures for the Parks and Recreation Department. It also contains the ratio of the parks and recreation operating budget to the Township operating budget as well as the parks and recreation per capita investment in parks and recreation. Table 12 depicts the budget according to recreation expenditures and park maintenance expenditures. Table 13 shows the revenues from program fees and charges including the pool and recreation program revenues.

Lower Merion Township’s level of support for parks and recreation is clearly shown in Table 11. The Township has appropriated between 4.4 and 5.4 percent of the Township’s operating budget to parks and recreation, which is more than double the current national average of about two percent. The budget ratio has held somewhat steady but is trending downward since the last plan when the percentage was about 5.9 percent. The per capita investment of $57.45 is also favorable in terms of comparison with the average investment by other Pennsylvania communities, which is about $30. It is important to note that Pennsylvania’s average municipal per capita investment has been skewed down as a result of the formation of many rural and multi-
Township Assets

municipal parks and recreation systems that invest very low per capita support for parks and recreation. Another perhaps more useful comparison because of the caliber of Lower Merion Township, renowned internationally as a premier community, is the national average of $65 per capita for parks and recreation.

Table 13 presents the revenues that the Parks and Recreation Department generates through fees and charges. Since the previous plan, the Township has revised its approach to supporting recreation as largely a public service with minimal fees charged. The Township has moved forward with a policy that all programs should recover their costs. This is consistent with the findings of the public opinion survey in which the majority of the respondents indicated that they are willing to pay fees to participate in programs and use facilities that require a higher level of maintenance.

For the first time in 2011, the Township enacted a fee for the playground program. The fee is $150 per participant. The rehabilitation of the Belmont Hills Pool and the Ardmore Community Pool was also based upon cost recovery. Belmont Hills Pool needs to recover all of its costs including capital improvement costs while the Ardmore Community Pool is slated to recover 80 percent of its operating costs.

Figure 8 compares the Recreation Division’s revenues with expenditures. The chart illustrates the continued growth in revenue generation. At the time of the last plan, cost recovery was only about 13 percent. Since 1996, the Department has increased the percentage of cost recovery more than four fold.

Capitol Budget
The Capital Improvement Program (CIP) provides many benefits to the Township. It allows improvements to be scheduled efficiently and it encourages priority-setting and long-range financial planning by the Township. The program contributes to stabilizing tax rates through proper fiscal management and it allows citizens to participate in helping the Township meet its goals and objectives.

Projects in the CIP generally have a useful life of twenty years (although some may be as low as ten years) and a unit or project cost of $10,000 or more. A project may be multi-year in project construction life or funding. Table 14 presents the Capital Improvement Program for 2011 – 2016.

Support: Beyond the Budget
While the budget presents important information about how the community supports parks and recreation, it is only part of the financial equation. The support for parks and recreation extends beyond the traditional budget allocation.

Volunteerism in Lower Merion has tremendous value. Thousands of people are involved in the civic associations, park friends groups, trail groups, conservation organizations and sports leagues. The Parks Department estimates that volunteer hours in the parks totaled about 1,000. However, it is likely that this number is very low due to not being able to easily track and monitor all the time spent by volunteers in the parks. Linwood Park is an excellent example of how the community rallied around supporting a new park so that it is self-sufficient from a maintenance perspective. The Friends of Linwood Park perform all park maintenance except for grass mowing, program, improve, monitor and self-police the park. The Friends have purchased over $10,500 worth of benches for the park, sponsored a custom park identification sign, and planted $10,000 of new trees, shrubs, perennials, and bulbs. The costs of these improvements would have been much higher if park staff or contractors performed this work. The Friends have also coordinated donations of a $5,000 statue and construction of a composter. As a result all yard waste is recycled in the park and not taken to Township facilities.

Since 2009, the Lower Merion Township Director of Planning has served in a volunteer capacity in managing the Friends of the Cynwyd Trail to coordinate more than 40,000 hours of volunteer and court ordered service on the trail. Many of the tasks performed under service would have been required to be performed by staff or contractors including removal of 100 yards of invasive species, weeds and vines, trash, tires and appliances. According to the Corporation for Na-
The support of elected and appointed officials is vital to the success of the Lower Merion Township parks and recreation system. Lower Merion Township has as strong commitment to public recreation as evident in its annual allocation of over five percent of its operating budget to parks and recreation.

**STRENGTHS**

The Township has moved forward in implementing recommendations from the previous plan to establish a policy of fees and charges that benefit the specific individual participants in order to direct most Township resources to facilities that serve the community at large such as the parks, recreation facilities, and trails. A major advance is the Township’s consideration of maintenance and operating costs with the capital development or improvement of a parks and recreation facility. For example, the swimming pool rehabilitation scheme requires for cost recovery of operating and capital expenditures. Linwood Park moved forward with the Friends of Linwood Park to help maintain the park and promote its use through programs and activities for all ages.

Volunteerism and partnerships provide support for facilities, programs and maintenance that the Township could not afford to provide on its own.

Lower Merion Township continually invests in capital improvements in the parks. The Township also steps
up to implement plans rather than just letting the plans sit upon completion. The Township has invested over $10 million in capital improvements in the parks since 1990, an average of $695,733 annually. Grants to support this effort totaled $3,614,000. The Township also uses fees in lieu of the dedication of parkland for park improvements. For example, the Township obtained $50,000 in fees-in-lieu for recreation from an assisted living development.

CHALLENGES

High expectations and demand for top quality services coupled with balancing the cost of facility maintenance and service delivery, the need to raise revenues and operating with fewer maintenance staff as facilities are being improved or added makes for a very challenging scenario for the Parks and Recreation Department. While volunteerism has emerged as a vital management mechanism and the Township endorses such support, there appears to be a broad understanding that the volunteer efforts create a high level of demand on Township staff. Volunteers are giving their time, interest and expertise for the public good and have a tendency to expect that Township staff can provide staff time, materials and support for their specific projects at any time. As a result, volunteer projects frequently add to the work responsibilities and time available rather than lessen it. The sheer number of organizations and volunteers in the community is of a magnitude that Township staff is hard pressed to meet their needs and expectations. In order to reap the benefits of cost savings and additional capacity, the Township needs to invest in organizing and managing volunteer efforts.

