

## Chapter 11

### **PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE RECOMMENDATIONS**

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#### ***PARKS AND RECREATION GOAL:***

**PRG1:** *Promote a safe, functional, walkable, and well maintained network of public parks, indoor recreation centers, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities that support physical health, economic stability, and Kennett Square's small town quality-of-life.*

#### ***OPEN SPACE PROTECTION GOAL:***

**PRG2:** *Permanently protect, maintain and, where appropriate, restore and expand open space lands to provide economic, ecological, public health, and quality-of-life benefits.*

#### **Objectives:**

**PRO1:** Maintain, improve, and establish park and recreation facilities and urban open spaces that provide a variety of active or passive recreation opportunities.

**PRO2:** Encourage recreational providers to increase indoor recreation opportunities and support the coordinated use of school, church, and other institutional recreation facilities.

**PRO3:** Cooperate with surrounding municipalities to establish a region-wide network of greenways, sidewalks, trails, paths, and bike routes which link recreation destinations with neighborhoods, employment centers, shopping areas, and public schools.

**PRO4:** Provide security, safety, and liability for fiscally responsible public recreational facilities.

**PRO5:** Establish adaptable recreation programming to meet the needs of all sectors of the community, and provide administration, staffing, and volunteers to implement the programs.

**PRO6:** Pursue joint public-private recreation initiatives, and support private and institutional entities that provide community recreation opportunities such as community events, organized team sports, and school-related athletics and unstructured play.

**PRO7:** Promote the continuation of traditional small town recreation activities and events such as parades, downtown festivals, parks events, and seasonal events such as fireworks and holiday house tours.

### **PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE RECOMMENDATIONS**

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**[PLANNING COMMITTEE NOTE:** The following recommendations serve two key functions. First, to establish policies that can be used in interpreting or, if warranted, revising borough ordinances such as the zoning ordinance and the subdivision and land development ordinance. The second function is to provide policies which can be quoted in applications to state, federal, and private grant programs that fund parks, recreation, and open space projects. In recent years, these grants have become a major funding source for municipally-initiated park, recreation, and open space projects. If a project is formally supported in an adopted comprehensive plan, it is more likely to get funding.] **NOTE:** A synopsis of Borough ordinances is included at the end of the recommendations.

## **PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES RECOMMENDATIONS**

- PR-1 Continue to provide a variety of active and passive recreation parks and facilities to meet the needs of current and future residents.** Implementing this task will involve the Parks and Recreation Board and the Planning Commission to actively investigate available grants for recreation and to pursue unique opportunities acquire parcels of land and to work in partnership with developers. Furthermore, there should be ongoing coordination with sports leagues and periodic user surveys to determine needs as they change. Given Kennett Square's small size, the Borough should partner with neighboring communities or regional civic groups to provide diverse recreation opportunities.
- PR-2 Establish indoor recreation facilities that can be accessed by pedestrians via the Borough's sidewalk grid.** Such facilities should be designed to meet some of the outstanding needs of the Borough, such as the need for senior or youth/teenage activities which could be accessed by pedestrians. A facility with adequate indoor space to serve as a fallback location for Borough events that get rained out should be considered. This facility could be part of a larger complex such as a public library or municipal building, or a series of smaller locations throughout the Borough. Working with a variety of organizations may be necessary to accomplish and manage this effort.
- PR-3 Continue to provide active recreation facilities which can accommodate multiple types of recreation uses.** Such facilities could include fields that can accommodate multiple sports activities or sports and non-sports activities, as well as trails for walking, cycling and other non-motorized uses.
- PR-4 Continue to provide parks and recreation facilities that can serve as community gathering areas or the location for civic and community events.** This task may involve designing or upgrading parks so that they can better serve as locations for civic and community events, and also focusing on improvements to areas such as the downtown sidewalks, parks, alleys, and streets to ensure that they better accommodate events. Such downtown improvements could be the installation of lighting, way-finding signs, and benches, or the trimming or locating trees to better accommodate vendors attending events, or developing a plan to provide electric outlets to be used by vendors.
- PR-5 Pursue the upkeep of and improvements to recreation facilities including:**  
(Note: Not all of these facilities are owned/and or operated by the Borough, so the implementation of this recommendation will require communication and cooperation)
- **Anson B. Nixon Park** - Continue to upgrade and improve facilities to provide opportunities for safe recreation, unstructured play, and locally organized events and activities.
  - **Red Clay Creek Trail** - Continue to maintain and expand the existing trail and add connections to recreational destinations and population centers.
  - **West South Street Ball Field** - Maintain the playing field and improve the function and aesthetics of the parking and entrance driveway corridor. Establish improved pedestrian links to the field, and possibly a path linking the park to the sidewalk on the west side of Center Street. Evaluate options for ensuring that this property will be protected as recreational open space and protected from future development. Evaluate options for establishing a playground on part of this property east of the ball field, which is currently a square shaped lawn measuring approximately one acre.

