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### **Introduction and Goal and Objectives**

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The term *recreation* can be generally defined as an activity that provides therapeutic restoration of one’s mind or body. Recreation [facilities and programs] can provide significant tangible quality-of-life benefits at a community level. Recreation facilities are also recognized by the medical community as tools for reversing the nationally-recognized epidemic of adult and childhood obesity. This Chapter provides an inventory of recreation resources and programs in the Oxford Region and plan recommendations that are consistent with the following goal:

*Promote the establishment of, and the programming for, a safe, functioning, walkable, and well-maintained network of public parks, recreation corridors, and recreation and pedestrian facilities that maintain and improve the physical health, economy, and rural quality-of-life for residents of the Region.*

## Plan Objectives

This Chapter focuses on how best to achieve the following Objectives:

- 15-A** Establish sufficient publicly-owned and managed park, open space, and water recreation facilities that provide a variety of active or passive recreation opportunities.
- 15-B** Establish a region-wide network of sidewalks, trails, paths, bike routes and buggy lanes, which link recreation destinations with population centers, employment centers, shopping areas, and public schools.
- 15-C** Provide fiscally responsible and well-planned maintenance, security, safety, and liability insurance for public recreational facilities in perpetuity.
- 15-D** Establish adaptable recreation programming to meet the needs of the community, and provide administration and sufficient staffing to implement such programming.
- 15-E** Continue and maintain regional recreation coordination centered on Oxford Borough and its nearby public schools.
- 15-F** 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 play and athletics.
- 15-G** Support and promote the continuation of traditional rural recreation activities such as fishing, hunting, horseback riding, farm shows, and country fairs.
- 15-H** Rigorously pursue public and private grants and funding sources for recreation while continuing to dedicate municipal funding for recreation capital improvements, maintenance, programming, and other necessary costs.
- 15-I** Sponsor community events to help maintain a rural culture and small-town atmosphere that is conducive to building strong relationships, communities, and families.

## Recreation Facilities: Inventory and Recommendations

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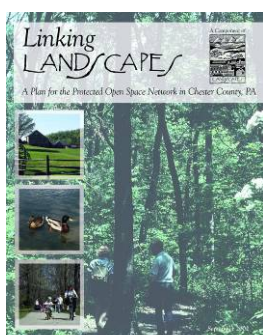
Recreation planners use the term “recreation facility” to refer to any public- or privately-owned property used for recreation, including indoor or outdoor activities. Recreation facilities can range from sport fields or nature preserves to indoor pools and gyms. A recreation facility can even be a paved downtown plaza or a municipal parking lot used as seating for an outside summer movie. Because of the wide diversity of issues relating to recreation, it is necessary to define some of the terms and concepts used in recreation planning.

**Numerous case studies have shown that municipalities with functioning recreation facilities enjoy higher real estate values, and are better situated to attract employers.**

## What is a “Park?”

In common use, the term “park” has a broad definition and can refer to a wide variety of public or private outdoor properties. In recreation planning, a park usually refers to an outdoor facility established to provide the public with opportunities for recreation. A park can be a wildlife preserve, a historic site, a quarter-acre tot-lot, or the 3,472-acre Yellowstone National Park. In Chester County, some properties set aside as natural areas are called “parks,” even though they do not provide public recreation. The vague definition for “park” explains why recreation planners prefer the term “recreation facility.”

The term “park” has no specific definition in the planning or legal profession. However, page 4.2 of *Linking Landscapes A Plan for the Protected Open Space Network in Chester County, PA*,



(Chester County Planning Commission, 2002), defines a “park” as any outdoor property with few if any structures that: 1) is owned in-fee or permanently eased for recreation by a government agency, 2) is open to the general public, 3) is specifically managed to provide public recreation, and 4) has public recreation as its primary use. This definition stresses that parks are acquired, designed, and managed to be public recreation facilities.

The most current National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) guidelines are from 1996. These guidelines - which are general guidelines and not strict standards - refer to a “service area,” which is a circle drawn around a park that represents the area in which most of the park’s users are likely to live. In general, small parks will attract users from a small service area, while larger parks with more facilities or unique features will attract users from a much larger radius. The NRPA classifies parks using a system that is similar to the one presented in *Linking Landscapes*, as shown in Figure 15-A below:

**Figure 15-A: A Comparison of Parkland Guidelines**

Park Classification	NRPA’s Most Current Guidelines (1996)	<i>Linking Landscapes</i> (2002)
Mini-Park	2,500 square feet to 1 acre, in a residential setting serving the surrounding 0.25 miles.	0.01 to 0.49 acre, with a 0.25-mi. service area, equal to an 8-minute walk.
Neighborhood Park	5 to 10 acres in size, serving the surrounding 0.25 to 0.50 miles.	0.5 to 19.9 acres, with a 0.5-mile service area, equal to a 15-minute walk.
Community Park	30 to 50 acres in size, serving the surrounding 0.50 to 3.0 miles.	20 to 399 acres, with a 2.5-mile service area equal to a 5-minute drive or a 30-minute walk.
Open Space Areas	Not defined.	Not defined.

Source: NRPA, 1996 and *Linking Landscapes*, 2002

In recent years, NRPA has determined that promoting a strict classification of parks is not an effective tool for creating parks or addressing recreation needs. As a result, they propose that park classifications be used as general guidelines. Most often, parkland is acquired on short



notice when unique opportunities arise, such as through a developer’s donation. Therefore, it is important for municipalities to be flexible, and build a network of parks based on public desire and the municipality’s ability to fund and maintain the acquisition. More information can be found at the NRPA’s website: <http://www.nrpa.org>

### Types of Ownership

Park and recreation facilities fall under three general categories of ownership: public, limited-public access, and private.

- **Public** - Public parks or recreation facilities are owned and maintained by governments in order to provide recreation opportunities to the general public. The governmental body may impose access limitations that are related to the health, safety, and welfare of the public. Such limitations could include closing the park at dusk or requiring permits for large group activities.
- **Limited-public Access** - Most limited-public access recreation facilities are owned and maintained by schools and other institutions. They are commonly used by the public for informal recreation, but the facility owner maintains the option to limit or ban public use. Limited-public access facilities also include sports fields whose main purpose to provide playing fields and practice areas for organized leagues.
- **Private** - Private parks and recreation facilities are private properties, such as golf courses and arboretums. Public access is usually granted by permission of the owner, and may be limited to paying members. For example, these facilities may range from non-profit nature centers to commercial entertainment (e.g., amusement park, gun club, etc.)



### Defining Passive and Active Recreation

Parks are typically identified based on the type of recreation that they provide, which in general terms can be described as “active” or “passive” recreation. It is important for municipalities to develop definitions for active and passive recreation in plans and ordinances so that users and sports leagues know what land uses are suitable for rigorous play and practice fields.