A review of the maintenance budget reveals complex findings that point to the need for a workload cost tracking system and a formalized written maintenance management program. The park maintenance budget of $1,845,977 yields an investment of $2,822 per acre of parkland for maintenance. While this would...
fall within a typical range of $1,500 to $3,000 per acre for maintenance, it is important to note that Lower Merion Township’s park system has only 190 active acres. Most of the parks are nature based and contain 465 acres for resource conservation. It is also important to note that park maintenance in more urbanized systems runs $10,000 per acre or more for parks with high use and high visibility. Typically, parks devoted to resource protection cost $600 – 800 per acre annually. At $1,000 for nature-based parks, Lower Merion would be spending $465,000 leaving $1,381,977 for the 190 active acres. That equates to $7,272 per acre. There is no doubt that park maintenance in Lower Merion Township requires every dollar that is budgeted for park maintenance. There is much work to do that is not now possible, particularly in the area of natural resource management. However, without a workload cost tracking system and a written park maintenance management system in place, it is impossible to determine the outcomes and benefits of the budget. With a system in place in which the workload is planned, scheduled, tracked, controlled, and evaluated, key managers and officials would be able to see more clearly how work is being accomplished with the work force, where the needs are, and how to make adjustments in everything from mowing patterns to employee develop-
which the majority of the respondents indicated that they are willing to pay fees to participate in programs and use facilities that require a higher level of maintenance. For the first time in 2011, the Township enacted a fee for the playground program. The fee is $150 per participant. The rehabilitation of the Belmont Hills Pool and the Ardmore Community Pool was also based upon cost recovery. Belmont Hills Pool needs to recover all of its costs including capital improvement costs while the Ardmore Community Pool is slated to recover 80 percent of its operating costs.

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<th>TABLE 13: PARKS AND RECREATION FEE AND CHARGES REVENUES</th>
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<td>Departmental Earnings for Recreation: Programs, pool gate fees, and percentage of Belmont Hills Pool Concession</td>
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<td>Licenses and Permits for Recreation: Pool membership</td>
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<td>Recreation Facility Rentals</td>
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<td>Percentage of cost recovery for the Parks and Recreation Expenditures</td>
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<td>Percentage of cost recovery for Recreation</td>
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opment. There is also no doubt that park management goes above and beyond duty in caring for the parks. However, the problem is that much of the work undertaken is unscheduled and in response to an immediate need due to requests for service and in taking care of a park infrastructure that is overused and worn out. The Department is so busy and working extra hours that it has not been possible to take the time to develop a workload cost tracking system and a written maintenance management program.

While it is important for the Township to recover program costs, it is equally important to make provisions for citizens in financial need to participate in public recreational opportunities, especially children and families that may be suffering the consequences of the current economy. Programs such as

| TABLE 14: LOWER MERION TOWNSHIP PARKS AND RECREATION CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM |
|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Project                                         | Previous Expenditures | Proposed          |
|                                                 | Amount | Years | 2011 - 2016 |                                  |
| Croyle Recreation Area                          | $83,000 | 2000-2005 | $800,000 |                                  |
| Comfort Station Replacement and Renovation      | 985,000 | 1996-2010 | 620,000 |                                  |
| Park Facilities Improvements                    | 1,412,000 | 1990 - 2010 | 874,000 |                                  |
| Basketball/Utility Court Reconstruction          | 414,000 | 2005 -2010 | 126,000 |                                  |
| Park Master Site Plan Implementation             | 1,384,000 | 1997-2010 | 863,000 |                                  |
| Ashbridge Memorial Park Master Plan Implementation | 344,000 | 2008-2010 | 275,000 |                                  |
| Park Tree Inventory and Planting Program         | 55,000 | 2003-2010 | 10,000 |                                  |
| Athletic Field Improvement Program               | 0 | 2005-2010 | 752,000 |                                  |
| Artificial Turf Athletic Fields                  | 0 | 2005-2010 | 2,284,000 |                                  |
| Open Space Program                              | 381,000 | 2004-2010 | 308,000 |                                  |
| Bicycle and Pedestrian Path System Implementation | 45,000 | 2005-2010 | 35,000 |                                  |
| Schuylkill River East Trail                      | 99,000 | 2007-2010 | 150,000 |                                  |
| Cynwyd Trail                                    | 3,271,000 | 2008-2010 | 1,929,000 |                                  |
| Polo Field Improvements                          | 73,000 | 2005-2010 | 324,000 |                                  |
| Material Storage Area                            | 212,000 | 2008-2010 | 360,000 |                                  |
| Playground Replacement Program                   | 0 | 2005-2010 | 865,000 |                                  |
| Shortridge Park Streambank Stabilization         | 159,000 | 2008-2010 | 231,000 |                                  |
| Linwood Park Development                         | 1,519,000 | 2007-2010 | 536,000 |                                  |
| TOTAL                                           | $10,436,000.00 | 1996-2010 | $11,342,000.00 |                                  |
the Playground Program may serve a population with circumstances that would require some support. Pockets of lower income residents in the villages of Lower Merion need to be considered in public recreation services.

The $7.8 million proposed Capital Improvement would require $1.55 million in annual investment. Obtaining this level of funding will be a challenge.

**OPPORTUNITIES**

**Technology** – Improving operations through the use of technology is likely to increase revenues and decrease operating costs. The Department of Parks and Recreation is operating with a twentieth century approach to technology in the 21st century. The Township needs to invest in technology for credit card payments, Internet registration, and workload cost tracking. Providing the investment in the software, training, and staff development to enhance operational efficiency is crucial. Workload cost tracking will enable to the Township to have real time information about the cost of parks and recreation by cost centers such as by park, by type of facility, by volunteer projects and requirements, by geographic area, by age of facility or equipment, and a host of other characteristics.

**Customer Convenience and Revenue Generation** – Credit card payments will increase revenues through expanded participation. Lower Merion residents are used to purchasing with credit cards and via the Internet as part of their lifestyle. These same conveniences should be available for public parks and recreation services that require payment and registration. This is especially important since the Township is moving more toward cost recovery, fees and charges.

**Outcome Based Budget Tracking** – Determining the actual cost of facility maintenance will help the Township and facility users to set policies and fees to recover the cost of maintenance for specialized facilities. Without this information it is a challenge to set fees and support Township policy on cost recovery. Making the case with the public that the Township is directing tax dollars to parks, natural resources and recreation facilities that serve the public interest at large without any fees and charges while recovering costs for specialized services is vital for good will and maintaining community support.