- **Herb Pennock Field** - Maintain this playing field which is owned by the Borough but is located in Kennett Township. Establish improved pedestrian links to the field, and possibly a trail or sidewalk along West South Street, in order to link the field to the residential neighborhood within the Borough between West South Street and Ridge Avenue.
- **Kennett Community Park and Swimming Pool** - Maintain this facility and improve access from the neighborhood between South Street East and Southview Avenue, including an improved crossing of South Street. Consider establishing a playground at this location.

**PR-6 Consider establishing additional mini-parks as opportunities arise.** Land for mini-parks, including public gardens or green spaces, can be acquired through purchase, donation, or directly from residential developers using mandatory dedication regulations. Bonuses could also be granted to property owners or businesses that provide small scale greenspaces, benches, or similar feature that can be enjoyed by the public.

**PR-7 Include options for reducing recreation costs through multi-municipal cooperation when evaluating or planning recreation initiatives.** When planning or pursuing funding for large-scale recreation projects like regional trails, the Borough should consider partnering with surrounding municipalities whose residents will likely use the Borough facilities, and vice versa.

### **TRAILS, PATHS, AND ROUTES**

**PR-8 Work with neighboring communities to establish multi-use trails which link residential areas to public schools, playgrounds, employment centers, and commercial areas.** A key to implementing this task is for the Parks and Recreation Board and the Planning Commission to continue to communicate and coordinate with regional trails advocates and neighboring municipalities. *Map PR-00* illustrates a regional trail network linking to the Borough.

**PR-9 Pursue projects and grant funding to support pedestrian, bicycle, and motorist safety initiatives.** The emphasis on such projects should be protecting children walking to school and recreation areas, and shoppers, employees, and residents visiting downtown Kennett Square.

**PR-10 Pursue the establishment of a network of sidewalks, trails, and paths that link all parts of the Borough with downtown and Anson B. Nixon Park.** Such an initiative would have to involve a coordinated effort with park planners, communities with existing sidewalks, new developers who could build new sidewalks, and the business community within the downtown.

### **SPORTS PROGRAMS, NON-SPORTS PROGRAMS, RECREATION, AND EVENTS**

**PR-11 Continue to support a balanced diversity of competitive sports through coordination with adult and youth athletic leagues, public schools, and other recreation stakeholders such as the YMCA.** Such coordination could focus on ways to more economically construct, maintain, and schedule playing fields, courts, and other facilities whose service area may cross municipal boundaries. Stakeholders could include sports leagues, school districts, health clubs, and trail, hiking, or bicycling groups.

**PR-12 Support a diversity of recreation activities, with a special focus on the growing senior population.** A key to implementing this recommendation is not only providing these activities, but providing them at a time and a place that will facilitate use by seniors. Such an approach requires that recreation planners consider access for a population which may have physical and

mobility limitations, and are more likely to use public transportation. A task force should be formed to address this issue.

- PR-13 Continue and expand special events programming.** Continue to cooperate with organizations such as Southern Chester County Chamber of Commerce on special events that build awareness of parks and downtowns as community centers. Such events could include a 5-K Run, bicycle race, music performances summer outdoor film nights, farmers markets, artisans markets, or other outdoor festivals.
- PR-14 Provide opportunities for environmental education.** Nature walks, birdwatching, stream/litter cleanups, and other types of environmental programs have both recreational and educational value. The Borough and/or School District should consider ways to provide environmental programming within Anson B. Nixon Park.
- PR-15 Coordinate with Kennett Middle and High School with the goal of making their recreation facilities more available for community use.** The campus of Kennett Middle and High School has substantial recreational facilities including an indoor swimming pool. The Borough should explore establishing community nights to use one particular school facility such as the indoor pool, basketball courts, or sports fields.