*Linking Landscapes* includes the following definitions for active and passive recreation:

- **Active Recreation** includes recreation activities that are usually rigorously athletic, not quiet, and have a noticeable impact on the surrounding environment. These may include individual or team sports, large picnics, children’s playgrounds, and recreational events with a high density of people. Parks that provide active recreation commonly include tennis, volleyball and basketball courts; swing sets, playgrounds, and tot-lots; or fields for team sports such as football, soccer,



Soccer - Active Recreation

and baseball/softball. Active recreation parks can be quite small, as in the case of a tot-lot, or they can cover multiple acres, as in the case of a sports field complex.

Currently, municipal parks provide the majority of public active recreation opportunities within Chester County, and this situation is likely to continue. Municipalities should not rely on County or state facilities to provide active recreation needs, since these facilities are primarily designed for passive recreation and may require a further distance to travel. Historically, active recreation parks in the County have been purchased and managed by municipal governments. However, some sports fields are owned by sports leagues or schools, which are not always public property and may be closed to the public.

- **Passive Recreation** includes recreation activities that are usually quiet, and not rigorously athletic, and have a low impact on the surrounding environment. These may include walking, hiking, fishing, bird watching, and quiet picnicking. Parks that provide passive recreation may include trails, public gardens or memorial parks, open areas, and picnic areas. Passive recreation parks in suburban or rural settings tend to be larger than active recreation facilities and may have natural or scenic significance, containing a stream, woodland, or historically significant resource.



The same recreational activity may be regarded as passive in one situation, but active in another, depending on the scale of the activity or the size of the park. For example, most people would classify a pair of hikers or a small picnic of four people as being passive recreation, while a hiking group of 50 energetic teenagers or a large family reunion picnic would be called active recreation. Similarly, a group of mountain bikers or horseback riders in a 5,000 acre wilderness preserve might have little impact and be called passive recreation, while the same group in a 50 acre park might be called active recreation.

Simply put, there are some activities that cannot be clearly categorized as being exclusively active or passive recreation. It is up to each municipality to define what constitutes active and passive recreation, and include these definitions in plans, regulations, and ordinances. In this way, parks can be designated as active recreation facilities, passive recreation facilities or both. In some instances parts of one park can be designated for active use, while other parts can be set aside for passive recreation. What is most important is to make these designations clear to park users.

### **Inventory: Public Recreation Facilities within the Oxford Region**

Publicly owned and operated park and recreation facilities within the Oxford Region are listed in Figures 15-B, 15-C, and 15-D. All of these are municipal parks except for Nottingham County Park, and the state-owned state forest property. The Oxford Region is unusual in that it has a large amount of municipally-owned land that is used for passive recreation or as a nature

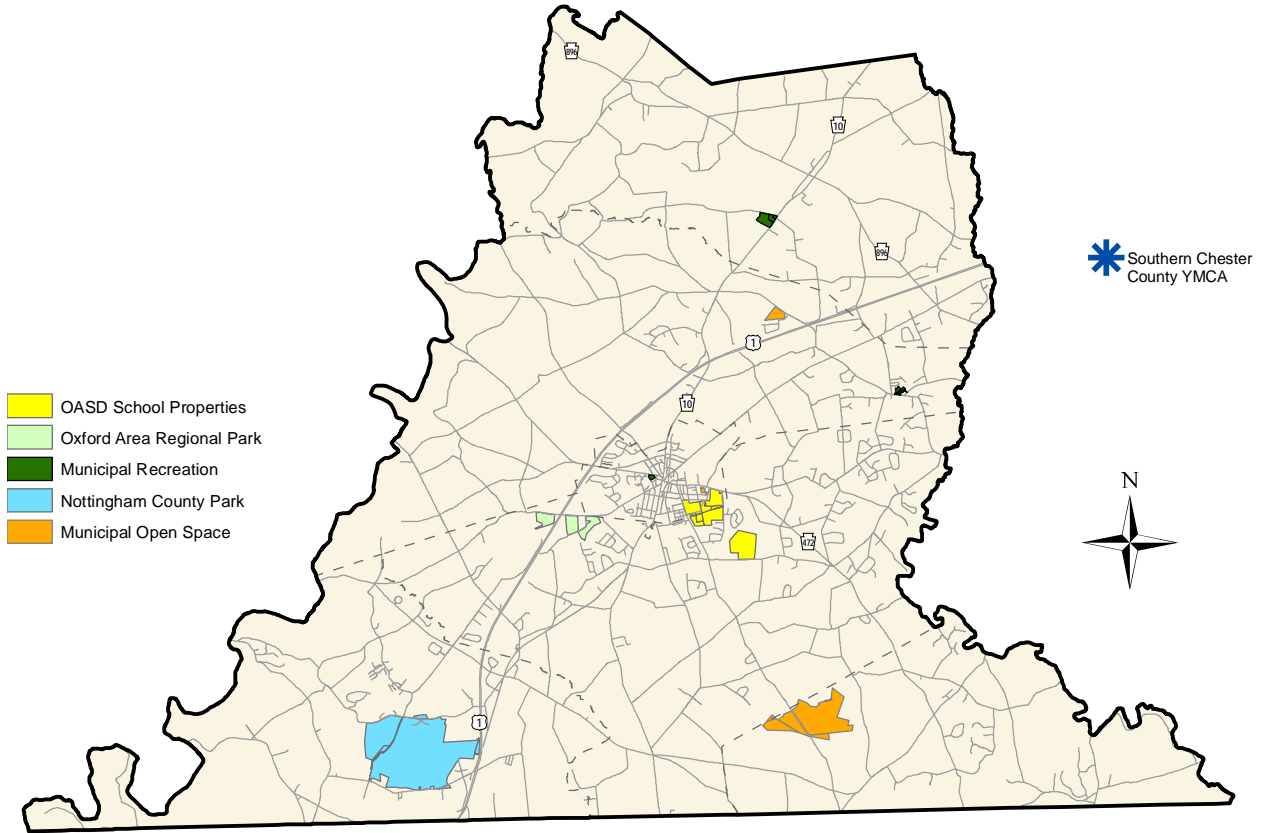
preserve. The table in Figure 15-B includes a total of over 2,280 acres of park and recreation facilities in the Region and 2 miles of trails. As the map in Figure 15-C indicates there is a cluster of recreation facilities in and around Oxford Borough.