**Sponsorships and Donations** – Developing a program for sponsorships and donations is important to consider for park improvements, supporting recreation opportunities for children in need, conservation efforts, and facility revitalization and expansion. A gift catalog could spur donations for projects such as community center rehabilitation, ball field improvements, and environmental projects and recreation efforts aimed at creating active healthy lifestyles.

**Grant Assistance** – The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources offers technical assistance grants for Peer Studies that could provide the Department with the means to begin development of a workload cost tracking system and written maintenance management program. DVIT (Delaware Valley Insurance Trust) also provides assistance to municipalities in developing maintenance systems. It may also be possible to create an advisory group of buildings, grounds and campus management from the Lower Merion School District, colleges, and private schools to assist the Department in establishing maintenance management systems. It will be critical to support the Park Superintendent and the Director in the effort to establish the maintenance management program elements. They are so pressed for time and always receiving requests to take care of immediate issues that taking time out for planning is a very serious challenge. Long term, taking the time to develop the maintenance management system will lead to a sustainable parks and recreation system that is a public asset.
APPENDIX A – CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN
APPENDIX B – PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY REPORT
APPENDIX C – DEMOGRAPHICS REPORT
APPENDIX D – PARK IMPROVEMENT MAPS
### Lower Merion Township – Capital Improvement Program

**Program Area Summary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CIP Project Titles</th>
<th>Parks and Recreation Plan Update Project</th>
<th>Capital Budget Estimates</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

#### Park Facilities Improvements

- Create barrier free parks
  - √
- Incorporate places to gather and socialize
  - √
- Enhance the parks with color
  - √
- Provide pathways for walking and bicycling in parks
  - √
- Provide support facilities and amenities
  - √
- Install a pedestrian bridge to connect Richie Ashburn Park with Keneally Nature Park
  - √
- Incorporate BMP’s to manage stormwater and enhance water quality for park renovation and new development.
  - √
  -  

#### Park Master Plans *

- Develop a master plan for Polo Field
  - $50,000
- Develop a master plan for Penn Wynne Park
  - $15-25,000
- Develop a master plan for Wynnewood Valley Park
  - $15-25,000

#### Athletic Field Renovations

- Bala Cynwyd Park – Convert the 90’ field to 60’ field
  - $22,000
- Gladwyne Park – Re-establish 60’ field in preferred orientation
  - $30,000
- General Wayne Park – Eliminate 60’ field and re-establish a 75’ or 90’ field.
  - $35,000
- Penn Wynne Park
  - √
  
  Costs to be determined through master plan process.
### Lower Merion Township – Capital Improvement Program

**Program Area Summary (Continued)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Park</th>
<th>Action Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Polo Field</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>Costs to be determined through master plan process. Refer to 2010 Job #’s 4480 and 4486.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Ardmore Park</td>
<td>Convert 60’ field to 90’ field and re-establish 60’ field to eliminate overlap</td>
<td>$41,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vernon Young Memorial</td>
<td>Park – Convert 90’ field to 60’ field</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vernon Young</td>
<td>Park Greening *</td>
<td>$22,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penn Wynne Park</td>
<td>Riparian buffer enhancements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polo Field</td>
<td>Plant shade trees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richie Ashburn Ballfield</td>
<td>Ballfield – Riparian buffer enhancements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Ardmore Park</td>
<td>Develop a rain garden and add shade trees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vernon Young</td>
<td>Memorial Park – Develop rain gardens, add street and shade trees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bala Cynwyd Park</td>
<td>Invasive removal and plantings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gladwynne Park</td>
<td>Add deciduous trees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Wayne Park</td>
<td>Develop rain gardens and plant trees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McMoran/Lewis J. Smith</td>
<td>Park – Add shade trees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rolling Hill Park</td>
<td>Eradicate invasive species and close steep, eroding trails</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### LOWER MERION TOWNSHIP – CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM
#### PROGRAM AREA SUMMARY (CONTINUED)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Area</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Cost Determination</th>
<th>Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kenealy Nature Park – Riparian buffer enhancements</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>Cost determined on project/park basis. Budget at $25,000 - $75,000 annually.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Lane Park – Add native vegetation</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shortridge Park – Wildflower/grass meadow</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharpe Park – Add vegetation to stabilize slopes</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pencoyd Park – Plant native vegetation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Mill Creek Park – Streambank stabilization</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>Cost to be determined as part of master planning process.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wynnewood Valley Park – Streambank stabilization</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>Cost determined on project/park basis. Budget at $25,000 - $75,000 annually.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harrition Park – Streambank stabilization</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merion Botanical Park – Streambank Stabilization</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eco-Valley Nature Park – Streambank Stabilization</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flat Rock – Riparian enhancements</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Playground Replacement Program</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make playgrounds interesting and unique</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>Cost determined on project/park basis. Budget at $180,000 - $250,000 annually. Add $35,000/pavilion.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add pavilions near playgrounds @ General Wayne Park, Polo Field, Penn Wynne Park, and Wynnewood Valley Park</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Passive Park Access Improvements</strong>*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop trailhead areas at: Kenealy Nature Park, Henry Lane Park, Mill Creek Valley Park</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>Cost determined on project/park basis. Estimate $80,000 - $125,000.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop environmental demonstration projects and interpretative signs</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>Cost determined on project/park basis. Estimate of $2,000/sign excluding graphic message and $5,000 - $15,000/demonstration area.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* New project category
The Township of Lower Merion conducted a public opinion survey in 2010. The survey included a random sample of 3,000 households including 2,905 that were successfully delivered by the U.S. Postal Service. Every household had an equal chance of being selected for the direct mail survey. Completed surveys totaled 751 for a total response of 26 percent. Typically direct mail surveys result in a two to four percent return.

**Purpose**

The purpose of the survey was to determine the opinions, ideas and concerns of the residents to serve as a foundation for decision-making regarding parks and recreation. By understanding the citizens’ needs and interests, the Township will be able to direct planning and resources for the benefit of the community.

