

## **RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION PROGRAM**

The following recommendations and implementation strategies are the heart of this Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan. These are the actions Amity hopes to take to address the needs, and achieve the goals and objectives identified in the previous sections of this document. This chapter of the Plan includes three main parts:

- *Recommendations* - The actions Amity should undertake to enhance its parks, greenways, recreation programs, conservation activities and recreation administration.
- *Action Program* - A summary of recommended actions, their phasing and who should be responsible for overseeing implementation.
- *Funding Sources and other Implementation Techniques* - Sources of funds to help carry out the Plan and a range of techniques for preserving open space.

Recommendations are identified below for the following topics:

- Parks and Recreation Facilities
- Greenways
- Recreation Programs
- Open Space Conservation
- Historic and Agricultural Preservation
- Recreation Administration

### **Recommendations for Parks and Recreation Facilities**

#### ***1. Finish Developing Hill Road Recreation Area***

Hill Road Recreation Area is Amity's newest park and a work still in progress. The Township constructed two Little League baseball fields there that are now in use. However, the Township has not yet built several related amenities also planned for the park. Amity should finish developing Hill Road Recreation Area with the following capital improvements:

- Construct a block building for: a) restrooms, b) a snack bar with storage, and c) sports equipment storage.
- Install picnic tables at the picnic pavilion, including at least one handicapped-accessible table.
- Enlarge the current parking area to permit double-loaded parking, including handicapped parking.
- Add an overflow parking area south of the picnic pavilion.
- Establish an additional baseball field.

- Build a fenced and landscaped playground adjacent to Letort Lane.
- Add landscaping between Hill Road and the completed parking areas.
- Install lighting for one or more of the baseball fields, with input from adjacent homeowners.

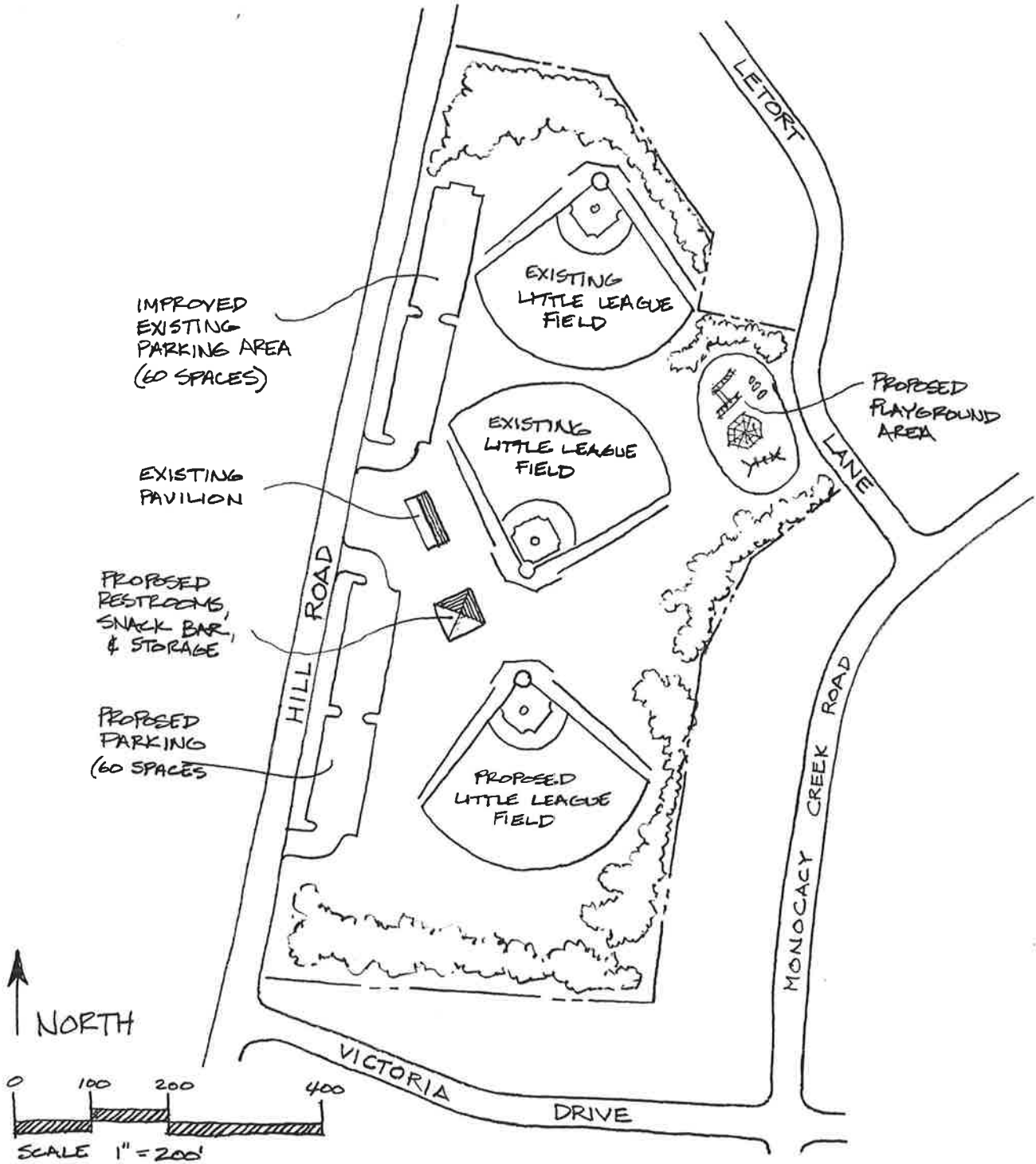
**2. *Upgrade Selected Facilities at Lake Drive Park and Recreation Area***

Lake Drive is an older park that organized baseball leagues use heavily. Tennis courts, playground equipment, picnic facilities and basketball courts are also available. Various recreation facilities and ancillary amenities at Lake Drive are outmoded or inadequate. Amity should complete the following capital improvements at this site:

- Construct a block building for restrooms on the north side of the park to serve the Little League field.
- Upgrade or replace the existing picnic pavilion on the south side of the park to make it barrier-free for the physically disabled and improve its appearance.
- Modernize the playground with new playground equipment to replace outmoded items.
- Install new playground surface material.
- Remove the swing set located between the Senior League baseball field and the off-street parking area.
- Construct a small picnic area with grills adjacent to the existing tennis and basketball courts.
- Reserve some of the existing off-street parking spaces for handicapped parking.