**Figure 15-B: Parks and Public Recreation Facilities in the Oxford Region**

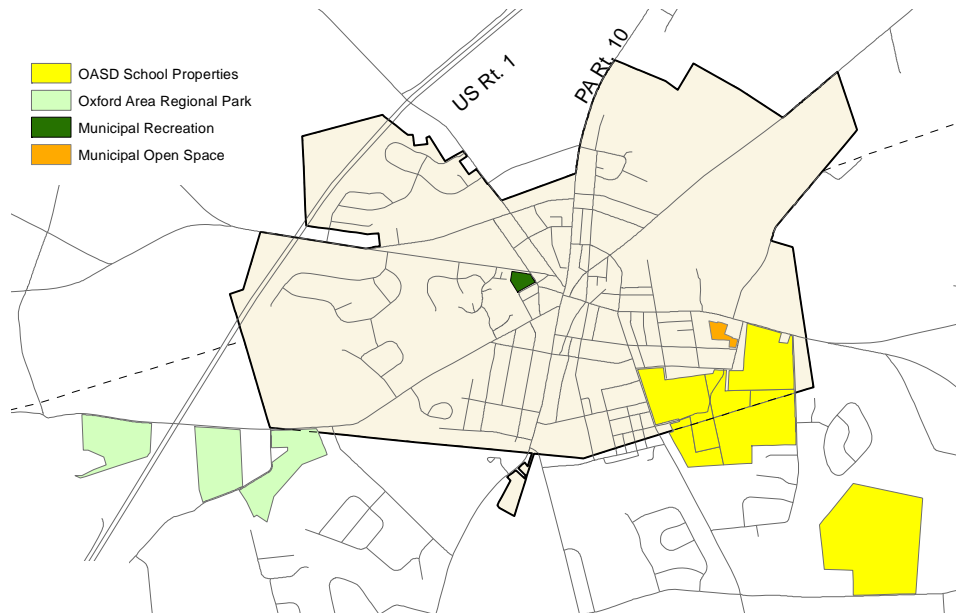
Park or Recreation Facility Name	Size in acres	Active Recreation Facilities	Passive Recreation Facilities	Parking and other User Amenities	Level of Maintenance	Ease of Access by Pedestrians
<i>East Nottingham Township</i>						
The Vintem Tract (part of chrome barrens)	2.9	No	Yes	No	Low	Low
Gray Tract West (under development)	21.9	Yes	Yes	Yes	High	High
Gray Tract East (under development)	46.3	Yes**	Yes**	Yes**	High**	High
<i>Elk Township</i>						
Chrome Barren Preserve	223.7	No	Yes	Yes	Low	Low
Spring Lawn Trail	2 mi.	Yes	Yes	Yes	High	High
Strawbridge State Owned Property	738.7	No	Yes	No	Mod	Med
<i>Lower Oxford Township</i>						
Barnard Park	5.1	Yes	No	Yes	Mod	High
Township Open Space	17.7	No	No	No	Low	Med
<i>Oxford Borough</i>						
8 <sup>th</sup> & Broad Street Park	2.8	No	No	No	Low	High
Oxford Memorial Park	2.7	Yes	No	Yes	Mod	High
<i>Upper Oxford Township</i>						
Catamount Road Park	18.9	Yes	Yes	Yes	High	Low
<i>West Nottingham Township</i>						
Nottingham County Park	625.2	No	Yes	Yes	High	Low
State Forest District 17	578.3	No	Yes	Yes	Mod	Low
<p>Active Recreation Amenities include: baseball and softball field, soccer/football field, outdoor basketball court, indoor basketball court, outdoor volleyball court, badminton court, playground, equipment, track/field Facilities, pool/adult's, pool/children's, and tennis courts.</p> <p>Passive Recreation Amenities include: passive open space, pavilion/gazebo, picnic tables, walking trail or path, and benches.</p> <p>User Support Amenities include: drinking water, restrooms, trash receptacles, indoor/undercover Area, outdoor lighting, lighting for security, on-site parking spaces, telephone, and cabin facilities.</p> <p>** Proposed facility or facility under construction.</p>						

Source: Oxford Region Municipalities, 2010

**Figure 15-C: Recreation in the Oxford Region**



**Figure 15-D: Recreation in the Oxford Borough Area**



### Limited Access Facilities

The limited access recreation facilities in the Oxford Region include school grounds with sports fields and play area, and fields operated by sports leagues, as shown in Figure 15-E. Most of these facilities are located in or around the Oxford Borough with access via the Borough’s sidewalk grid. As a result these fields can be reached by children on foot and used for unstructured play and “pickup” games.

**Figure 15-E: Limited Access Recreation Facilities in the Oxford Region**

Name	Description	Recreation Facilities
<b>East Nottingham Township</b>		
Oxford Area Athletic Assoc.	Sports league	Softball fields
Penn’s Grove Middle School	School grounds	Gymnasium
Tipton Field	Sports league	Little league baseball fields
<b>Oxford Borough</b>		
Elk Ridge Elementary School	School Grounds	Sports fields
Hopewell Elementary School	School Grounds	Playground
Jordan Bank Elementary School	School Grounds	Multi-purpose room
Nottingham Elementary School	School Grounds	Playground
Oxford High School	School Grounds	Sports fields, tennis courts, and gymnasium

Source: OASD

The table in Figure 15-F lists privately-owned and operated recreation facilities within the Oxford Region. This listing presents very few facilities given the large size of the Region. However, this limited number can be attributed to the fact that that so much of the Region is low-density and dominated by farmland. Most of these facilities, such as the golf course and overnight camps, require large amounts of space and are destinations for customers who live outside the Oxford Region.

**Figure 15-F: Private Recreational Facilities in the Oxford Region**

Facility Name	Description	Recreation Facilities
<b>East Nottingham Township</b>		
Bicknell’s Pool	Private Club	Swimming pool that is open in the summer.
<b>Elk Township</b>		
Oxford Gun Club	Private Club	Shooting ranges.
<b>Lower Oxford Township</b>		
Girl Scout Camp Tweedale	Non-Profit Camp	Campsites, trails, pool, and gathering areas.
Wyncote Golf Club	Private Club	18-hole Heathlands-style golf course.
Lincoln University	College Campus	Swimming pool, trail, and baseball field
<b>West Nottingham Township</b>		
Boy Scout Camp Horseshoe	Non-profit Camp	Campsites, trails, pool, and gathering areas.

Source: Oxford Region Municipalities, 2010



The table in Figure 15-G lists all of the major recreation facilities outside the Oxford Region that can be easily reached by the Region’s residents. This list is limited to facilities within a five mile radius which represent a 5 to 10 minute drive. These are mostly private clubs or large passive recreation wildlife areas.