**Findings**

- **Top Recreational Pursuits** – Walking, playing and socializing in township parks, nature enjoyment, bicycle riding and exercise and fitness are the top five activities in which township residents participate.
- **Activities of Interest** – The top activities in which citizens are interested include programs offered by Lower Merion Township, events sponsored by the Civic Associations, recreational classes for adults, boating, and the arts.
- **Participants and Programs** – Families and adults would be the two groups most likely to participate in programs offered by the Township. Generally respondents stated that children and youth are served recreationally. Overall participants in township recreation programs stated that the programs are interesting of high quality and scheduled in good locations at good times. Aspects of programs for the Township to improve include advertising, registration, payment forms, and recreation leadership.
- **High Level of Park Visitation** – The respondents are major visitors to parks. Nine out of ten survey respondents reported using township parks. This is a very high response rate, higher than the national average of 72 percent. Not only do they use township parks, they use many township parks with respondents reporting using six to eight different parks. The most popular parks appear to be South Ardmore, General Wayne, and Rolling Hill. In addition about one in two respondents reported using private recreation facilities for sports and fitness.
- **High Marks on Parks** – Three out of four respondents rated township parks as good to excellent. Factors garnering the highest rating included location, safety, cleanliness, attractiveness and being fun places to spend free time. Appeal to people of all ages, types of facilities and access to nature got lower ratings although still positive at 60 to 62 percent.
- **Places to Walk and Bicycle** – While respondents generally responded that most recreation facilities are available in the community, they stated that there were not enough bicycle trails (71%) and walking paths (61%).
- **Awareness about Parks and Recreation** – Lack of awareness was reported as the chief reason that prevents citizens from participating in recreational opportunities. The area in which they would like more information include: trails (75%), recreation facilities (64%), programs and activities (61%), where to get information about parks and recreation (57%) and township parks (56%). Most would prefer getting information on the township WEB site and through newsletters mailed to the homes.
- **Supporting Parks and Recreation** – Over half of the respondents are willing to pay program fees and charges to use facilities with high maintenance costs.
**I. INTRODUCTION**

The Township of Lower Merion conducted direct mail surveys in 2010 and 2011 to assess public opinion about parks and recreation. The Department of Parks and Recreation wanted to determine the opinions, ideas and concerns of the residents to serve as a foundation for decision-making regarding how to improve the parks, recreation facilities, programs and services. By understanding the citizens’ needs and interests, Lower Merion Township will be able to direct planning and resources so that citizens benefit from the kinds of parks and recreation opportunities in which they are interested.

In addition to the public opinion survey to assess the interests of citizens as individuals, the public participation process also included interviews with key stakeholders, focus groups, public meetings and work sessions with the municipal officials and staff. Balancing the needs of the general public with those of organized community associations that provide important public service such as organized sports is crucial to meeting overall community needs.

**Survey Reporting Parameters**

Survey responses are reported as percentages. Percentages and numbers may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

**II. PROCESS**

Organization, Goals and Survey Instrument – Lower Merion Township retained a team of consultants including Toole Recreation Planning, YSM, Stromberg Garrigan Associates and Sarcinello Planning and GIS to update the 1996 Parks and Recreation Plan. Toole Recreation Planning conducted the public opinion survey as a component of the planning process. The Plan Study Committee and the consultants worked together collaboratively to develop the topics to be addressed in the survey. Topics identified by the Study Committee included: recreation interests and participation, parks, recreation facilities, priorities for parks and recreation, public awareness about recreation opportunities in the area, and level of support for parks and recreation. The survey instrument underwent several revisions until it was fine-tuned for public distribution.

Random Sample - Every household had an equal chance of participating in the survey. The goal was to produce a high level of confidence in the survey response along with a low margin of error. The random sample included 1,500 households.

Distribution – Respondents received a pre-survey letter informing them that they would be getting a questionnaire the following week. The pre-survey letter informed the respondents about the project, the importance of their response and the time frame. The survey was mailed out via first class mail along with a cover letter and a self-addressed stamped reply envelope the next week. A follow-up postcard was sent to thank respondents for returning the completed surveys or asking them to complete their survey and send it in.

During the distribution of the survey, the mailing house employed erroneously sent the wrong letter initially. The error was corrected immediately and a round of new letters was distributed and a refund given to the Township. A second survey was undertaken in 2011 to increase the response.

**III. RETURN**

Lower Merion Township’s survey resulted in 751 completed returned questionnaires for a return rate of 26 percent. Typically direct mail surveys generate a return rate of two to four percent.

Respondent Characteristics

Respondents provided demographic information that included their gender, age group, household composition and length of residence. Surveys were coded according to the township of residence of each respondent so the number of respondents from each township was produced.

Respondent Age Group

Figure 1 presents the response according to age group of the respondents. The age group of 18 to 24 had only two respondents, a typical frequency of response in park and recreation direct mail household surveys. The respondents in the age groups of 25 to 44, 45 to 64 and 65 years and older reflect the (comparison with age group cohorts as a whole).

Gender of Respondents

Of those who answered the question about respondent gender, 45 per-
cent reported that they were males and 46 percent females. Nine percent of the survey respondents did not answer this question.

Household Characteristics

Figure 2 presents the characteristics of the households responding to the survey.

Respondents by Length of Residence in Lower Merion Township

The majority (71%) of survey respondents have lived in Lower Merion Township for over ten years. About 12 percent lived here between five and ten years and 17 percent for fewer than five years.

IV. SUMMARY OF OVERALL FINDINGS

The survey confirms that parks and recreation is an important part of community life in Lower Merion Township. The results offer a clear direction on how to move ahead on enhancing the parks and recreation system to meet the 21st century needs of the residents. The 10 major findings of the survey include the following:

1. Top Recreational Pursuits – Walking, playing and socializing in township parks, nature enjoyment, bicycle riding and exercise and fitness are the top five activities in which township residents participate.

2. Activities of Interest – The top activities in which citizens are interested include programs offered by Lower Merion Township, events sponsored by the Civic Associations, recreational classes for adults, boating, and the arts.

3. Participants and Programs – Families and adults would be the two groups most likely to participate in programs offered by the Township. Generally respondents stated that children and youth are served recreationally. Overall participants in township recreation programs stated that the programs are interesting of high quality and scheduled in good locations at good times. Aspects of programs for the Township to improve include advertising, registration and recreation leadership.

4. High Level of Park Visitation – The respondents are major visitors to parks. Nine out of ten survey respondents reported using township parks. This is a very high response rate, higher than the national average of 72 percent. Not only do they use township parks, they use many township parks with respondents reporting using six to eight different parks. The most popular parks appear to be South Ardmore, General Wayne, and Rolling Hill. In addition about one in two respondents reported using private recreation facilities for sports and fitness.

5. High Marks on Parks – Three out of four respondents rated
township parks as good to excellent. Factors garnering the highest rating included location, safety, cleanliness, attractiveness and being fun places to spend free time. Appeal to people of all ages, types of facilities and access to nature got lower ratings although still positive at 60 to 62 percent.