### **RECREATION FUNDING**

- PR-16 Consider establishing a park and recreation gift catalog that can receive cash donations.** This catalog would describe needed recreation equipment and structures that can be funded by a donation by an individual, a business, or some other organization. Donations could be recognized with a permanent plaque, as opposed to an advertisement.
- PR-17 In appropriate developed areas, pursue funding that will permit the demolition of abandoned or unused structures of no historic value whose removal could create areas of open space.** Certain open space protection grants will not permit funding to be used for the demolition of existing structures. As a result, the Borough should be vigilant to pursue funding for demolition, since many of the Borough's potential open spaces have existing structures. These areas could be used as "tot lots," community gardens, or neighborhood meeting spaces.
- PR-18 Consider the use of municipal funding as a local match to encourage open space preservation.** The Borough should consider providing funding as a local match, on top of sums offered to ease lands from land trusts, if the additional sum would entice a landowner to ease a property.
- PR-19 Extend the protected open space network into commercial, industrial, and residential areas via greenways.** Coordinate with owners of larger parcels such as homeowner associations, institutions, schools, industrial uses, utility companies, and rail companies to determine if their property can be managed to serve as a greenway to link to existing protected open spaces.
- PR-20 Evaluate public access or restrictions to open space.** Encourage land development plans, open space protection studies, and Borough ordinances and regulations which clearly state whether or not public access may be permitted on a protected open space property, or cluster of properties.

## **MAINTENANCE AND PROPERTY MANAGEMENT**

**PR-21 Document and continue recreation policies that address property issues such as public access, liability, disabled persons access, and the use of public land as protected open space infrastructure.** The implementation of this action could include updating ordinances to address:

- Recreation activities that may be restricted or limited.
- Public access restrictions to facilities, such as dusk till dawn use.
- Activities requiring a permit or proof of insurance.
- Lighting recreational facilities in a way that balances energy use, safety concerns, and light pollution impact to properties surrounding lighted recreational facilities.
- How recreation facilities will comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, which may involve designating some but not all parts of natural or historic resources area as locations that can accommodate the handicapped.
- Linking parks or open spaces as part of the infrastructure and circulation network.

**PR-22 Conduct ongoing maintenance and safety inspections at Borough parks and recreation facilities based on a regular maintenance schedule.** This schedule should be revised on an as needed basis to minimize liability and insurance cost. The maintenance schedule could be supplemented with a work plan listing maintenance jobs in more detail on a monthly basis.

**PR-23 Evaluate potential maintenance costs and staffing when planning new parks and recreational facilities.** The Borough should evaluate potential maintenance costs associated with new parks and public open space areas including trail and sidewalk areas that will function as trail links.

**PR-24 Ensure that open space resources are properly maintained using best management practices.** The Borough should regularly inspect open spaces to ensure that functions are being maintained and mandated maintenance and management regulations are being followed.

**PR-25 Encourage developers and homeowners associations to properly manage existing and newly constructed HOA open spaces according to a management plan.** Such a plan should take into account issues such as funding for in-perpetuity maintenance, ecological sustainability, public access, recreation use, and if needed, reforestation, invasive plant removal, or stream bank restoration.

## **SAFETY AND LIABILITY**

**PR-26 Ensure that maintenance, security, safety, ADA compliance, and liability are addressed when planning, developing, and constructing parks and recreation facilities.** These issues should be considered at the very early stages of planning for a recreation project so as to avoid a situation where a project must be revised in its later stages.

**PR-27 Continue to regularly coordinate with police and emergency service providers regarding recreational facilities.** Such coordination would provide them with updates on new and improved recreation facilities, and options for patrolling them or accessing them with emergency vehicles.

## **PUBLIC RELATIONS AND MARKETING**

**PR-28 Operate a web page, which outlines the recreation opportunities available in Kennett Square Borough.** This could provide:

- Maps and locations of parks and recreation facilities, and available amenities.
- Information on activities, programs, and event schedules.
- Information on trail or park “Friends of” groups.
- On-line registration for reserving or renting facilities, or participating in events.
- Opportunities for user comments on recreational facilities.
- Opportunities for volunteers to work on parks and trails.

**PR-29 Create and update a brochure describing leisure opportunities in and around the Borough.**

As more features are added to the Borough’s park and recreation facilities, it is important to update the public about new opportunities that are available. In general, an informative brochure should be updated whenever there is a major new development such as a new trailhead, playground, etc. This brochure could also be posted on-line as a download.

**PR-30 Continue to use a variety of media, such as newsletters and websites, to publicize recreation opportunities.** Given the fast pace of digital and internet technology, it is important for the Borough to use new and innovative techniques to make the public aware of recreation opportunities, and provide digital versions of park brochures and maps on the Borough’s Internet site.

**PR-31 Inform residents about open space opportunities.** The Borough should inform residents in a timely manner when proposals are made that would affect open space. Such proposals would include the purchase, sale, or change in use of Borough-owned open space.