**Figure 15-G Major Public and Private Recreation Facilities Surrounding the Oxford Region**

Facility Name	Description	Recreation Amenities
<i>Chester County</i>		
Franklin Township Community Park	Township Park	Trails, fields, tennis courts, and pavilion
Penn Township Park	Township Park	Trails, pavilions, playgrounds
Barnard Park	Township Park	Pond, fields
Township Building Open Space	Open Space	Wooded open space
White Clay Creek Bi-State Preserve	State Private	Trails, picnic areas, and historic buildings
Jennersville YMCA	Non-Profit Facility	Fitness center, pre-school facilities and indoor and outdoor swimming.
Moccasin Run Golf Course	Private Club	18-hole public golf course
Camp Saginaw	Private Club	Commercial overnight summer camp.
<i>Lancaster County</i>		
Bells Run Nature Preserve	Non-profit Preserve	10 acre Lancaster County Conservancy preserve with trails
Octoraro Lake Boat Ramp	Private Facility open to the public	Boat ramp is located at the Chester Water Authority Fishing Headquarters
<i>Cecil County</i>		
Fair Hill State Natural Resource Management Area	State Facility	5,600 acre of trails, campsites and equestrian facilities
Plumpton Park Zoological Gardens	Non-Profit Facility	100-acre zoo open to the public housing rescued exotic animals

Source: Oxford Region Municipalities

## Evaluation of Current Conditions and Future Needs

### Land Use and Demographic Trends Influencing Recreation Needs

For most of its history, the Oxford Region has been a rural agricultural community where traditional outdoor physical activity, from farmwork to fishing, was part of everyday life. However, recent decades have witnessed the growth of commercial offices and isolated residential developments, along with a rise in indoor sedentary activities such as working at a computer or playing video games. Furthermore, there has been a loss of privately-owned open lands and forests that were traditionally used for recreation. As a result, a growing number of residents now rely on dedicated recreation facilities for their physical activity and recreation needs.

The 2010 Census indicates that the population of the Oxford Region was 25,814. It also indicates that the Hispanic or Latino population measured 3,330 or 12.9%, which almost doubled the percentage measured in 2000, which was 7.0%. Many of these Hispanic

residents work in the farm industry and migrated from countries where soccer is the prevalent field sport. There is also a well-established Plain Sect community in the Oxford Region, and they are limited to accessing recreation facilities that can be reached by foot, scooters, or buggies.

The most recently published Delaware Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) population projections for the Region projected an increase of nearly 6,400 new residents from 2010 to 2030.

### Population-Based Recreational Park Needs

Previous open space plans in the Oxford Region evaluated existing active recreation park facilities using National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) guidelines to project future park needs. As noted previously, *Linking Landscapes* provides an updated philosophy and guidelines called the “Chester County Recreational Park Standards (2002),” which are shown in Figure 15-H.

**Figure 15-H: Chester County Recreational Park Standards (2002)**

Type of Park	Regional Park	Sub-Regional Park	Community Park	Neighborhood Park	Mini Park
Service Radius	30 mi. (Equal to a 60 min. drive)	7.5 mi. (Equal to a 15 min. drive)	2.5 mi. (Equal to a 5 min. drive or a 30 min. walk)	0.5 mi. (Equal to a 15 min. walk)	0.25 mi. (Equal to an 8 min. walk)
Minimum per 1,000 people	20 acres	8.5 acres	3.0 to 6.0 acres	2.5 to 3.5 acres	0.25 acres
Maximum Population* <sup>1</sup>	None	100,000	25,000	5,000	2,000
Size of Park	1,000 acres or more	400 acres to 999 acres	20 acres to 399 acres	0.5 acres to 19.9 acres	0.01 acre to 0.49 acres

Source: Linking Landscapes, 2002

Figure 15-I applies the County Standards to evaluate the Oxford Region’s projected recreation needs on a region-wide basis. This methodology is one of many that can be used to evaluate recreational needs, and should not be viewed as the definitive evaluation. However, this analysis suggests that the Region, which has 2,284.2 acres of park and recreation facilities, far exceeds the projected year 2030 park acreage needs.

However, the raw acreage of recreational land is not the only issue to consider when evaluating recreational needs. Figure 15-I shows that the Region has more than enough Sub-Regional and Community Park acreage, but has a shortfall of approximately 300 acres when it comes to smaller-scale Neighborhood and Mini Parks. Furthermore, Figure 15-J shows that all but one of the Region’s municipalities have a shortfall in terms of Regional, Neighborhood, and Mini Parks.

<sup>1</sup> Maximum Population is the largest recommended population for a Service Area.

**Figure 15-I: Region-wide Recreation Acreage Needs Evaluation**

	2000 Census*	2030 Projection*	Current Acreage
Population	20,364	31,230	N/A
Regional Park Acreage Need	407.3 ac.	624.6 ac.	0.0 ac.
Sub-Regional Park Acreage Need	173.1 ac.	265.5 ac.	1,942.2 ac.
Community Park Acreage Need	61.1 to 122.2 ac.	93.7 to 187.4 ac.	291.9 ac.
Neighborhood Park Acreage Need	50.9 to 71.3 ac.	78.1 to 109.3 ac.	50.1 ac.
Mini Park Acreage Need	5.1 ac.	7.8 ac.	0 ac.
Total Park Acreage Need	697.5 to 788.9 ac.	1,069.6 to 1,194.5 ac.	2,284.2 ac.

Source: *Linking Landscapes: A Plan for the Protected Open Space Network in Chester County, PA*, CCPC 2002.

Note: Only year 2000 Census data and 2030 Projections were used in *Linking Landscapes*.

**Table 15-J: Municipal Small-Scale Park Needs Evaluation**

Municipality	2030 Projected Population*	Community Park (Acres)	Neighborhood Parks (Acres)	Mini Parks (Acres)	Total Need (Acres)	Current Acreage (Acres)
East Nottingham	9,880	29.6 to 59.3	24.7 to 34.6	2.5	56.8 to 96.3	71.1
Elk	1,900	5.7 to 11.4	4.8 to 6.7	0.5	10.9 to 18.5	233.7
Lower Oxford	7,200	21.6 to 43.2	18.0 to 25.2	1.8	14.4 to 70.2	22.8
Oxford	5,750	17.3 to 34.5	14.4 to 20.1	1.4	33.1 to 56.1	5.5
Upper Oxford	3,410	10.2 to 20.5	8.5 to 11.9	0.9	19.6 to 33.2	18.9
West Nottingham	3,090	9.3 to 18.5	7.7 to 10.8	0.8	17.8 to 30.1	00.0
Subtotal	31,230	93.7 to 187.4	78.1 to 109.3	7.8	179.6 to 304	342.0

Source: *Linking Landscapes: A Plan for the Protected Open Space Network in Chester County, PA*, CCPC 2002.

Note: Only year 2030 Projections were used in *Linking Landscapes*.

Figure 15-J indicates that based on population alone, the Region would not require any new small-scale parks by 2030. However, Elk Township's sole community park, Chrome Barrens Preserve, is more of a natural preserve than an active recreation park. If its acreage were removed, the regional total would be 118.3 acres, and there would be a shortfall of 61.3 to 185.7 acres for small-scale parks. For all practical purposes, this shortfall represents what is needed in terms of acreage for new small-scale parks.

