

Chapter 1 - Introduction

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Plan Purpose and Goals

The **Spring Garden Township Comprehensive Recreation, Park and Open Space Plan** provides strategic direction for the municipality to expand and enhance its recreation offerings and position the Parks and Recreation Department as a vital component of municipal government. The purpose of this planning effort was to develop a document that will guide future activities to improve parks and recreation facilities, programs and services, and assess the need for the development of the Mount Rose Avenue Property as a recreation asset. Parks, recreation facilities, trails, and open space add to the quality of life offered in a community; helps to attract and retain residents and businesses; and can spur economic activity. Recreation programs and services offer opportunities for residents to gather together as a community and lead a healthful lifestyle.

The **Plan** is an advisory document that serves as a long range planning tool for Spring Garden Township. The **Plan** defines future actions for providing recreation facilities, parkland, trails, and recreation services into the next decade. The Plan builds upon the existing framework of parks and services in the community. Recommendations target enhancements and initiatives desired by citizens and needed in the community, while considering the implications of today's lifestyles and trends in leisure activities.

The **Plan** provides a focus and prioritization for recommended initiatives, recognizing that not everything can be accomplished at once. The parks, recreation, trails, and open space proposals will require the investment of time, energy, and money, as well as, the commitment of elected officials, advisory boards, municipal staff, and volunteers.

Planning Process

Spring Garden Township began this planning process in early 2015. The Spring Garden Township Recreation Commission served as the Study Committee to work with the consultant team of a landscape architect and recreation planners to create this plan. Public input was gathered throughout the year-long planning project. Citizens were invited to public meetings to share their ideas and views on parks and recreation; interviews were held with key stakeholders to gather input and insights from recreation program providers, township staff, and others; and the municipal website hosted an on-line survey, which asked residents about their



priorities for improving parks and recreation in the Township. The public participation process and assessment of current conditions provided the foundation for the plan and defined key issues and opportunities for consideration to enhance parks and recreation services in Spring Garden Township.

The Plan as a Guide

The **Spring Garden Township Comprehensive Recreation, Park and Open Space Plan** will help to guide municipal decision-making regarding parks, recreation facilities, trails, recreation programs and services, and their financing. The recommendations reflect the direction in which the community desires to move in enhancing the quality of life for its citizens. The **Plan** reflects citizen's opinions and priorities and sets forth a clear vision of the future of parks and recreation in Spring Garden Township. The **Plan** positions the community to undertake the actions recommended and seek the financial support of its residents and from various grant programs.

The **Plan** functions in both a legal and an advisory capacity. It may help the municipality to acquire future funding from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, federal grant programs, as well as, from local businesses and foundations.

Legal

Once adopted, the **Comprehensive Recreation, Park and Open Space Plan** can serve a legal function. The MPC (Pennsylvania Municipalities Code) provides planning requirements that can be adopted by municipalities. Municipalities must provide a defensible basis for sound decision-making regarding land use. The **Plan** provides a sound foundation on which Spring Garden Township can base local planning decisions. The **Plan** provides the background, assessment, and rationale required to incorporate mandatory dedication of parkland and fee-in-lieu of dedication provisions into municipal ordinances.

Advisory

This **Plan** serves as a reference document for overall municipal planning and management and collaboration with regional partners and the private sector. The recommendations are based upon an investigative and educational process to identify initiatives and opportunities that are important to Spring Garden Township. The plan is intended to be a living document that will play a role in the decisions the municipality makes about parks, recreation services, trails, financing, management, open space preservation, and related planning efforts.

The **Plan** should be reviewed annually, prior to budget season. Through this review, accomplishments, needs, and emerging opportunities should be reviewed and considered. Actions should be adapted to changing circumstances in the municipality and region. Budgets should be based on the action plan, as modified to respond to existing circumstances, for the upcoming fiscal year. This proves to be a sound way of targeting resources to community needs and emerging opportunities.

The Benefits of Parks & Recreation

Parks and recreation play a critical role in providing a high quality of life that attracts and retains residents and businesses in a community. Pennsylvania municipalities that invest in park areas and recreation programs are creating opportunities to enhance citizens' well-being, improve the local economy, conserve

the natural environment, and strengthen the community. Our lives would not be complete without recreation and parks. Recreation brings us purpose, pleasure, and balance. Most of our best memories were made during our recreation time. The benefits of parks and recreation go way beyond fun and games. Consider the following benefits:

Personal Benefits

- Reduce stress
- Increase life expectancy
- Create balance between work and play
- Reduce obesity
- Promote physical activity and healthy lifestyles
- Reduce alienation and loneliness
- Encourage life-long learning and self-discovery
- Provide diversion from routine
- Meet people's needs for adventure, relaxation, belonging, competition, achievement, and excitement



Community Benefits

- Promote community pride and identity
- Reduce crime, delinquency, and self-destructive behavior
- Keep children involved in positive activities and out of trouble
- Encourage appreciation for community traditions and heritage
- Help people stay connected with others
- Promote cultural understanding and harmony
- Provide opportunities for neighbors to meet and form friendships
- Provide involvement opportunities that build leadership skills



Environmental Benefits

- Reduce pollution
- Protect ecosystems and natural resources
- Enhance air, water, and soil quality
- Protect wildlife and habitat areas
- Provide access to places to enjoy nature



Economic Benefits



- Enhance land and property values
- Assist in business retention
- Increase tourism
- Generate revenue
- Generate income for local businesses
- Reduce vandalism and crime
- Reduce health care costs

What Do Children Learn when Participating in Recreation Activities?

Recreation programs teach children skills they need to be successful in school and in life:

- How to budget time, set goals, communicate effectively with others, make decisions, follow rules, use their imaginations, and resolve problems.
- Sportsmanship and fairness, giving total effort, hard work pays off, the importance of exercise and physical fitness, and being a team player.
- Planning, strategy, leadership, patience, resourcefulness, and social skills.
- How to accept, understand, and value differences.