6. Places to Walk and Bicycle – While respondents generally responded that most recreation facilities are available in the community, they stated that there were not enough bicycle trails (71%) and walking paths (61%).

7. Awareness about Parks and Recreation - Lake of awareness was reported as the chief reason that prevents citizens from participating in recreational opportunities. The area in which they would like more information include: trails (75%), recreation facilities (64%), programs and activities (61%), where to get information about parks and recreation (57%) and township parks (56%). Most would prefer getting information on the township WEB site and through newsletters mailed to the homes.

8. Supporting Parks and Recreation – Over half of the respondents are willing to pay program fees and charges to use facilities with high maintenance costs.

9. Park Friends – The potential to establish a park friends program appears to be positive.

10. Volunteerism – While the topic of volunteerism has emerged throughout the planning process as difficult in this community filled with busy people with little free time, 149 respondents indicated that they would be willing to volunteer for parks and recreation projects. If 100 of these respondents contributed 20 hours a year, this would have an actual cash value of $42,000. It is also the equivalent of one full time employee.

Applying the Findings: Future Directions and Recommendations
The survey findings provide guidance for Lower Merion Township in terms of responding to the public opinion of the citizens at-large:

- Continue to invest in township parks as they are a major community asset used by nine out of ten citizens.
- Work towards increasing public awareness about parks and recreation. Focus on enhancing the WEB site and the township newsletter to create a public perception that the Parks and Recreation department is the “go-to” place for information about parks and recreation opportunities.
- Focus on enhancing parks to appeal to people throughout their lifetime, not just for youth and sports, as a priority for capital improvements. Safe places to walk and bicycle are important. Consider adding facilities that are absent or undersized such as an outdoor ice rink, indoor recreation facilities, and access to natural areas.
- Continue to deal with dogs in parks as this is a controversial subject. Two points of view cover dogs in parks: those that want expanded areas for dogs both on-leash and off-leash and those who do not think that dogs belong in parks.
- Phase in program expansion to adults and families and in areas beyond sports. Consider partnerships with other organizations in this effort. Focus on high quality.
- Move to online registration and credit card payment.
- Move forward with the feasibility study for the Ardmore Community Center expansion. Timing and information are the crucial factors regarding an indoor recreation center study. Include a vigorous public participation process. Retain a company with expertise and experience in indoor recreation center planning and operation. The study needs to address capital costs and most importantly on operations, management and financing as primary elements for consideration. Consider having elected and appointed officials and other key stakeholders make visits to a variety of indoor recreation centers to see them first hand and learn about their experiences.
- Work towards increasing partnerships with other providers. A main recommendation is to continue to foster the township/school district alliance and partnerships with other schools.
The demographic profile builds upon the data presented in the Lower Merion Township Comprehensive Plan (in progress at the time of this draft). It characterizes present day Lower Merion Township and examines changes that have occurred in the Township since the 2000 Census. It specifically focuses on population, age, race and ethnicity, and income. Population counts are based on the 2010 Census. Data on age, race and ethnicity, and income are based on 2009 estimates. Maps reveal local demographic patterns and show where changes have taken place at the neighborhood level.

The demographic profile demonstrates that Lower Merion Township is a large and affluent township with a high degree of local variation in socioeconomic and land use characteristics. Communities in the central, northern and northwestern portions of the Township, such as Gladwyne and Rosemont/Villanova, tend to be more affluent, less densely populated, and less intensively developed, while those on the Township’s southwestern and southeastern boundaries (along the Route 30 and Route 1 corridors) are more socioeconomically diverse, more densely populated, more intensely developed. Consistent with this pattern, large tracts of open space and protected natural areas are predominantly found in the Township’s less populated interior communities where space permits such uses, while smaller neighborhood parks, gymnasiums, and community centers are found in the more densely populated areas of the Township.

The demographic profile also shows that Lower Merion Township is diversifying and aging. All racial and ethnic groups have increased in number since 2000, with the exception of the white population, and this growth is seen in nearly every neighborhood. The Township is also aging as younger residents either leave the Township or advanced into higher age groups and are not replenished.

**POPULATION TRENDS**

Decennial population counts for Lower Merion Township are presented from 1900 through 2010, along with population projections for 2020 (Table 1 and Figure 1). According to these counts, Lower Merion experienced very high rates of population growth through 1970. In 1980, the population decreased for the first time dropping -6.3%. With the exception of a 1.3% increase in 2000, the Township’s population has continued to decline each decade since 1980 but at a low to moderate rate. The decrease seen in the last decade might have been exacerbated by the downturn in the national economy. The 2020 population projection was estimated using a simple linear regression based on a 50 year trend. The result suggests a further decline in the Township’s population of -1.2% over the next ten years, with a total 2020 population of 57,118.

Should economic growth trigger renewed land development activity in the coming years, this downward population trend could be tempered and would likely result in a plateauing or stabilization of the Township’s population.

**Population Change 2000-2010**

Population change by community reveals the local pattern of population change that occurred from 2000 to 2010. Ten of Lower Merion Township’s 16 communities lost population, with the largest decreases occurring in East Bryn Mawr (-16.5%) and Gladwyne (-7%). Wynnewood and West Ardmore had the highest growth rates at 6.7% and 6.1%, respectively.

The map that follows shows the percent population change from 2000 to 2010 at the neighborhood level. Areas colored in shades gray on the map represent neighborhoods that lost population; areas colored in shades of brown represent neighborhoods that gained population (Figure 2). The map reveals that neighborhoods that lost population are distributed throughout the Township. Neighborhoods that gained popula-
TABLE 1: DECENNIAL POPULATION TRENDS 1900-1920

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Change</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>13,275</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>17,671</td>
<td>4,396</td>
<td>33.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>23,866</td>
<td>6,195</td>
<td>35.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>35,166</td>
<td>11,300</td>
<td>47.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>39,566</td>
<td>4,400</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>48,745</td>
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<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>59,420</td>
<td>10,675</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>63,564</td>
<td>4,144</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>59,561</td>
<td>-4,003</td>
<td>-6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>58,003</td>
<td>-1,558</td>
<td>-2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>57,840</td>
<td>737</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>57,825</td>
<td>-915</td>
<td>-1.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2020 Projection  57,118  -707  -1.2%

Source: United States Census; Consultant’s Analysis

FIGURE 1: DECENNIAL POPULATION TRENDS 1900-1920

In order to analyze age trends geographically within the Township, the data are aggregated into the under 18 age group, the 18 to 64 year age group, and the 65 years and over age group. The under 18 age group represents the population that is typically involved in organized youth recreational activities and school related recreational activities. The 18 to 64 year age group represents adults, some of whom might participate in organized Township recreational activities and others that recreate independently. The 65 and over age group represents seniors who may seek recreational activities targeted toward their age group.