### Outdoor Recreation Facilities

In many instances, planning for outdoor recreation facilities is done on short notice after a parcel of land is donated for public use or becomes available for sale. Ideally, facilities, such as sports fields, should be planned out in advance and developed to meet the recreation priorities of the community. However, in reality the shape and size of a parcel can limit what kind of facility is possible. For example, if a developer donates a strip of land that is large enough for tennis courts, but too small for a soccer field, the municipality may be justified in constructing tennis courts, even if soccer fields are a higher priority. Municipal recreation planners should be aware of the standards for outdoors facilities, a sample of which is provided in Figure 15-K. More facility standards can be found on the NRPA's website: <http://www.nrpa.org>

### Passive Recreation Facilities

The Oxford Region includes about 1,450 acres of passive recreational land, the bulk of which is located in the County Park, the State Forest, and Elk Township’s Serpentine Barrens Preserve. The region-wide evaluation in Figure 15-I suggests that approximately 900 acres of large-scale parkland is needed. Based on this methodology, no more passive recreation would be needed or justified. However, there are no standards for determining how much passive recreation is needed in a community by 2030. Typically, passive parks focus on protecting or conserving a specific natural, historic, or locally significant landscape, regardless of size.

### Opportunities and Obstacles

The Oxford Region is well-situated to plan new parks in a coordinated effort. Existing municipal open space plans, especially those conducted by Oxford Borough and Elk Township have proposed a network of trail, equestrian, and pedestrian links that connect parks to residential communities. This approach could be applied to the Region as a whole. New parks can also be constructed using modern designs that better meet the needs of the disabled and elderly. New parks can also be constructed to better reflect the needs of the Region’s changing demographics, such as providing additional public soccer fields both for youth leagues and as a safe and healthy recreation for farm workers from abroad.

**A skateboard park was identified as a “popular” recreational facility**  
Recreational Resources Survey

New active recreation facilities should not be created on parkland already dedicated to passive recreation. Vision 19.1 of *Linking Landscapes* sets forth that, “A municipality should fulfill the active recreation needs of its residents with recreation parks fully or partially owned and operated by the municipality, and not rely on federal, state, or county parks, or parks wholly owned and operated by another municipality.” This philosophy extends to County Parks, where county policy has designated for passive recreation and not active recreation.

The Oxford Region’s passive recreation parks focus on natural resources protection and could become part of a greenway (as discussed in Chapter 10: Open Space Inventory and Plan). With the projected increase in population, that these passive parks may experience more users, some of whom may trespass or bushwhack trails in sensitive areas. This inappropriate use is an unfortunate but common situation, which can end up damaging sensitive natural resources. An effective means to counteract such misuse is to provide designated trails, trailheads, and limited parking to sensitive passive recreation facilities. There are opportunities for such efforts to be pursued now before the population levels rise even further.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RECREATIONAL FACILITIES IN THE REGION

**Action 15-1** Provide a variety of active and passive recreation parks and facilities to meet the needs of current and future residents.

**Action 15-2** Amend municipal ordinances to define active and passive recreation, consistent with this Comprehensive Plan, and identify existing or proposed parks or recreation facilities as active or passive recreation, or both.

**Action 15-3** Provide active recreation facilities with a preference for those which can have multiple uses, such as fields that can accommodate multiple sports activities.

**Action 15-4** Provide parks and recreation facilities in developed communities which can serve as community gathering areas or the location for civic and community events.

✓These actions address Objectives: 15-A, C, and D

**Figure 15-K: NRPA Suggested Outdoor Facility Development Standards (Example)**

Activity	Size and Dimensions	Area Needed
Basketball, Youth	46' – 50' x 84'	2,400 - 3,036 sq. ft.
Basketball, High School	50' x 84'	5,040 - 7,280 sq. ft.
Tennis	36' x 78'. 12 ft. clearance on both ends.	Minimum of 7,200 sq. ft. single court area.
Baseball, Official	Baselines - 90', Pitching distance - 60.5', Foul lines - min. 320', Center field - 400'+	Minimum 3.0- 3.85 ac.
Baseball, Little League	Baselines - 60', Pitching distance - 46', Foul lines - 200', Center field - 200' to 250'	Minimum 1.2 ac.
Football	160' x 360' with a minimum of 6' clearance on all sides.	Minimum 1.5 ac.
Soccer	195' to 225' x 330' to 360' with 10' minimum clearance on all sides	1.7 - 2.1 ac.
Golf- driving range	900' x 690' wide. Add 12' width each add. tee.	Minimum 13.5 ac. for 25 tees.
Quarter mile running track	Overall width - 276', length - 600'. Track width for 8 to 4 lanes is 32'.	4.3 ac.
Softball	Baselines - 60', pitching distance 45' (men) & 40' (women). Fast pitch field radius from plate is 225'. Slow pitch field radius from plate is 275' for men and 250' for women.	1.5 to 2.0 ac.
Multiple use court	120' x 80'	9,840 sq. ft.
Golf, Par 3 (18 hole)	Average length varies – 600 – 2,700 yards.	50 to 60 ac
Golf, 9-hole	Average length 2,250 yards.	Minimum of 50 ac.
Golf, 18-hole	Average length 6,500 yards.	Minimum 110 yards.
Swimming Pools, Teaching	Minimum 25 yards. x 45' even depth of 3-4 ft.	Varies. Usually 1 to 2 ac.

Source: NRPA, 1996



## Trail and Pedestrian Networks

### Overview

In the past, trails were usually established only within large park settings (such as Nottingham County Park), while sidewalks were built in downtowns and suburban neighborhoods. In recent decades, there have been efforts to link trails, walking paths, and sidewalks into one network that can join residential areas and downtowns to parks and recreation facilities. Trails can provide a walking facility for the elderly, and can improve public health by helping to reduce the national epidemic of adult and childhood obesity. As a result, many grant programs give funding preference to trail projects which link to parks and other important community destinations.

**When properly planned, a trail network can improve local real estate values, boost the local economy, and add to a resident's quality of life.**

### What is a trail?

A trail is a type of recreation facility. However, there is no universally recognized definition for “trail” and the term is often used interchangeably with “path” or “route.” In this Chapter, trails, paths, and routes will be discussed using definitions developed by the Chester County Planning Commission (CCPC) and Chester County Parks Department (CCPD) based on terminology used by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR).

- **Trail** - According to the *Linking Landscapes* definition, a “trail” is an off-road facility with a permanent alignment that is open to the general public, designed, constructed, maintained as part of a public park system, and used for a variety of non-motorized forms of travel including walking, hiking, bicycling, cross-country skiing, or horseback riding.
- **Path** - Trails that are designed, constructed, maintained, and used primarily for one form of travel are called “paths.” Thus, a “bike path” is an off-road facility that has been designed to be used primarily by bicyclists. Although paths are designed to be used by only one mode of travel, they are usually used by other types of users. Limiting the use of a path to one type of user is difficult to enforce, and so path managers commonly must rely on voluntary compliance by the users.
- **Route** - *Linking Landscapes* defines a “route” as a facility that utilizes the shoulders of paved streets or motor vehicle travel lanes on roads with low traffic volumes. In general, “bicycle routes” extend along streets or rights-of-way owned by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT). Roadway routes are sometimes used to link together trail segments that cannot be linked by an off-road corridor, and so should be considered in any trail network project.