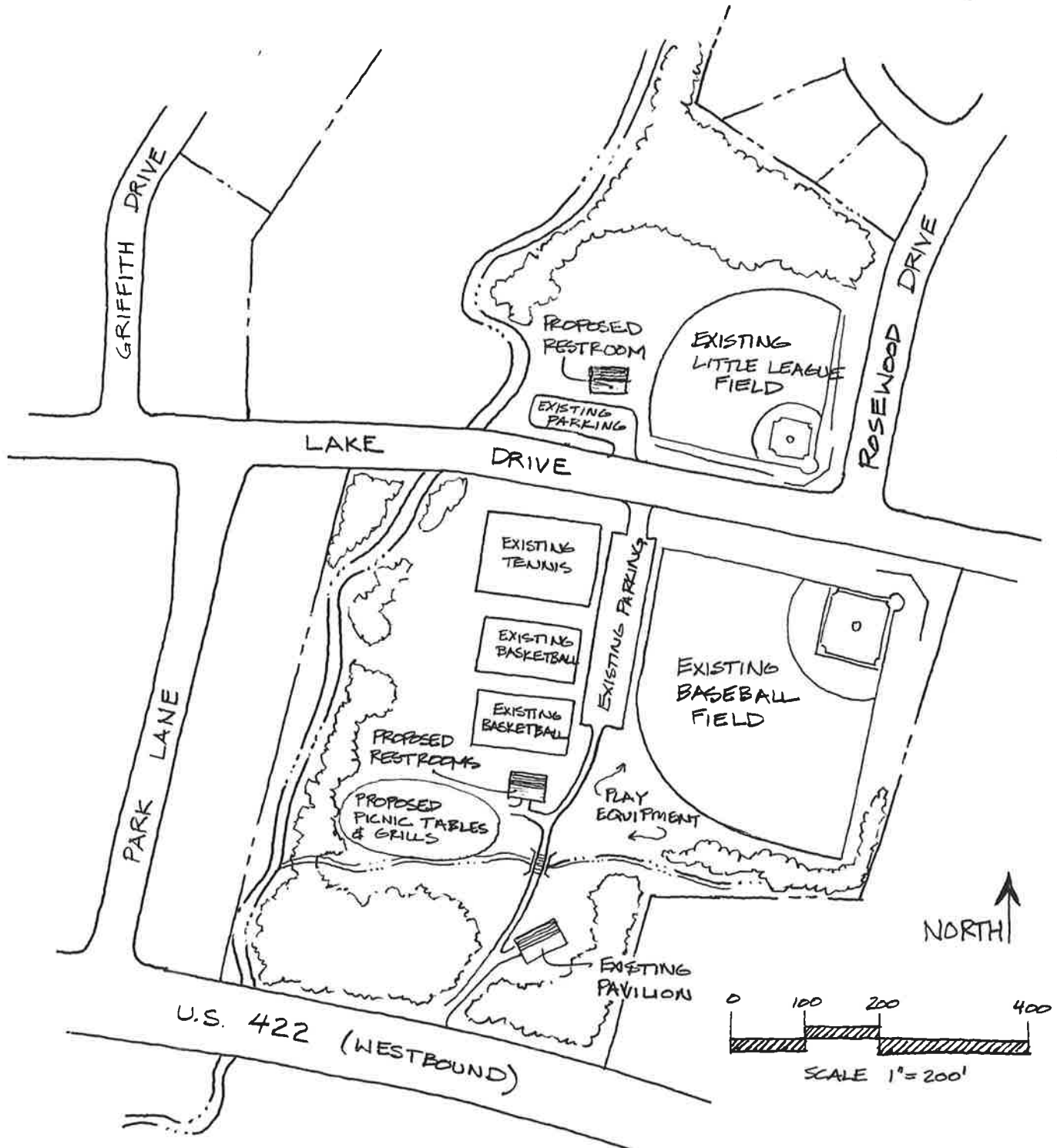
Amity should also survey peak use of both on-street and off-street parking areas at Lake Drive during Spring 2001 to determine if additional parking is needed.

# Conceptual Development Plan for Hill Road Recreation Area



Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan  
Amity Township, Berks County, Pennsylvania

# Conceptual Development Plan for Lake Drive Park and Recreation Area



Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan  
Amity Township, Berks County, Pennsylvania

**3. *Make Immediate Improvements Needed at Monocacy Hill Recreation Area***

The Monocacy Hill Recreation Area is an unspoiled treasure of wooded open space that Amity Township preserved for hiking, environmental education and in-season hunting. The need for the following improvements has become evident as more people use the park and its multi-purpose trails:

- Double the size of the existing parking area, including the addition of handicapped parking spaces.
- Retain a landscaped buffer between any new parking and Hill Road, and ensure that new parking is planned so as not to present a hazard to existing driveways on the opposite side of Hill Road from the park.
- Demolish for safety reasons the dilapidated building on the recently acquired parcel that fronts on Hill Road.
- Install at least one handicapped-accessible picnic table at the picnic grove and install a more accessible surface between the parking lot and the picnic grove.
- Eventually replace existing toilets with self-composting toilets.

**4. *Secure Clear Title to Monocacy Hill Recreation Area***

When Amity Township acquired the Monocacy Hill Recreation Area in 1967, the John T. Dyer Quarry Company retained the rights to all minerals on the property. Amity should investigate whether the company is willing to donate these mineral rights to the Township or the Monocacy Hill Recreation Association. The company could be eligible for federal tax benefits from this charitable donation, in addition to ensuring the park is never disturbed.

**5. *Plan for Long Range Development of an Environmental Education Center at Monocacy Hill Recreation Area***

Monocacy Hill should become an environmental education center for residents of Amity Township, Daniel Boone School District and the surrounding area. In cooperation with the School District, Amity should begin planning a small building on-site to assist and supplement environmental education activities that occur at the park now. The portion of the park from which the dilapidated building is removed would be one suitable location for an environmental education center. The center could be staffed in the future with a combination of Township, School District and other personnel.

**6. *Sell a Portion of the Haas Farm Site to Daniel Boone School District for a New Middle School***

Daniel Boone School District is interested in acquiring a portion of Amity's Weavertown Road Open Space (the Haas Farm) to build a new middle school. Township officials and residents should support this proposal for several reasons:

- There is only one school in Amity (an elementary school) even though the Township is the fastest growing of the three municipalities in the Daniel Boone School District.
- The School District needs approximately 30 acres. This would leave 38 acres available at the site for the Township to use for its own recreation purposes.
- With proper terms included in the agreement of sale, Amity can arrange guaranteed access to the new school's gymnasium. This will address Amity's need for additional basketball courts and potentially provide space for indoor soccer, swimming or other indoor recreation activities. Similar arrangements can be made for community use of the auditorium, exercise room, multi-purpose room, etc. A new school on the Haas Farm will provide Amity Township with many of the benefits of an indoor recreation center without having to fund, construct, staff and maintain one itself. The Township can always reconsider constructing its own indoor recreation center with a swimming pool in the future if the School District does not utilize the Haas Farm site for the new school.
- A school is a community space not just a school space. Township residents will work together to help plan the new school and later to help support it. Hopefully, this cooperation will generate more community spirit and a greater sense of community identity in Amity Township.