In reference to the under 18 segment, all but three communities experienced substantial decreases. Even in the communities that saw an increase (Gladwyne, Wynnewood, and North Penn Valley), the numbers are rather low. The maps reveal that at neighborhood level, declines this age group are spread throughout the Township, and change (in either direction) is most pronounced in neighborhoods in the western portion of the Township (Figure 5). Bryn Mawr, Merion, and Ardmore are among the communities with the largest declines in the under 18 age group, but despite their losses these communities still have the highest densities of youth (Figure 5).

West Ardmore and East Bryn Mawr have the largest decreases in the 18 to 64 year age segment at -39.8% and -27.2%, respectively. West Bryn Mawr has the largest increase at 73.2% (Table 5). Most communities show low to moderate levels of change among this age group. Despite their drastic changes, Bryn Mawr and Ardmore...
have the highest densities of the 18 to 64 year age segment (Figure 6).

In reference to the population age 65 and over, the largest decline is seen in East Bryn Mawr at -43.3% (Table 8). Communities with the largest increases are Merion, Bala, North Penn Valley and West Bryn Mawr. At the neighborhood level, increases in the population age 65 and over are seen throughout the Township, and densities are highest in neighborhoods along the western and southeastern boundaries from Bryn Mawr to Bala (Figure 7).

Race and Ethnicity

The examination of race and ethnicity demonstrates that the Township is diversifying. The White population remains the largest in the Township, but is estimated to have declined by -6.3% from 2000 to 2009 (Table 9). The African American population is the second largest in the Township and is estimated to have grown by 46.8% from 2000 to 2009. The Asian population also grew substantially and is the third largest in the Township. The Hispanic population grew by approximately one-third and is estimated at 2.1% of the Township’s population.

The map shows that the non-white population is estimated to have increased in all neighborhoods with the exception of one in West Ardmore. In terms of population density, the non-white population is concentrated in Ardmore and Bryn Mawr and portions of Bala and Cynwyd.

Income

Lower Merion Township has historically been one of the most af-
PARKS & RECREATION PLAN UPDATE

Appendix C
Lower Merion Township Demographic Profile

**TABLE 3: POPULATION DENSITY - 2010**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>2010 Population</th>
<th>Square Miles</th>
<th>Population Density</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gladwyne</td>
<td>5,020</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosemont/Villanova</td>
<td>5,178</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>1,303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Penn Valley</td>
<td>2,173</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1,709</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haverford</td>
<td>2,848</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>2,268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Bryn Mawr</td>
<td>1,853</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>2,530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Penn Valley</td>
<td>4,612</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>2,562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bala</td>
<td>2,434</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>3,074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Ardmore</td>
<td>5,990</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>3,153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belmont Hills</td>
<td>3,402</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>3,220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cynwyd</td>
<td>3,241</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>3,241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wynnewood</td>
<td>3,565</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>4,373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merion</td>
<td>4,752</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>4,456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Bryn Mawr</td>
<td>2,517</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>4,979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penn Wynne</td>
<td>4,827</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>5,216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Ardmore</td>
<td>1,867</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>7,178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Ardmore</td>
<td>3,514</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>9,336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Merion Township</td>
<td>57,825</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>2,419</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: United States Census; Consultant’s Analysis

**Figure 3: Population Density - 2010**

Conclusions

The demographic profile demonstrates that Lower Merion Township is large and affluent township that is aging and diversifying. The maps show where recent changes have taken place and the local variation in socio-economic characteristics among the townships neighborhoods. According to the Comprehensive Plan, the diversity within the Township “virtually ensures that it functions more as a federation of neighborhoods,” and “residents often have strong ties to their local neighborhood.” In many cases, parks and recreational facilities are an important part of this identity and form an integral part of the community by providing residents with a place to interact and socialize. Continued maintenance and improvement of the Township’s open space, parks, and recreational facilities is therefore necessary not only for the obvious health benefits, but also for continued community cohesion.

Noting demographic changes allows the Township to anticipate future conditions and plan accordingly. Although the Township’s population has decreased since 1980, it remains a very large and active community. Its open space, park and recreational facilities are heavily used and will continue to be heavily used for the foreseeable future. This is especially true of facilities in the Township’s densely populated areas, where heavy use is

fluent townships in Montgomery County and in Pennsylvania. Within the Township, income levels vary substantially. By neighborhood, median household income ranges from $46,309 per year in East Bryn Mawr to $239,522 in Rosemont/Villanova. Lower and middle income neighborhoods are found in Bryn Mawr, Ardmore, and Bala, while the highest incomes are found in Rosemont/Villanova, Gladwyne, and South Penn Valley (Figure 9).
simply a function of accessibility to a large number of residents in the immediately surrounding neighborhoods. In all cases, improvements to, and maintenance of facilities are needed to keep pace with use, to ensure their safety, and to maximize efficiency and economy of resources.

Furthermore, while much of the current demand for the Township’s park and recreational facilities is generated by youth athletics, the Township must consider the needs of a growing middle-aged and senior population as it plans for an active and healthy future.

### Table 4: Median Age 1990 - 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Median Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>40.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>41.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>41.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: United States Census; Consultant’s Analysis