### Trail Planning Considerations

Sections 303(a)(3), 401(a)(3), 503.3, 603(b)(2), and 604.(1) of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) empower a municipality to address trail and path planning through its ordinances and regulations. Public involvement is also an essential part of trail planning. Planners should let surrounding landowners comment on a proposed trail corridor before the

alignment for the trail. These landowners might be residential neighbors, retail businesses, or corporations owning industrial parks.

Addressing public concerns is of prime importance, especially concerns about crime and accidents. Local landowners can also be contacted to identify issues, such as areas that flood or locations that are prone to vandalism. Trail planners and the public should be aware that, in order to function properly and safely, public trails and paths need to have 1) thoughtful design, 2) regular maintenance; and 3) thorough security.

*PennDOT's 2008 Policies and Procedures for Transportation Impact Studies Related to Highway Occupancy Permits* also address trails and pedestrian facilities. According to these guidelines, a developer who is required to complete a Transportation Impact Study “shall also describe how the proposed development was designed to accommodate pedestrians, bicycles and transit operations.”

### **Inventory of Trail Facilities in the Region**

There are a small number of trails and paths within the Oxford Region as shown in Figure 15-L. There are internal trails within Nottingham County Park and walking or hiking paths within some developments. The only multi-use public trail is the Spring Lawn Trail in Elk Township. The Spring Lawn Trail is a former road that has been converted for trail use. The only other major pedestrian facility is the sidewalk grid in and around Oxford Borough, shown in Figure 15-M. Parts of Elk Township have back roads and paths that are well-suited for horseback riding, and many of the back roads along the Route 10 corridor are used by buggy riders.

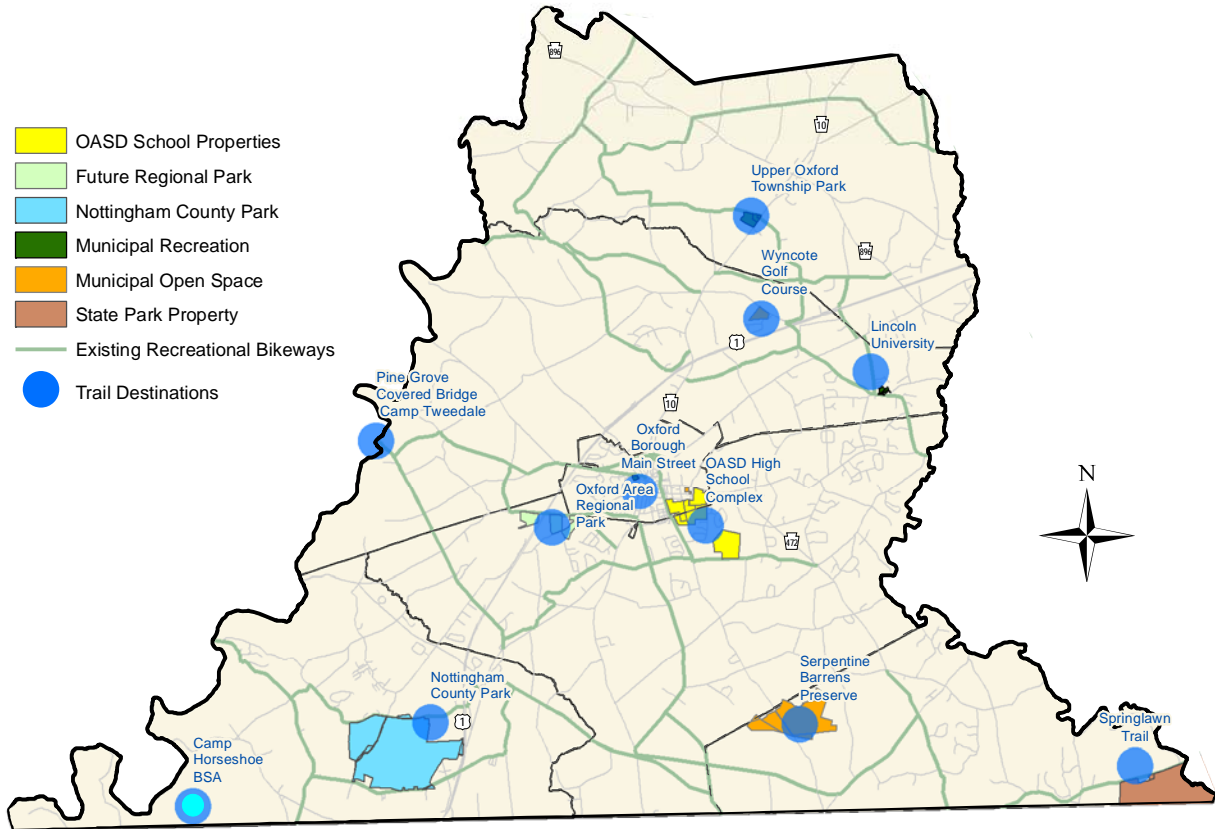


### **Evaluation of Current Conditions and Future Needs**

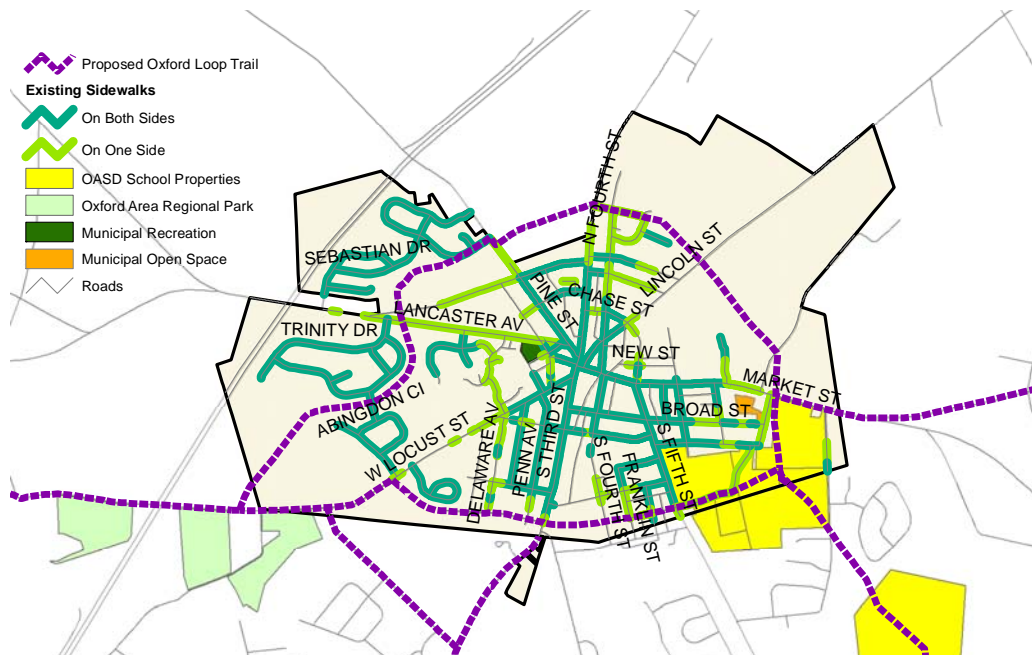
#### **Region-wide Trail Planning**

To date there have only been a few trail planning initiatives in the Oxford Region. In 2002, *Linking Landscapes* listed five regional recreation corridors within the Oxford Region, as shown in Figure 15-N. At that time the Octoraro Regional Recreation Corridor was designated as a “Regional Priority Trail Corridor.” Furthermore, the Octoraro Corridor in West Nottingham was designated as a “Future County Trail.” Due to funding limitations, the County subsequently withdrew plans for a County trail at this location, and it is unlikely that such a facility will be established there. It is also unlikely that trails could be established underneath the overhead transmission line corridors within the Oxford Region because these corridors tend to cross through active farmland.