**7. *Construct Outdoor Athletic Facilities on the Haas Farm In Cooperation with Daniel Boone School District***

Amity Township and Daniel Boone School District should cooperate to establish outdoor recreation facilities on the Haas Farm adjacent to the location of the new school. Amity should build a Senior League baseball field to meet what is the Township's most immediate outdoor sports need. The Township should also construct fields for soccer, which will be needed soon as population in Amity continues to grow. The Daniel Boone School District and Amity's community athletic organizations groups can then share use and maintenance of these fields under an agreement with the Township. While the Township and School District will still need to coordinate on overall layout of the Haas Farm site, this scenario will allow Amity to begin addressing its outdoor recreation needs now without waiting for the School District to design and construct the new school.

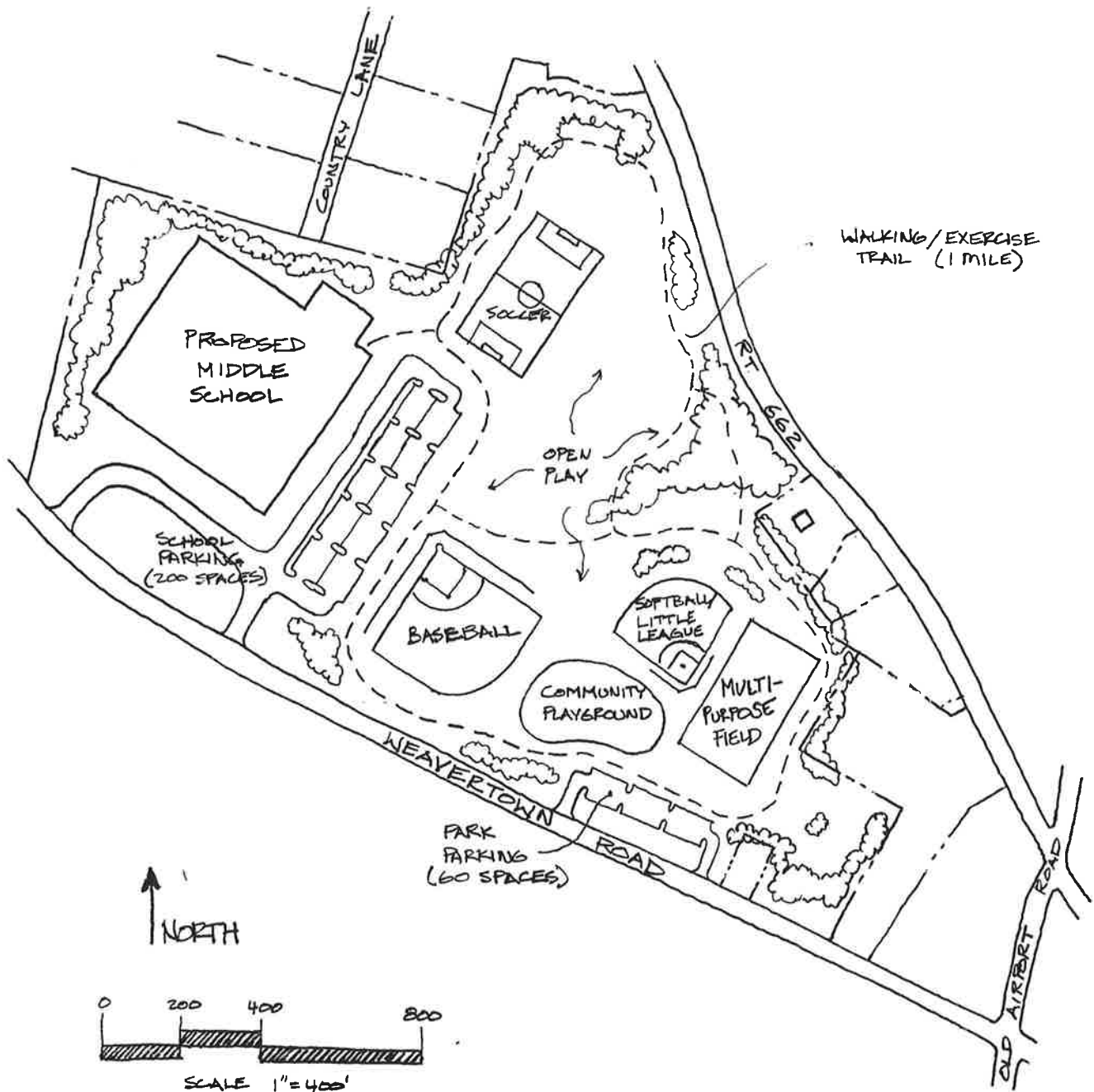
Another advantage of this approach is financial. The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) sponsors a very competitive program, under which the State awards 50/50 matching funds for park construction. DCNR looks very favorably on grant applications from municipalities that plan park and recreation projects in coordination with adjacent municipalities or school districts.

**8. *Construct Additional Outdoor Recreation Facilities at the Haas Farm For Community Use***

Amity should also construct additional recreation facilities on the Haas Farm site that are designed for Township residents and not necessarily school use. These facilities should include the following at a minimum:

- A major playground area with swings, slides and an assortment of climbing apparatus
- A walking/exercise trail at least 8' to 10' wide to accommodate two-way traffic
- A Little League baseball field that could double as a girls/womens softball field (the School District has no use for a field of this size).
- A multi-purpose field for lacrosse, field hockey or other activities not offered in Amity to date because no field space exists.
- Unstructured area for playing frisbee, walking pets and similar informal activities.

# Conceptual Development Plan for Weavertown Road Open Space (Haas Farm)



Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan  
Amity Township, Berks County, Pennsylvania



**9. *Continue the Township's Policy of Accepting Fees in Lieu of Land for Neighborhood Parks***

The Amity Township Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance requires developers to dedicate land or fees to the Township for recreation. The Township has preferred to accept fees rather than land in recent years. The Township budgets these fees for improving parks that serve the entire community. This policy makes the best sense for Amity because:

- The Township does not have the staff to maintain small, scattered parcels of land.
- Residents of large lot subdivisions do not typically use neighborhood parks and tot lots intensively. Many homeowners in these subdivisions install playground equipment on their own lots.
- The Township already owns several small open space parcels that can be converted to neighborhood parks should the need ever arise.

This recommendation discourages Amity from accepting land from developers to establish neighborhood parks that the Township will have to develop and maintain. As an alternative, homeowners associations can establish these facilities. It is sound land use planning to create recreation areas within walking distance of residential neighborhoods. However, extra steps will need to be taken if homeowners associations build neighborhood parks. In other communities, homeowners have sometimes lost interest in maintaining these park, defaulted on their responsibilities and left the municipality with an unanticipated maintenance burden.