### Table 5: Age Change Lower Merion Township 2000 - 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-4</td>
<td>3,039</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>2,777</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>-262</td>
<td>-8.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05-11</td>
<td>5,186</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>4,592</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>-594</td>
<td>-11.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-14</td>
<td>2,550</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>2,283</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>-267</td>
<td>-10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-17</td>
<td>2,229</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>2,281</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>6,264</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>6,373</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>5,874</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>5,119</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>-755</td>
<td>-12.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>8,105</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>7,208</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
<td>-897</td>
<td>-11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>9,207</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>8,749</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>-458</td>
<td>-5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>6,385</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>8,110</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>1,725</td>
<td>27.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-74</td>
<td>5,070</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>5,070</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75-84</td>
<td>4,203</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>3,887</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>-316</td>
<td>-7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85 &amp; over</td>
<td>1,738</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>2,349</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>611</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Groupings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-17</td>
<td>13,004</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>11,933</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
<td>-1,071</td>
<td>-8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-64</td>
<td>35,835</td>
<td>59.9%</td>
<td>35,559</td>
<td>60.5%</td>
<td>-276</td>
<td>-0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 &amp; over</td>
<td>11,011</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
<td>11,306</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 6: 2000 - 2009 CHANGE IN POPULATION UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>2000 Census</th>
<th>2009 Estimate</th>
<th>2009 % of Community</th>
<th># Change</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E. Bryn Mawr</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>-76</td>
<td>-37.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. Bryn Mawr</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>-84</td>
<td>-21.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merion</td>
<td>1219</td>
<td>961</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
<td>-258</td>
<td>-21.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. Ardmore</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>-47</td>
<td>-19.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Ardmore</td>
<td>670</td>
<td>564</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>-116</td>
<td>-15.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cynwyd</td>
<td>898</td>
<td>782</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
<td>-116</td>
<td>-12.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haverford</td>
<td>606</td>
<td>530</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
<td>-76</td>
<td>-12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosemont/Villanova</td>
<td>1192</td>
<td>1100</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>-92</td>
<td>-7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. Ardmore</td>
<td>1366</td>
<td>1267</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
<td>-99</td>
<td>-7.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Penn Valley</td>
<td>1406</td>
<td>1311</td>
<td>27.7%</td>
<td>-95</td>
<td>-6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penn Wynne</td>
<td>1084</td>
<td>1019</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
<td>-65</td>
<td>-6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bala</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>-6</td>
<td>-1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belmont Hills/College Park</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>791</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
<td>-9</td>
<td>-1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gladwyne</td>
<td>1300</td>
<td>1317</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wynnewood</td>
<td>850</td>
<td>869</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. Penn Valley</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: United States Census; Consultant's Analysis

TABLE 7: 2000 - 2009 CHANGE IN POPULATION AGE 18 TO 64 YEARS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>2000 Census</th>
<th>2009 Estimate</th>
<th>2009 % of Community</th>
<th># Change</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W. Ardmore</td>
<td>2424</td>
<td>1459</td>
<td>78.3%</td>
<td>-965</td>
<td>-39.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Bryn Mawr</td>
<td>2605</td>
<td>1897</td>
<td>87.2%</td>
<td>-708</td>
<td>-27.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. Penn Valley</td>
<td>1418</td>
<td>1324</td>
<td>59.1%</td>
<td>-94</td>
<td>-6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belmont Hills/College Park</td>
<td>2024</td>
<td>1918</td>
<td>58.7%</td>
<td>-106</td>
<td>-5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gladwyne</td>
<td>2764</td>
<td>2728</td>
<td>50.7%</td>
<td>-36</td>
<td>-1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haverford</td>
<td>1684</td>
<td>1670</td>
<td>58.1%</td>
<td>-14</td>
<td>-0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cynwyd</td>
<td>1882</td>
<td>1883</td>
<td>58.5%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wynnewood</td>
<td>1875</td>
<td>1881</td>
<td>56.7%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Penn Valley</td>
<td>2606</td>
<td>2653</td>
<td>56.0%</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. Ardmore</td>
<td>3695</td>
<td>3819</td>
<td>62.8%</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penn Wynne</td>
<td>2267</td>
<td>2347</td>
<td>50.1%</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bala</td>
<td>1258</td>
<td>1318</td>
<td>51.3%</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merion</td>
<td>3077</td>
<td>3225</td>
<td>66.1%</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Ardmore</td>
<td>2327</td>
<td>2471</td>
<td>66.4%</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosemont/Villanova</td>
<td>2759</td>
<td>2939</td>
<td>57.2%</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. Bryn Mawr</td>
<td>1170</td>
<td>2027</td>
<td>76.3%</td>
<td>857</td>
<td>73.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: United States Census; Consultant's Analysis
In reference to the population age 65 and over, the largest decline is seen in East Bryn Mawr at -43.3% (Table 8). Communities with the largest increases are Merion, Bala, North Penn Valley and West Bryn Mawr. At the neighborhood level, increases in the population age 65 and over are seen throughout the Township, and densities are highest in neighborhoods along the western and southeastern boundaries from Bryn Mawr to Bala (Figure 7).

Source: United States Census; Consultant’s Analysis
### TABLE 8: 2000 - 2009 CHANGE IN POPULATION AGE 65 YEARS AND OVER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>2000 Census Estimate</th>
<th>2009 Census Estimate</th>
<th>Community # Change</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E. Bryn Mawr</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>-116</td>
<td>-43.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. Ardmore</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>-21</td>
<td>-9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Ardmore</td>
<td>735</td>
<td>684</td>
<td>-51</td>
<td>-6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. Ardmore</td>
<td>996</td>
<td>993</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>-0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gladwyne</td>
<td>1335</td>
<td>1334</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>-0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosemont/Villanova</td>
<td>1096</td>
<td>1099</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penn Wynne</td>
<td>1303</td>
<td>1317</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wynnewood</td>
<td>556</td>
<td>567</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belmont Hills/College Park</td>
<td>542</td>
<td>559</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cynwyd</td>
<td>531</td>
<td>552</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Penn Valley</td>
<td>744</td>
<td>774</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haverford</td>
<td>643</td>
<td>675</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. Bryn Mawr</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. Penn Valley</td>
<td>431</td>
<td>499</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bala</td>
<td>733</td>
<td>867</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merion</td>
<td>584</td>
<td>696</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: United States Census; Consultant’s Analysis

---

**FIGURE 7: 2000 - 2009 POPULATION AGE 65 YEARS AND OVER**

2000-2009 Estimated Percent Change in Population Age 65 Years and Over

Density of Population Age 65 Years and Over (2009 Estimate)

Source: United States Census; Consultant’s Analysis
Race and Ethnicity

The examination of race and ethnicity demonstrates that the Township is diversifying. The White population remains the largest in the Township, but is estimated to have declined by -6.3% from 2000 to 2009 (Table 9). The African American population is the second largest in the Township and is estimated to have grown by 46.8% from 2000 to 2009. The Asian population also grew substantially and is the third largest in the Township. The Hispanic population grew by approximately one-third and is estimated at 2.1% of the Township's population.

The map shows that the non-white population is estimated to have increased in all neighborhoods with the exception of one in West Ardmore. In terms of population density, the non-white population is concentrated in Ardmore and Bryn Mawr and portions of Bala and Cynwyd.