**Figure 15-L: Inventory of Trails in the Oxford Region**



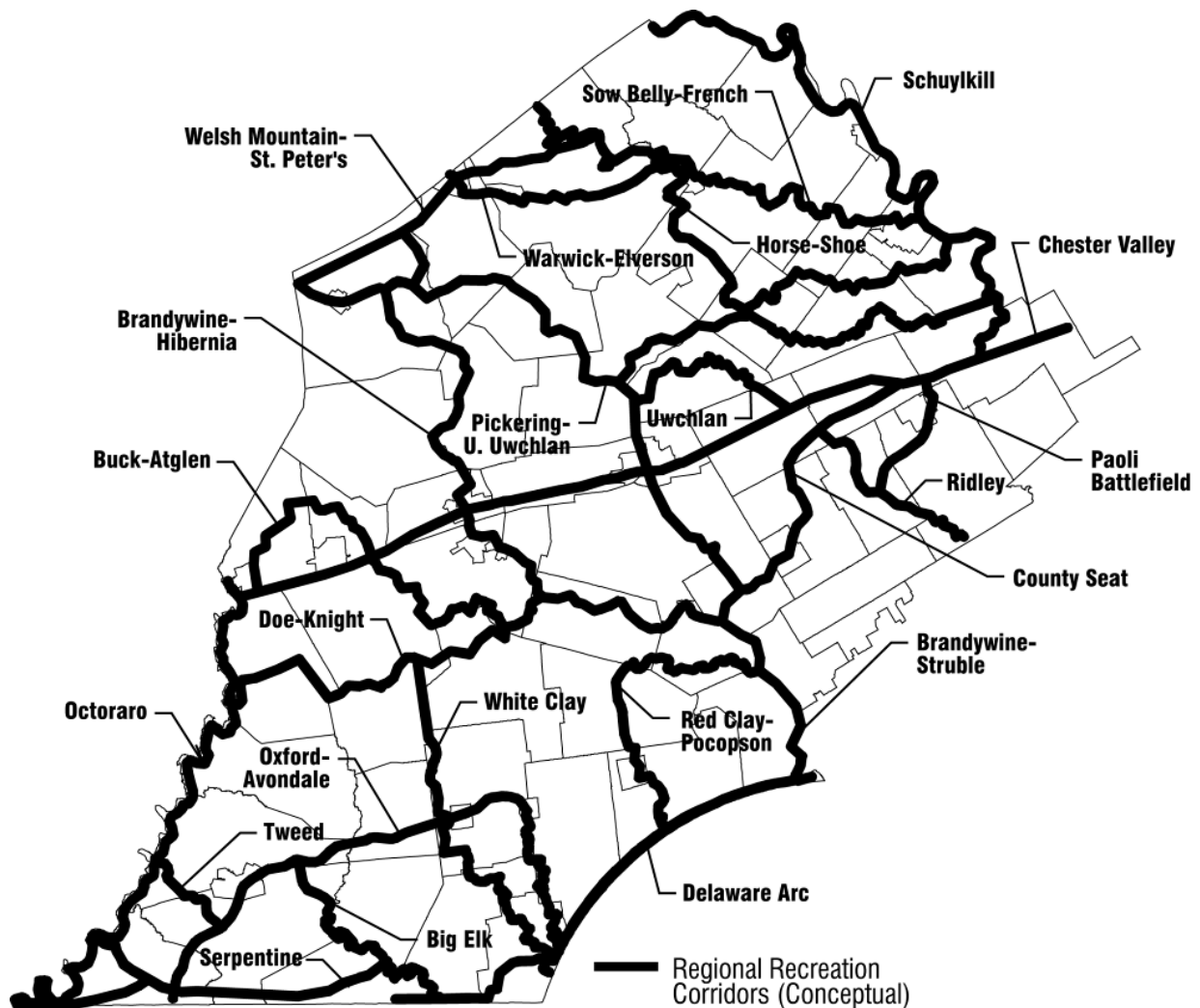
**Figure 15-M: Oxford Borough Trail and Sidewalk Inventory**



**Region-wide Bikeway Planning**

The existing topography of the Oxford Region is gently rolling and well-suited for trails and bikeways. Most roadways, especially back roads, have low traffic volumes that can accommodate bicycling. The exceptions are U.S. Route 1, Route 10, Route 896, and Route 472. Although parts of these roads could be used by expert bicycle riders, they are not ideal for most bicyclists. The intersections and off-ramps along these roads are elevated or depressed in many locations which does not provide an ideal line-of-sight for bicyclists. Also compatible with bicycling, the Octoraro Rail line is primarily at grade in the Oxford Region, and generally used for slow moving freight; it can be crossed easily at most locations by pedestrians, equestrians, and bicyclists.

**Figure 15-N: County Designated Regional Recreation Corridors**



Source: Linking Landscapes, 2002

In 2001, the Chester County Planning Commission published a county-wide map of the *Recommended Bikeway Functional Classification Network*, which identified roadways well-suited for bicycling and classified them as “Beginner Recreation, Intermediate Recreation, Commuter Connector, and Advanced.” The roadways designated as “Beginner” and “Intermediate” are presented in Figure 15-L as ‘Existing Recreational Bikeways.’ These roadways are the best suited for the majority of bicyclists.

In 2002, Oxford Borough adopted a recreation plan which includes a pedestrian network plan consisting of the existing sidewalk grid and a loop of trails and sidewalks that circle the Borough and link to the school complex to the southeast of East Nottingham Township. That same year, West Nottingham Township adopted a recreation plan that is consistent with the “Oxford Loop” concept, and includes on-road bikeways that link into the Loop. While all Oxford Region municipalities have adopted OSRER Plans to date, these are the only municipalities in the Oxford Region who adopted detailed map-based trail network plans.