**10. *Include Multi-Purpose Community Space in the New Birdsboro Library***

The southeast corner of Old Airport and Morlatton roads will be the site of the new Birdsboro Library. Amity Township, which is donating the site to the Library Board, should try to ensure the new library includes a multi-purpose/meeting room that seniors and other community groups can use for meeting space and various activities.

**11. *Connect the Old Airport Road Open Space to the Township Building Property***

Developing the Haas Farm site should accommodate Amity's foreseeable needs for major outdoor recreation facilities. The Township should hold development of the old Airport Road site in reserve to meet park and recreation facility needs that may arise in the long term future. In the meantime, Amity should acquire the land needed to connect the old Airport Road site with the ballfields located at the Amity Township Building. The Township could secure the property needed to make this connection in two different ways considering current land ownership patterns in the immediate vicinity.

## **Recommendations for Greenways**

### ***1. Establish a Greenway Along the Leaf Creek Interceptor***

Amity owns a 25' wide easement along the Leaf Creek Interceptor, which is a sewer line that follows a waterway between Cider Mill subdivision on the east side of Route 662 and the Township's sewage treatment plant on the Schuylkill River adjacent to Old Morlatton. This corridor is a natural location for Amity's first greenway because the Township controls the easement and it connects to the Thun Trail that the Schuylkill River Greenway Association is constructing between Pottstown and Reading.

From Pine Road north to the Cider Mill subdivision, the sewer easement departs from Leaf Creek and runs along Route 662. In this segment, Amity would be better off to acquire an easement across the back of the two farms situated on the east side of Route 662 between Pine Road and the Cider Mill subdivision. This could be pursued now or the Township could wait until later, if and when these parcels are proposed for subdivision and development.

Crossing U.S. 422 presents an additional challenge. If PennDOT converts U.S. 422 west to two-way traffic as proposed, PennDOT could plan a pedestrian crossing as part of project design. A pedestrian tunnel, pedestrian bridge or special pedestrian traffic signal cycle are three options PennDOT could examine as part of its commitment to alternative transportation modes. If U.S. 422 west and U.S. 422 east remain two separate high-speed, high-volume roads, Amity will have to coordinate with PennDOT on the feasibility of making special arrangements for pedestrian crossings at each of the two roads.

Recommending a route and identifying issues that will have to be addressed during design of the greenway are within the scope of this Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan. Amity Township should undertake a Leaf Creek Greenway Master Plan to explore trail design options in detail. A greenway master plan would also recommend a trail surface for the greenway, based on the types of uses envisioned. For instance, a paved surface is expensive but is the best choice for biking and rollerblading. Gravel or wood chips are less expensive but more limiting and a greater maintenance burden. The Township needs to more formally explore these and related greenway development topics in greater detail.

### ***2. Plan an Additional Greenway Segment Along the Schuylkill River***

The short section of the Thun Trail *through* Amity Township is on the north bank of the Schuylkill River. The much longer section of the Thun Trail *adjacent to* Amity Township is on the south side of the Schuylkill River in Union Township. This presents the opportunity for Amity to parallel the Union Township segment of the Thun Trail with a trail of its own along the north bank. A looped trail with distinct endpoints could then be created because:

- The Township owns two open space parcels on the north bank of the Schuylkill River that are approximately 2.5 mile apart: a 4.5-acre site next to the sewage treatment plant at Old Morlatton and a 28-acre property west of Main Street in the Monocacy Station section of Amity.
- There is a bridge across the Schuylkill River adjacent to the Township-owned property in the Monocacy Station area that could carry trail users between the Thun Trail on the south bank of the Schuylkill and a Township trail on the north side of the Schuylkill.

Another advantage to a Township trail in this location would be its connection to the southern terminus of the Leaf Creek Greenway described above, which would end at the Township-owned open space parcel next to Amity's sewage treatment plant. This parcel or nearby area would be ideal for a boat launch along the Schuylkill that could be planned in coordination with the Thun Trail. The Schuylkill River Greenway Association has expressed interest in working with Amity Township on this matter.

The biggest challenge to connecting the two Township-owned parcels at each end of this trail segment would be for Amity (or some other entity) to secure easements across approximately 2.5 miles of properties that back up to the Schuylkill River. These and other issues, such as the feasibility of connecting this trail segment to Monocacy Hill Park, could be explored as part of the Leaf Creek Greenway Master Plan noted above.

There are numerous ways to control the necessary property for a greenway short of paying for fee-simple acquisition. These methods include the following, among others:

- donation
- easement
- mandatory dedication
- reserved life estate
- purchase-leaseback

Local landowners should be made aware of these options, particularly donation. Donation of land for public open space can be tax deductible as a charitable contribution. A greenway trail in Amity Township would respond to a strong desire among local residents. Trails for hiking, walking and bicycling were the most frequently indicated recreation facility need in the public survey described earlier.

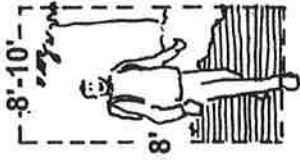
The Thun Trail is being planned and developed by the private, non-profit Schuylkill River Greenway Association. In developing greenway links in Amity, there may be a role for a similar land trust, conservancy or other non-profit entity. For instance, a group of this nature could be instrumental in acquiring the property and/or easement needed along the Schuylkill River to implement the loop trail described above.

# GREENWAY DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The following Greenway Design Principles should be considered wherever a greenway is being proposed.

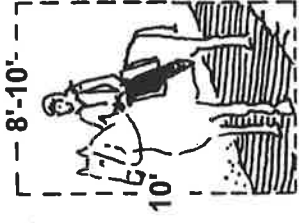
## Hiking/Walking & Jogging Trails

- Provide adequate headroom (at least 8').
- Allow adequate access for passing (at least 8'-10').
- Use smooth relatively soft but firm materials for trails in natural settings.
- Vary sense of enclosure (both long and short stretches) in natural settings.
- Use street trees and other vegetation to provide shade and add interest to urban/suburban walkways.
- Pay more attention to design details in areas of high use by casual walkers.
- Provide resting spots at appropriate intervals and at points of interest.



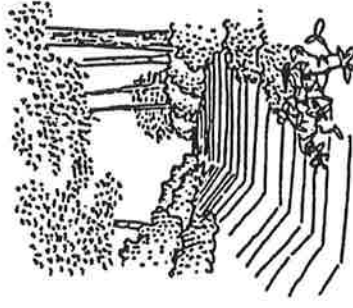
## Equestrian Trails

- Provide adequate headroom (at least 10').
- Allow adequate width for passing (at least 8'-10').
- Use stable, well-drained surface materials.
- Vary sense of enclosure, considering speed of movement.
- Provide hitching posts at activity areas.
- Provide for trailer parking at selected access points.



