

Chapter 1

Introduction

AN OVERVIEW

The *2003 Horsham Township Park and Recreation Plan Update* represents a commitment on the part of Horsham Township Council to continue assessing the municipality's role as a provider of parks and recreation services. This plan is intended to serve as an effective planning tool to maintain and improve the present level of service and to enhance an already successful park and recreation system. It assesses the need for a broad array of recreation opportunities into the future and identifies needs and priorities so that decision makers can make informed decisions regarding the delivery of parks and recreation services in Horsham Township.

The 2000 Census recorded 24,232 people in Horsham Township. The population is projected to grow to 30,890 by 2025, a gain of 6,658 persons, which translates to a 27.4% increase. Provision of adequate parks and recreation opportunities to serve the growing population takes careful planning. This is especially true to meet the changing needs and interests of the people. Because public needs must be continually monitored so that the local park and recreation strategy can be adjusted as necessary, this is the underlying purpose of this plan.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

This plan was prepared by a study committee that met from September 2002 through December 2003. The study committee was established by Township Council to serve as the official policy- and decision-making body for developing the plan and presenting it to Council for adoption. The 14-member board included a broad representation of people who brought to the meetings a sincere interest in enhancing the quality of life in the township through public recreation.

The Horsham Township Park and Recreation Plan Update Study Committee was comprised of the following representatives:

- two members from the Township Council;
- two members from the Park and Recreation Board;
- one member from the Planning Commission;
- one member from the Environmental Advisory Board;
- one member from the Hatboro-Horsham School District;
- four residents at large;
- one senior citizen;
- the Township Manager; and
- the Parks and Recreation Director.

The Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC) was selected by the Township Council to serve as the planning consultant for the project. MCPC facilitated the study committee meetings by presenting information, conveying concepts, addressing questions, resolving issues, and guiding decision-making.

MCPC worked closely with the study committee throughout the planning process to build consensus with public input. The planning process was designed to incorporate broad and meaningful public participation to determine park and recreation support, needs, and priorities. The study committee felt so strongly about being sure that the plan effectively addressed the prevailing sentiment of the people that the general public was offered the following ways to participate:

- **Public Meetings** – The study committee meetings were advertised and open to the public. This gave the general public and other stakeholders an opportunity to become informed about the plan and to understand the potential impacts and benefits of its findings and recommendations. Information was presented and questions and concerns were addressed during these public forums.

Two study committee meetings were structured as formal Public Meetings. One was held when the study was approximately 25% complete (after base information had been collected and a meaningful presentation could be made for local input). The second was held to present the findings and recommendations of the draft study for official public comment as part of the plan approval process.

- **Citizen Survey** – A recreation needs questionnaire was mailed to every postal address in the township as the primary means of assessing the public park and recreation interests and needs. The responses gathered from a series of questions were used to guide the formulation of recommendations in the study based on the expressed current and future needs of the people.

- **Key Person Interviews** – Interviews with key persons (i.e., important civic leaders, organizations and businesses that are influential in the community) were conducted to obtain a more thorough understanding of park and recreation opportunities and needs.

Electronic and Printed media were used to make the general public aware of opportunities to contribute to the planning process. Information about the plan, including descriptions of the project’s status and upcoming meetings, was posted on the official Horsham Township website. Local newspapers, cable television, and the Township’s quarterly newsletter were also used to advertise meetings and to present general information about the project.

The results of the public participation process are described in subsequent chapters of this plan.

USES OF THE PLAN

This plan is a basic source of information about parks and recreation in Horsham Township. It provides a comprehensive look at the parks and recreation services as they exist today and how they should be offered in the future. The plan is intended to serve two basic functions:

- **Advisory** – Based on the broad array of data that was gathered and analyzed, this plan sets forth a comprehensive strategy for establishing an effective park and recreation services delivery system. It recommends parameters, principles, and actions to accomplish a level of service capable of meeting the community’s long-term needs. Although the recommendations are only advisory, they provide a framework for Township officials, administrators, and management to formulate policies. The recommendations do not commit the Township to specific actions.

The plan should be thought of as a blueprint for decision-making. It provides guidance for parkland acquisition and development, operations and maintenance, recreation programming, staffing, budgeting, and other fundamental elements of fulfilling the prescribed mission and goals for the park and recreation system.