## **GREENWAY/OPEN SPACE PLANNING**

**PR-32 Establish a greenway/open space network in the Borough linking existing protected open spaces.** This network could include forested greenways throughout the Borough. An example is the greenway along the trail connecting Anson B. Nixon Park with natural areas along the East Branch Red Clay Creek. Other creeks within the Borough should also receive consideration for riparian buffers, in addition to street trees on primary streets to serve as urban greenways connecting to open space areas and the riparian corridors. (See Riparian Buffers recommendation included in Chapter 00).

**PR-33 Consider the development of a multi-municipal master plan with Kennett and East Marlborough Townships for a Red Clay Creek Greenway.** This plan should also address recreation based businesses, access limitations, resource conservation, reforestation, and available grant funding. This process might also involve developing a distinctive name for this greenway. This “identity” should be appropriate for the Borough to use in grant applications.

## **UPDATES TO ORDINANCES AND REGULATION**

**PR-34 Amend municipal ordinances to include and consistently define active and passive recreation as well as trails, paths, and routes as they relate to recreation planning.** This task will require a review of existing ordinances, and revising or adding definitions to be consistent with this comprehensive plan. A brief summary is as follows:

- Natural Resources Provisions of the Zoning Ordinance (adopted 2007)

<i>Section</i>	<i>Park, Rec. &amp; OS Provisions as of the Most Recent Amendment, 2005</i>
Art. II	Defines “open space” and “park,” but not “trail,” “path,” or “sidewalk.”

- Natural Resources Provisions of the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance.

<i>Section</i>	<i>Park, Rec. &amp; OS Provisions as of the Most Recent Amendment, Oct. 2006.</i>
Sec. 18-1	The definitions section does not include the terms for “trail,” “path,” “park,” “open space,” or “greenway.”
Sec. 17-5	Notes that property owners must maintain sidewalks.
Sec. 17-26	Defines sidewalk as “any surface provided for the exclusive use of pedestrians.”

**PR-35 Update ordinances to include provisions which address planning and funding of trails, paths, and bicycle routes.** Such provisions could require the construction of trails and paths in new developments and redevelopments. These provisions could be designed to coordinate trail connections with existing sidewalks, trails, and paths where applicable during the subdivision and land development review process and when new trails are proposed. Such provisions should encourage the linkage of internal trails and paths within a development to municipally maintained trails and sidewalks. Such links should be constructed in a manner that is safe, aesthetically pleasing, and designed in such a way as to minimize maintenance.

**RP-36 Update ordinances to include trails and paths, along with parks and open spaces, as recipients of fee-in-lieu funding.** Ordinances should be reviewed and updated as necessary to clearly state that fee-in-lieu funding targeting recreation facilities can be used for the establishment of trails and paths.

**PR-37 Coordinate with non-residential developers to dedicate protected open space or green areas in the form of a public square or public common/green.** Amend ordinances to require developments to include open spaces, with the option of choosing from a wide variety of open space types. Open space areas within a nonresidential development can be used for public greens or squares, sitting areas, outdoor rooms, greenways, trails, paths or other forms of recreation or outdoor enjoyment. The Borough should coordinate with developers early in the site planning process to include open space and greening amenities in their design schemes.

**PR-38 Amend the SLDO to establish mandatory land dedication or fee-in-lieu provisions.** The current SLDO does not include mandatory land dedication or fee-in-lieu provisions. Because the Borough is largely developed with few opportunities for new large-scale developments, any fee-in-lieu provisions will likely focus on trail or pedestrian links or small mini-parks or public garden spaces. Fee-in-lieu provisions should only apply to developments that are larger than a specified acreage.

**PR-39 Consider requiring fee-in-lieu provisions to be updated at least every five years.** Updating fee-in-lieu provisions at least every five years ensures that the fees generated are current with changing real estate values, and provide sufficient funding to cover the practical costs of recreation projects. Such a revision should also update the type of projects that can accept fee-in-lieu funds, including: parks and recreational facilities; the construction of recreation infrastructure such as play equipment, structures or parking facilities; and projects either on public land, or parts of private land with publicly-owned recreation easements.

**PR-40 Consider including the definition of “Open Space” in Borough ordinances as defined in this plan.** As noted above in recommendation PR-20, the term “open space” should be included as a category that can receive fee-in-lieu funding.

**PR-41 Evaluate the methods for the maintenance and inspection of open space within residential developments.** The Borough should review the standards within the Zoning Ordinance and SLDO that regulate how open spaces within residential developments are permitted, maintained, and inspected. It may be necessary to modify the regulations to be more specific about maintenance requirements or to give the Borough additional flexibility to inspect and enforce the maintenance of these open spaces.