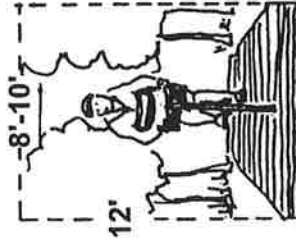
## Nature Trails

- Use native or naturalized plant materials.
- Highlight areas of interesting natural features (e.g. geological formations, unique plant communities).
- Use plant materials that provide food and shelter for wildlife.
- Direct traffic away from areas sensitive to human activity.
- Maintain a diversity of habitats for plants and animals.
- Leave dead trees, brush and other natural elements that may be home for wildlife.



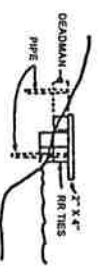
## Bicycle Trails

- Provide adequate headroom (at least 10').
- Allow adequate width for passing (8'-10').
- Leave 5' clearance on both sides of trail for "fall-away" area.
- Use smooth, hard surface material, free of loose gravel.
- Provide bike racks at appropriate locations.
- Design curve radii and gradients for moderate, safe speeds.
- Provide loop trails



**Waterways – Boating, Fishing**

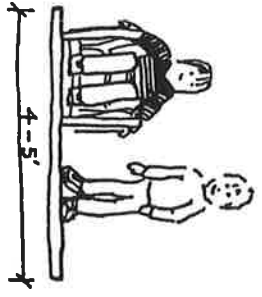
- Provide flat spots for chairs at appropriate sites for fishing.
- Clear vines and overhanging vegetation that could snag fishing lines.
- Locate boating docks at access points and activity areas.
- Provide snubbing posts at appropriate points.
- Provide signs visible from water where appropriate (e.g. at historic sites, portages, rest areas).
- Provide portage paths where appropriate.
- Provide steps at portage sites.



**CANOE LAUNCH**

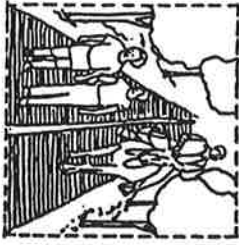
appropriately 300' intervals to inform users as to how far they travelled and their location.

- Avoid long straight sections that become monotonous.
- Generally, grades should not exceed 3 percent. 8-10 percent grades are satisfactory if only for short lengths.
- Trail should be cleared of all obstacles (e.g. shrubs, rocks, roots).
- Frequent rest stops should be provided about 150 feet apart.



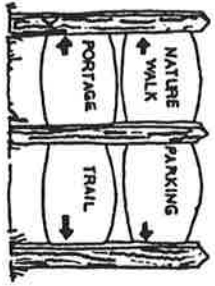
**Mixed-Use Trails**

- In high use areas, delineate among different trail uses through signage, striping and paving.
- Provide typical trail amenities that accommodate different trail uses (e.g. bike racks for cyclists).
- Allow adequate width for passing (8' min.).
- Provide adequate headroom (8'-12').



**Park Furniture and Signs**

- Use materials/forms which don't detract from the environment.
- Use durable materials.
- Use vandal-proof construction technologies.
- Signs should be placed along roadways prior to trail heads.
- Signs should be made as small as possible but not smaller than 2 inches.
- A sign should be placed within a trail head and contain a key map showing the whole trail system.
- Number of signs should be held to a minimum.
- Use park furniture appropriate to environment (e.g. picnic table in small open space areas, benches at viewing areas, trash receptacles at public areas).



**Other Design Considerations**

- Construct foot bridges over storm water drainage areas.
- Use proper storm water drainage techniques to prevent run-off from eroding trails.
- Fit trails to topography to avoid excessive earth work.
- Provide low impact trails near fragile natural resources.
- Avoid seasonal and natural wet areas/
- Design ways of crossing roads that prevent hazardous conditions.



**Handicapped Accessible Trails**

- Work closely with disabled persons in the planning of these trails.
- A type of marking system should be incorporated using signs placed at

## Recommendations for Recreation Programs

### 1. Create More Non-Sports Activities, Especially for Adults

Amity residents would benefit from a greater diversity of recreation programs. Opportunities should be available for males and females of all ages and a variety of interests, including adults. The following program categories should be expanded in the Amity area to place more emphasis on “TLC” activities, those that involve thinking, learning and creativity.

- arts and crafts
- mental and language arts
- camping, nature
- dance
- drama
- music
- service activities
- social recreation
- special events
- clubs, hobbies and collecting

The following are examples of specific program activities for consideration by local recreation programmers. These activities focus on non-sports recreation since local sports clubs and the Township already offer well-organized sports programming.

#### physical recreation

- frisbee golf
- field hockey
- volleyball
- exercise for seniors
- outdoor ice skating
- bocce for seniors
- sledding
- outdoor racquetball
- hiking
- horseshoes for seniors
- fitness program
- sand volleyball

#### hobbies, clubs, collecting, special interest groups

- juggling
- miniature golf
- landscaping, gardening
- furniture refinishing
- auto mechanics
- woodworking
- toy making
- flower arranging
- dog obedience

#### hobbies, clubs, collecting, special interest groups (Cont.)

- recipe swapping

#### the arts (music, dance, drama, arts and crafts)

- music
- storytelling
- art appreciation
- quilting
- knitting, crocheting
- needlework
- ethnic art
- painting

#### nature, outing, camping, interpretation

- nature study
- fishing
- birdwatching
- animal tracking

mental and linguistic activities

- bridge
- chess
- reading
- discussion groups
- lecture series
- genealogy for seniors
- nutrition

service activities

- babysitting classes
- adopt-a-grandparent
- clean-up day at parks
- Arbor Day

social recreation

- hay rides
- garden walks
- picnicking

special events

- scavenger hunt
- jump rope contest
- talent show
- puppet show
- travel/tours
- holiday activities

**2. Offer More Special Events Programming**

The Optimists sponsor certain special events in Amity. In cooperation with the Optimists, Amity should explore the following to supplement existing offerings:

- More trips and tours
- 5-K Run
- Township Triathlon
- Amity Day
- Bike Treasure Hunt
- Easter Egg Hunt
- Halloween Party/Haunted House
- Christmas Party
- Golf Outings

**3. Consider Professional Programming Assistance in the Future**

Amity Township is projected to grow to over 13,000 people by 2010. The Township may want to consider hiring a part-time professional recreation programmer as its recreation programs grow in step with its population. Alternatively, Amity should consider sharing the time and costs of this recreation professional with one or more neighboring municipalities such as Birdsboro and Union, the other members of the Daniel Boone School District. Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) offers funding assistance for professional recreation persons who serve more than one municipality.