Aside from being used internally by the Township, the plan will also serve as a tool for external stakeholders and partners (i.e., developers, businesses, recreation-related organizations, neighborhood groups, associations, agencies, the general citizenry, etc.) to learn how they, too, can help implement the plan. For example, a youth sports organization serving the township could decide to expand its programming efforts and to develop associated facilities to fulfill unmet recreation demands. Another example is that state, county, and federal programs and private foundations could award grant funding to the Township or other qualified entities to carry out recommendations of the plan. Having an adopted park and recreation plan increases the Township’s funding eligibility for projects that are tied to planned community initiatives.

- **Legal** - The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (PMPC), which sets forth requirements for planning on the municipal level, stipulates that planning documents and ordinances must be adopted by the municipality to provide a defensible basis for sound decision-making regarding land use. The code further requires that the Township have an adopted recreation plan if it requires developers, during the subdivision and land development process, to privately reserve land, construct recreational facilities, dedicate land to the public, and/or pay a fee-in-lieu of the dedicated land for park and recreation purposes. This plan will satisfy this legal directive if the Township imposes such requirements.

Plan Goals

The Study Committee established a set of goals to guide the process of collecting and analyzing information. The goals of the plan are as follows:

- Inventory and assess customer park and recreation needs and make projections for future preferences and interests.
- Inventory and assess open space and park resources and devise a plan of action to protect such resources for present and future customers.
- Inventory and assess existing Township parks and recreation facilities to determine if the facilities are well-distributed throughout the township as well as if the recreation facilities are of sufficient numbers and condition to offer a quality recreation opportunity to the customers.
- Inventory and assess programs and services to determine if the leisure interests of the customers are being met and what changes will be needed in the future to serve them at the level they desire.
- Inventory and assess public and private recreation providers to see where cooperative efforts could be made to deliver recreation services through partnerships or coordinated services.
- Assess current financing of the Township's parks and recreation services and develop strategies that will continue to support its investment in parks and recreation.
- Establish an action plan for the acquisition, development, and rehabilitation of parks, recreation facilities, trails, and important open spaces.
- Develop strategies for the short-term and long-term management and support of Township parks and recreation services.

ORGANIZATION OF THE PLAN

The remainder of this plan is organized as follows:

- **Chapter 2** (Customer Analysis) identifies the customers that are served by Horsham Township's parks and recreation services. The chapter provides background information about the community, including township history; governmental structure; population and employment data; land use; growth patterns; and remaining open land.
- **Chapter 3** (Supply Analysis) inventories and assesses the existing supply of available parks, recreation facilities and recreation programs. Active proposals that could supplement the existing supply are identified.
- **Chapter 4** (Needs Analysis) presents the park and recreation interests and needs that customers expressed through a mailed survey, interviews, and public meetings. The spatial distribution and physical accessibility of parks and recreation facilities are examined.
- **Chapter 5** (Issues and Opportunities Analysis) draws conclusions about the future demand for parks and recreation in light of constraints, trends, and forecasts. Opportunities to enhance the delivery of parks and recreation services are outlined.
- **Chapter 6** (Strategic Goals) proposes a mission statement and definitive goals for achieving the mission. General roles and responsibilities are assigned.
- **Chapter 7** (System Plan) identifies new parks to be acquired, new recreation facilities to be developed, and other resources to be replaced/rehabilitated. Trail, sidewalk, and on-road bicycle facility improvements are addressed.
- **Chapter 8** (Maintenance Plan) proposes operation, maintenance, and land management practices to enhance the condition of parks and recreation facilities. Maintenance equipment needs are evaluated.
- **Chapter 9** (Recreation Services Delivery Plan) describes new programs to be offered to better meet customers' recreational interests. Public relations and marketing efforts are recommended to inform customers of available functions, services, and programs.
- **Chapter 10** (Administration and Personnel Plan) recommends a level of staffing needed to administer and maintain the recommended parks, facilities, programs, and services. Additional personnel needs are identified.
- **Chapter 11** (Implementation Plan) provides a cohesive five-year list of prioritized operating-related recommendations with their associated costs. A prioritized capital improvement program extending 8+ years is recommended. Implementation techniques are proposed.