### Table 9: Race and Ethnicity Lower Merion Township 2000 - 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>54,047</td>
<td>50,627</td>
<td>84.3%</td>
<td>-3,420</td>
<td>-6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>2,694</td>
<td>3,956</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>1,262</td>
<td>46.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alaska Native</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>2,048</td>
<td>3,014</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>966</td>
<td>47.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaiian, Pacific Islander</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other race</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Races</td>
<td>673</td>
<td>770</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>956</td>
<td>1,259</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>31.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: United States Census; Consultant’s Analysis

### Figure 8: 2000 - 2009 Race and Ethnicity

**2000-2009 Estimated Percent Change in Non-White Population**


Source: United States Census; Consultant’s Analysis
The demographic profile demonstrates that Lower Merion Township is large and affluent township that is aging and diversifying. The maps show where recent changes have taken place and the local variation in socioeconomic characteristics among the townships neighborhoods. According to the Comprehensive Plan, the diversity within the Township "virtually ensures that it functions more as a federation of neighborhoods," and "residents often have strong ties to their local neighborhood." In many cases, parks and recreational facilities are an important part of this identity and form an integral part of the community by providing residents with a place to interact and socialize. Continued maintenance and improvement of the Township's open space, parks, and recreational facilities is therefore necessary not only for the obvious health benefits, but also for continued community cohesion.

Noting demographic changes allows the Township to anticipate future conditions and plan accordingly. Although the Township's population has decreased since 1980, it remains a very large and active community. Its open space, park and recreational facilities are heavily used and will continue to be heavily used for the foreseeable future. This is especially true of facilities in the Township's densely populated areas, where heavy use is simply a function of accessibility to a large number of residents in

Data Source: 2000 and 2010 United States Census
Prepared by: Nasso Saromello, AICP
Saromello Planning & GIS Services
## Lower Merion Township – Park Improvement Maps

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Existing Baseball Fields</th>
<th>Proposed Baseball Fields</th>
<th>Soccer Fields</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>90' Baseline Field</td>
<td>60' Baseline Field</td>
<td>Total Fields</td>
<td>90' Baseline Fields</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Bala Cynwyd Park     | 1                        | 1                        | 2            | 0                        | 2                        | 2            | 1 @ 135' x 225' 1 @ 75' x 150' | Eliminate overlap fields.  
|                      |                          |                          |              |                          |                          |              | Soccer outside of infield mix.  |
|                      |                          |                          |              |                          |                          |              | Suggest relocate 60' field to preferred orientation.  |
| Gladwyne Park        | 1                        | 1                        | 2            | 1                        | 1                        | 2            | 1 @ 100' x 180' | Eliminate foul ball threat at playground and basketball court.  
|                      |                          |                          |              |                          |                          |              | Add picnic grove with pavilion.  |
| General Wayne Park   | 0                        | 1                        | 1            | 0                        | 1                        | 1            | 1 @ 165' x 300' | Eliminate foul ball threat at playground and basketball court.  
|                      |                          |                          |              |                          |                          |              | Add picnic grove with pavilion.  |
| McMorran Park        | 1                        | 1                        | 2            | 1                        | 1                        | 2            | 1 @ 135' x 225' 2 @ 75' x 1150' | Add parking for 23 cars.  
|                      |                          |                          |              |                          |                          |              | Relocate basketball court to visible location.  
|                      |                          |                          |              |                          |                          |              | Suggest a picnic pavilion at the playground.  |
|                      |                          |                          |              |                          |                          |              | Add trail throughout site.  |
| Penn Wynne Park      | 0                        | 1                        | 1            | 0                        | 2                        | 2            | 1 @ 135' x 225' 2 @ 75' x 1150' | Add parking for 23 cars.  
|                      |                          |                          |              |                          |                          |              | Relocate basketball court to visible location.  
|                      |                          |                          |              |                          |                          |              | Suggest a picnic pavilion at the playground.  |
|                      |                          |                          |              |                          |                          |              | Add trail throughout site.  |
| Polo Field           | 1                        | 2                        | 3            | 1                        | 1                        | 2            | 4 @ 225' x 360' 2 @ 165' x 300' | Abandon all fields.  
|                      |                          |                          |              |                          |                          |              | Soccer outside of infield mix.  
|                      |                          |                          |              |                          |                          |              | Two locations to relocate playground.  
|                      |                          |                          |              |                          |                          |              | Two basketball courts in new location away from residences but visible from road.  |
| Richie Ashburn Field | 0                        | 1                        | 1            | 0                        | 1                        | 1            |                          | No change suggested  |
| South Ardmore Park   | 1                        | 3 (1 is softball)        | 4            | 2                        | 2 (1 is softball)        | 4            | 3 @ 165' x 300' | Suggested relocation of southeast 60' field to provide preferred orientation.  
|                      |                          |                          |              |                          |                          |              | Relocate basketball to southeast corner.  |
| Vernon Young Memorial Park | 1                        | 1                        | 2            | 0                        | 1                        | 1            | 1 @ 75' x 150' 1 @ 100' x 180' | Existing configuration overlaps and allows use of only one field at a time.  
|                      |                          |                          |              |                          |                          |              | Relocate tennis with preferred orientation.  
|                      |                          |                          |              |                          |                          |              | Suggest adding a skate park or pavilion.  |
| Totals               | 6                        | 12                       | 18           | 7                        | 12                       | 19           |                          | Overall gain of 1-90' field  |
| Totals with 90' Fields in Use | 6                        | 8                        | 14           | 7                        | 10                       | 17           |                          | Gain use of 1-90' and 2-60' fields.  |
| Totals with 60' Fields in Use | 2                        | 12                       | 14           | 5                        | 12                       | 17           |                          | Gain use of 3-90' fields and 60' field # the same.  |

Red = Overlapping field – can only use one field at a time.
Appendix D
Park Improvement Maps
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Park Improvement Maps
Lower Merion Township Awards for Parks & Recreation Excellence: 1998 - 2011

2011.....ASLA Merit Award for the Cynwyd Heritage Trail Design

2010.....PRPS Excellence in Programming Award for the Cynwyd Heritage Tool Trailer
ASLA Merit Award for the Cynwyd Heritage Trail Master Plan

2009.....Best of Philly for Belmont Hills Pool
ASLA Merit Award for the Linwood Park Master Plan

2000.....PRPS Excellence in Programming Award for the Natural Areas Stewardship program

1998.....PRPS Excellence in Programming Award for the Department’s Special Recreation Day Camp program

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