**Recommendations for Open Space Conservation**

**1. Strengthen Steep Slope Zoning Regulations**

Section 505 of the Amity Township Zoning Ordinance addresses development on slopes over 25% in grade. However, instead of protecting natural grades, the regulations state

only that structures not be permitted in areas where final grades (after construction) exceed 25%. Amity should strengthen its steep slope regulations by prohibiting structures on land over 25% grade. The Township could go further by regulating soil disturbance in areas of 15% to 25% slope. One approach that other municipalities have used is to stipulate that no more than 30% of a site's land area with 15% to 25% slope may be disturbed by grading of any type. Another approach is to double the minimum lot size where structures are proposed on slopes above 25% and increase the minimum lot size by 50% where structures are proposed on slopes between 15% and 25%.

**2. *Enact Zoning Regulations to Protect Stream Corridors***

Section 502 of the Amity Township Zoning Ordinance and the Amity Township Floodplain Ordinance each regulate development in floodplains. These floodplain regulations are extensive. However, they do not prohibit paving, as stream corridor setback regulations would. Amity should adopt a stream corridor protection ordinance that prohibits development or soil disturbance within a specific distance (such as 50 feet) of all stream banks or stream centerlines. There is significant undeveloped land in the Township adjacent to smaller waterways.

**3. *Adopt Zoning Regulations to Protect Wooded Areas***

Section 517 of the Amity Township Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance states that "Reasonable efforts should be made by the developer to preserve existing trees within the site of the development." Stronger, more specific tree protection regulations would contain the following standards:

Tree Removal - Only trees meeting at least one of the following conditions shall be removed:

- a. is located within ten (10') feet of an uncurbed vehicular cartway,
- b. is within a proposed or existing vehicular cartway, shoulder or sidewalk,
- c. is within ten (10') feet of an approved storm water detention basin, paved area, driveway or on-lot sewage system,
- d. is within twenty-five (25') feet of the foundation of an approved structure,
- e. is within an approved utility corridor,
- f. is dead or poses a clear danger to a structure, utility or public improvement,
- g. is a hazard to vehicular sight distance,
- h. is within an area of an approved principal or accessory use structure that clearly requires the removal of the tree,
- i. is within an area that must be cleared to develop an approved golf course, or
- j. is necessary to allow longer rows for crop farming.

Protection of Trees During Construction - Specific techniques shall be used during any construction to ensure that trees are not accidentally injured or removed, including root compaction by equipment and materials, damage by equipment or change in grade level.



Trees that were required to be preserved and that were destroyed shall be replaced by the developer with mature trees with the closest trunk width available.

## **Historic and Agricultural Preservation**

### ***1. Consider Adopting Zoning Regulations to Preserve Historic Structures***

Amity is home to five properties on the National Register of Historic Places. In addition, there are many other structures of historic interest in the Township. Amity should consider adopting special historic overlay zoning regulations that provide additional protection provisions for these properties following a formal inventory effort.

Historic overlay regulations can require enhanced review procedures and a delay before demolition of an historic building can occur. Additional uses (such as offices in a residential district) could also be allowed within historic buildings to provide sufficient cash flow to fund restoration or ongoing upkeep. A full-scale historic district ordinance that would regulate exterior alterations of buildings within a specific historic area may be appropriate in Douglassville near Old Morlatton. However, measures short of an historic district, such as those described above, will help prolong the life of other areas that are important remnants of the Township's 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century heritage.

### ***2. Use a Variety of Techniques to Encourage More Agricultural Preservation***

Preferential tax assessment programs and the agricultural security program offer incentives for keeping farmland in agricultural use. The preferential assessment program provides reduced tax rates in exchange for a property owner agreeing not to develop his or her land for a specific period of time. Farms within agricultural security areas are protected from certain regulations that constrain farming and are eligible to have Berks County purchase their development rights.

Amity should encourage more eligible residents to take advantage of available incentives for agricultural preservation. The Township should also work with Berks County to help ensure that the County fully considers eligible Amity properties when selecting development rights to acquire in the future. Additional recommendations on how to enhance local farm preservation efforts include the following. These recommendations focus on preserving rural open space and maintaining the active farmland that remains in the Township.

- Ensure that sufficient area continues to be zoned to permit crop farming and other types of agriculture.
- Prevent public water and sewer lines from being extended into the area's most rural areas via Act 537 sewage facilities planning.
- Ensure the area's Congressman, State Senator and State Representative are well aware of local residents' views on legislative proposals that affect farming.

- Consider additional setback requirements for residential subdivisions that are constructed adjacent to active farms. This will help reduce conflicts between farms and adjacent residential areas.
- Support farm service organizations including the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, Soil Conservation Service, County Conservation District, Cooperative Extension Service, 4-H farmers associations and other such organizations in the region.
- Permit farm-based businesses in selected areas where agriculture is allowed in the Township (provided these farm-based businesses are not large volume, heavy traffic generating uses).

## **Recommendations For Recreation Administration**

### ***1. Track the Number of People Who Visit Monocacy Hill Park***

It is difficult to estimate how many people use Monocacy Hill Park because much of the use at the site is informal and not part of an organized event. The simplest method to track usage would be to attach a pad of “visitor passes” to a locked box situated in the parking lot. The Township could install a sign there that asks each visitor to tear off one “visitor pass” from the pad and drop it into the box. Volunteers could empty the box and replace the pads regularly. This is an imperfect method based on the honor system. However, it is very low cost and is worth attempting on a trial basis at least.

### ***2. Enhance Regular Safety Inspections at Township Parks***

Amity should continue its regular park inspections. The Township should designate two days each year to conduct thorough maintenance inspections of parks and recreation facilities. This will allow the Township to determine:

- needed grounds work (e.g., regrading, clearing of overgrown vegetation, etc.),
- needed structural repairs,
- current condition of recreation facilities,
- grounds/repair work which will be needed in the near future, and
- other safety and security concerns.

Designated inspection days are intended to insure parks and recreation facilities are thoroughly inspected at least every six months in a formal, structured manner. The Township should continue informal inspections between semi-annual inspections. Such safety inspections should be conducted frequently to detect and repair faulty facilities.

A designated person on the Township staff should become familiar with the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission Handbook for Public Playground Safety. This person should be part of all future park inspections.

**3. *Enhance Risk Management Practices***

Risk management is the best insurance. In addition to regular safety inspections, the Township should consider four administrative procedures for park risk management practices:

- Establish a written policy on visitor safety to guide risk management decisions about identifying and abating hazards, prohibiting unsafe actions, setting standards for maintenance and upkeep, and providing for emergency services. This policy should be strictly enforced.
- Help Township employees and visitors report hazards in Township parks.
- Establish written emergency procedures.
- Develop standardized accident report forms.

These risk management techniques will improve safety standards in park areas. In addition to reducing the chances of potential legal actions, effective risk management actively and visibly promotes owner competence to park users. Once these practices are in place, Amity should have its insurance coverage/policy re-evaluated for possible reduction of the Township's insurance premium.

**4. *Establish a Gifts Catalog of Recreation Items Needed***

Amity Township can make its commitment to parks, recreation and open space preservation more visible and enlist the support of the community by inaugurating community support programs, such as a gift catalog. A gift catalog describes a wish list of needed recreation equipment and facilities. Prices are listed with the idea that people can donate the money for a specific item(s) as a gift to the Township. Both businesses and individuals have responded to this type of appeal in many other communities.

**5. *Establish a Park Endowment Fund Supported by Donations and Fundraisers***

This is a companion recommendations to the gifts catalog. The Township establishes a fund to finance future recreation improvements. Proceeds are accumulated from fundraisers, donations and bequests.

**6. *Distribute a Brochure Describing Leisure Opportunities In and Around the Township***

The Township should prepare a brochure which lists leisure opportunities currently available from public, quasi-public and private recreation providers. The brochure should be comprehensive, including information on things such as area parks, recreation programs, facilities for specific activities, museums, libraries or historic sites. It should be general in nature, giving basic information and a phone number or web address for more specific information. The brochure can be updated periodically to reflect changes in the basic information it contains. The brochure can be made available at the municipal building and other public locations.

**TABLE 10**  
**ACTION PROGRAM**  
Amity Township

RECOMMENDATION	IMMEDIATE (1 <sup>st</sup> Year)	SHORT RANGE (2 <sup>nd</sup> through 4 <sup>th</sup> Year)	LONGER RANGE (5 <sup>th</sup> Year and Beyond)	RESPONSIBILITY (in addition to Board of Supervisors and Township Manager)
<b>Recommendations for Parks and Recreation Facilities</b>				
1. Finish Developing Hill Road Recreation Area	X	X		Recreation Board
2. Upgrade Selected Facilities at Lake Drive Park and Recreation Area	X	X		Recreation Board
3. Make Immediate Improvements Needed at Monocacy Hill Recreation Area		X		Recreation Board / Monocacy Hill Conservation Association
4. Secure Clear Title to Monocacy Hill Recreation Area	X			Recreation Board / Monocacy Hill Conservation Association
5. Plan for Long Range Development of an Environmental Education Center at Monocacy Hill Recreation Area			X	Recreation Board / Monocacy Hill Conservation Association
6. Sell a Portion of the Haas Farm Site to Daniel Boone School District for a New Middle School	X			Recreation Board
7. Construct Outdoor Athletic Facilities on the Haas Farm in Cooperation with Daniel Boone School District		X	X	Recreation Board
8. Construct Additional Outdoor Recreation Facilities at the Haas Farm for Community Use		X	X	Recreation Board
9. Continue the Township's Policy of Accepting Fees in Lieu of Land for Neighborhood Parks	Ongoing			Planning Commission
10. Include Multi-Purpose Community Space in the New Birdsboro Library		X		Planning Commission
11. Connect the Old Airport Road Open Space to the Township Building Property			X	Recreation Board
<b>Recommendations for Greenways</b>				
1. Establish a Greenway along the Leaf Creek Interceptor		X	X	Planning Commission / Recreation Board
2. Plan an Additional Greenway Segment along the Schuylkill River		X	X	Planning Commission / Recreation Board

RECOMMENDATION	IMMEDIATE (1 <sup>st</sup> Year)	SHORT RANGE (2 <sup>nd</sup> through 4 <sup>th</sup> Year)	LONGER RANGE (5 <sup>th</sup> Year and Beyond)	RESPONSIBILITY (in addition to Board of Supervisors and Township Manager)
<b>Recommendations for Recreation Programs</b>				
1. Create More Non-Sports Activities, Especially for Adults		X		Recreation Board
2. Offer More Special Events Programming		X		Recreation Board
3. Consider Professional Programming Assistance in the Future			X	Recreation Board
<b>Recommendations for Open Space Conservation</b>				
1. Strengthen Steep Slope Zoning Regulations	X			Planning Commission
2. Enact Zoning Regulations to Protect Stream Corridors	X			Planning Commission
3. Adopt Zoning Regulations to Protect Wooded Areas	X			Planning Commission
<b>Historic and Agricultural Preservation</b>				
1. Consider Adopting Zoning Regulations to Preserve Historic Structures	X			Planning Commission
2. Use a Variety of Techniques to Encourage More Agricultural Preservation		Ongoing		Planning Commission
<b>Recommendations for Recreation Administration</b>				
1. Track the Number of People Who Visit Monocacy Hill Park	X			Monocacy Hill Conservation Association
2. Enhance Regular Safety Inspections at Township Parks	X			Recreation Board
3. Enhance Risk Management Practices	X			Recreation Board
4. Establish a Gifts Catalog of Recreation Items Needed		X		Recreation Board
5. Establish a Park Endowment Fund Supported by Donations and Fundraisers		X		Recreation Board
6. Distribute a Brochure Describing Leisure Opportunities in and Around the Township		X		Recreation Board

## **Funding Sources and Other Implementation Techniques**

This section describes ways to acquire and preserve land, funding sources and ways to help defray recreation and conservation-related costs. These suggestions are grouped in the following categories:

- Ways to Preserve Open Space
- Local Funding Sources
- State Grants for Parks, Recreation, Greenways and Open Space Conservation
- Other Cost Conscious Techniques

### *Ways to Preserve Open Space*

1. Fee Simple Acquisition - The most direct means of obtaining land for parks or greenways is through fee simple purchase. The main advantage of this procedure is that an entire parcel of land belongs to the organization purchasing the land. In many situations, fee simple acquisition is the most appropriate manner in which to preserve land. However, the expense of fee simple purchase can sometimes exceed available funding sources.
2. Condemnation - Acquisition can occur by exercising the right of eminent domain where the public purpose is well defined, where fee simple acquisition is desired but not possible at a fair price and where the owner is reluctant to sell. It is legally prudent to view condemnation as a last resort when acquiring land for parks and/or greenways.
3. Purchase and Lease-Back or Resale - In certain cases, it is appropriate for a municipality to purchase land in fee simple, place restrictions on the deed prohibiting certain uses (e.g., residential development) and lease it back to interested parties. One advantage of this method is that the municipality can purchase land for future use (before the price increases, perhaps prohibitively so) and, through leasing, recoup some or all of the purchase price. In this way, land is maintained in open space and can be developed as a park when future demand warrants. Resale of some or all of the land (after placement of deed restrictions) would maintain open space while also relieving the municipality of maintenance obligations and returning the land to the tax rolls.
4. Conservation Easements - Conservation easements are used to preserve land at a relatively low cost without acquiring it. With a conservation easement, the land remains privately-owned. The easement involves the property owner voluntarily agreeing to donate or sell the right to develop his or her land. The property owner agrees to place a restriction in the deed of the property, which then becomes binding on all future owners of the land. The easement can be written in many different ways to restrict or not restrict certain types of activities. Most conservation easements prohibit the construction of new buildings and cutting down woods. Often, the granting of a conservation easement can result in federal income tax and local property tax advantages to the property owner.

5. Pedestrian Easements - A conservation easement can also be combined with a “pedestrian easement” to allow the public the right to walk, hike and ride bicycles along a specific area, provided users follow a careful set of rules. These easements can be particularly useful in connecting two or more greenway segments.
6. Mandatory Dedication - The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (Act 247, as amended) enables municipalities to require that residential developers dedicate land, or fees in lieu of land, for public recreation. Municipalities must have an adopted recreation plan and an adopted ordinance relating to mandatory dedication before land or fees can be accepted. The amount of land required must be related to the demand for recreation land typically created by new development. The required fee should reflect the fair market value of the amount of land for which the fee is being substituted. Amity Township has adopted mandatory dedication regulations and has developed a substantial account to fund future recreation-related acquisition and development.
7. Donations - Land frequently is acquired through donations from private owners, organizations and corporations. Local governments should encourage land donations by pointing out benefits of such actions, such as public relations values and federal income tax benefits. Prior to accepting a donation, a municipality should consider two things: first, it should analyze the location of the parcel and the anticipated development and maintenance costs. If the location is poor and/or projected costs will be excessive, the municipality should strongly consider accepting a fee rather than the land. Second, if the land is found to be suitable, the municipality should encourage the donor to provide an endowment fund along with the land to assist with development and/or maintenance costs.
8. Natural Resource Protection Standards - Resources such as trees, flood-prone land, steep slopes, woodlands and other amenities can be conserved by provisions in municipal zoning and subdivision regulations that regulate development and soil disturbance in these areas. See the Recommendations sections for a description of how Amity Township can enhance its current natural resource protection standards.

### ***Local Funding Sources***

1. General Revenue Funds - The Township can continue to use general revenue funds for open space and recreation purposes. Specific portions of the Township’s overall tax revenue can continue to be earmarked for open space and recreation, if the Township Board of Supervisors so chooses.
2. User Fees - User fees are revenues collected directly from the people who use a program or facility. Certain offerings, such as adult fitness programs, can be run in a business-like fashion for greater efficiency and a fair distribution of costs. Care is needed to make sure that lower income families are not excluded because they cannot afford high fees. User fees should not be charged if it would be too costly or administratively burdensome to

collect. Amity Township currently sponsors only minimal recreation programming but it may have more to offer in the future.

3. Bond Issues - Bond funds are monies borrowed to implement a pre-approved list of capital improvements. Bonds can either be general obligation bonds, which are paid back from a municipality's general revenues, or they can be revenue bonds, which are retired from revenues generated by specific improvements. A bond issue can be appropriate to fund projects with a long life expectancy. Payments are spread over the many years during which project benefits will be enjoyed. The total cost of a project funded through a bond is higher, however, because of interest charges. The key is to time a bond issue when interest rates are lowest.
4. Special Fundraisers - Fundraisers are special purpose campaigns designed to solicit money from local households and businesses. Contributions are collected in tandem with a publicity campaign that focuses on the need and the public benefit associates with a particular improvement such as a new community park. Walk-a-thons, bake sales and other special events can be used to generate interest. Appeals to civic duty and the chance for businesses to get good publicity should also be emphasized.

### ***State Grants for Parks, Recreation, Greenways and Open Space Conservation***

1. Community Conservation Partnership Grant Program - This program is the primary source of State aid for parks, recreation and open space initiatives in Pennsylvania. Applications are accepted each fall for 50/50 matching grants through the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR). It is a highly competitive program. In 2000, DCNR received 622 applications requesting over \$70 million in assistance, compared to approximately \$30 million available to distribute. Major funding categories are as follows:

#### **Planning and Technical Assistance**

- **Planning Projects**
  - Comprehensive Recreation, Park and Open Space Plans
  - Conservation Plans
  - County Natural Area Inventories
  - Feasibility Studies
  - Greenways and Trails Plans
  - Rails-to-Trails Plans
  - Master Site Plans
  - Rivers Conservation Plans
- **Technical Assistance Projects**
  - Education and Training
  - Circuit Rider
  - Peer-to-Peer

#### **Acquisition Projects**

- Park and Recreation Areas
- Greenways, Trails and Rivers Conservation



- Rails-to-Trails
- Natural and Critical Habitat Areas

**Development Projects**

- Park and Recreation Areas
- Greenways and Trails
- Rails-to-Trails
- Rivers Conservation

**Federally Funded Projects**

- Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Projects
- Pennsylvania Recreational Trails

2. Pennsylvania Department of Transportation Enhancement Projects - The Federal Inter-Modal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) allocated approximately \$4.7 million per year for six years to Pennsylvania for use in Enhancement Projects. Enhancement Projects involve transportation-related activities outside of the traditional highway construction and mass transit projects. In 1998, Congress extended this program for another six years and substantially increased the total funding available by enacting the Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (TEA-21).

The program is administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PADOT) under a cooperative agreement with the Federal Highway Administration. Construction phases are eligible for 100% grant funding. 80% funding is offered for planning, design and acquisition. There are twelve funding categories for projects that “enhance the transportation experience”:

- Facilities for pedestrians and bicycles
- Safety and educational activities for pedestrians and bicyclists
- Acquisition of scenic easements of historic sites related to transportation
- Scenic or historic programs, including tourist and welcome center facilities
- Landscaping or other scenic beautification
- Historic preservation
- Rehabilitation or operation of historic transportation buildings, structures or facilities (including historic railroad facilities and canals)
- Preservation of abandoned railway corridors (including the conversion and use thereof for pedestrian or bicycle trails)
- Control and removal of outdoor advertising
- Archaeological planning and research
- Mitigation of water pollution due to highway runoff or reduction of vehicle-caused wildlife mortality while maintaining habitat connectivity
- Enhancement of transportation museums

3. Pennsylvania Legislative Initiative Program - This program provides wide discretion to many State legislators to award limited amounts of State funds for worthy projects in their home district. Because the money can be used for such a wide variety of uses, it cannot be

counted upon as a regular source for park and recreation and open space funds. There are no specific guidelines regarding what types of projects can be funded, who may apply or the maximum amount that can be provided. There also is no formal application process. State legislators seek the grants annually. The best time to submit a request has been between January and June when the annual State budget is being formulated.