### **Municipal Bike and Pedestrian Planning and Funding**

Because bicycle planning is a relatively young field, municipal ordinances and regulations do not include the kind of regulations which facilitate the construction of trails and paths that could be used by bicyclists or pedestrians. One key concept in trail planning that can be included in ordinances is the construction of trails and paths in new developments prior to the construction of surrounding buildings. There also needs to be documentation setting forth as to what parties are responsible for the maintenance, security, and liability for trails and paths within developments or on public lands.

Permitting trails and paths to be a recipient of fee-in-lieu funding can be an important way to fund trails. Other funding can be used, such as the “Safe Routes to School” program administered by PennDOT, and other federal transportation enhancement funds address making schools more walkable. Major PennDOT highway projects commonly require that some sort of mitigation be undertaken for impacts caused by roadway construction. This mitigation can include trails and sidewalks within roadway right-of-ways. If such mitigation occurs, the mitigation funds are more likely to be spent on trail projects that have been addressed in adopted municipal planning documents.

### **Opportunities and Obstacles**

The Oxford Region is especially well-suited to support a trail network. It has one downtown center and a University, which are connected by a growing residential area. In the western part of the Region, there are a number of ideal destinations for bicyclists, mostly clustered along the Octoraro Creek. The Region also has an existing network of relatively flat back roads that are well-suited for recreational bicyclists and Amish commuters traveling by buggy, scooter, or rollerblades. The major obstacle to the creation of trails and bikeways are the major roadways in the Region.



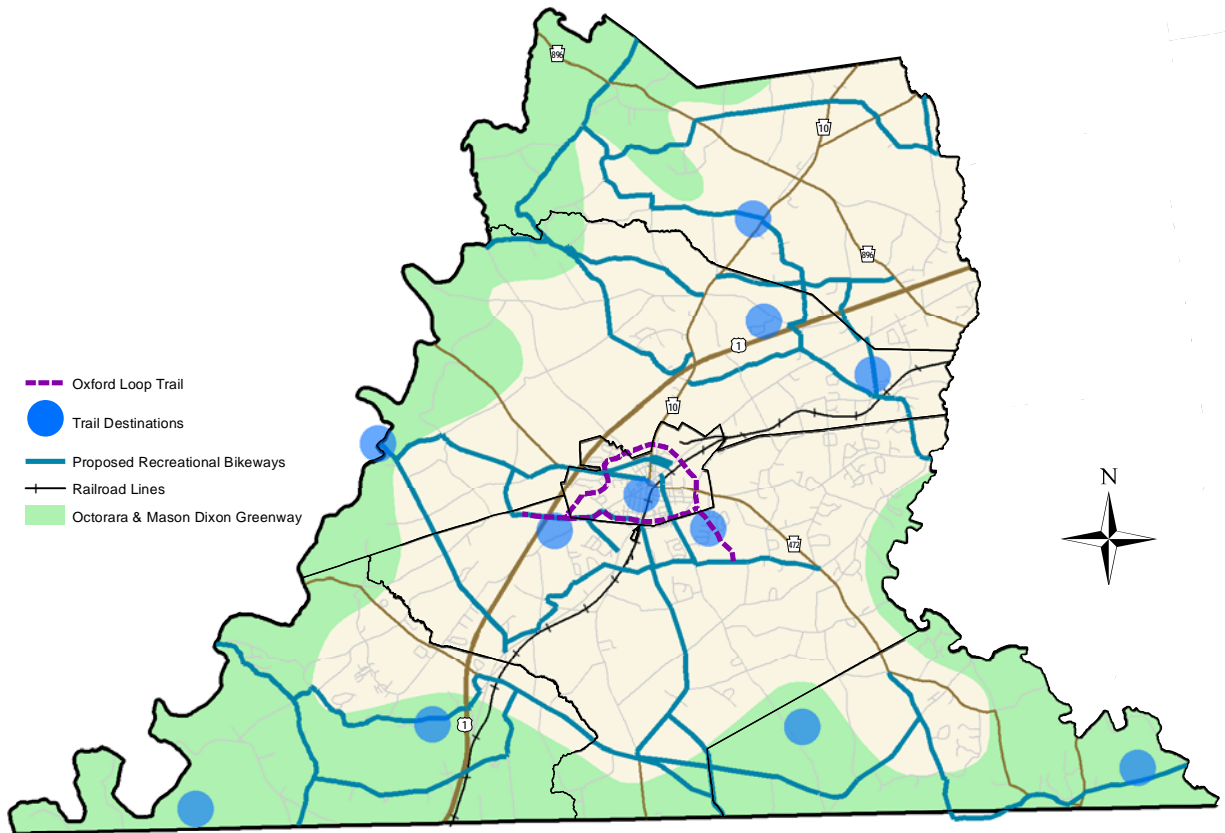
**☑ RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TRAIL AND PEDESTRIAN NETWORKS**

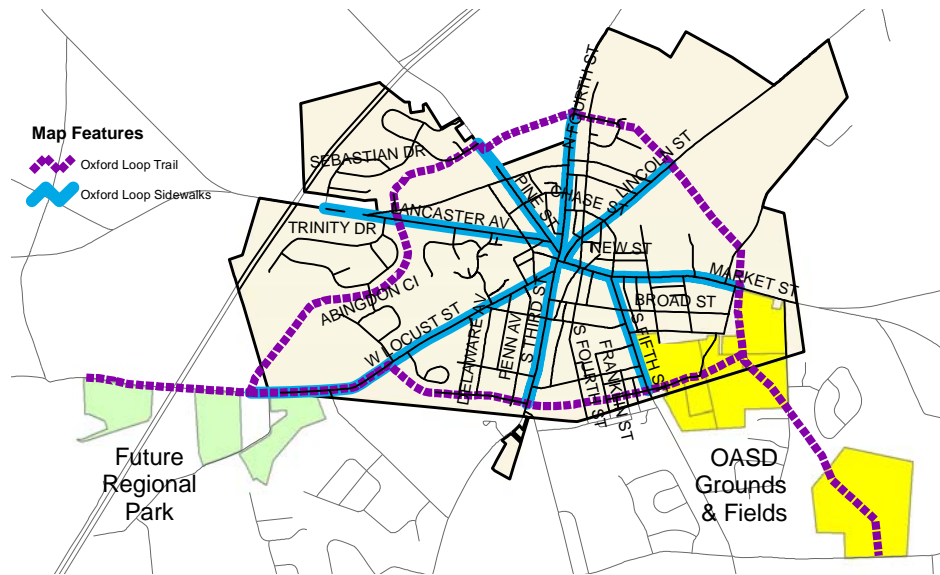
**Trails Network Plan Map**

The maps in **Figures 15-O** and **15-P** present a Recommended Trail and Bikeway Network Plan. This plan consists of three interlinked components:

- **The Octoraro Valley Bikeway (15-O)** - This network would extend throughout the entire Oxford Region, linking its residential areas to its recreation sites. In order to promote the network as a link to recreation destinations, it would be prudent to emphasize its major destination which is the Octoraro Valley. Such an “identity” could also help in securing grant funding.
- **Oxford Borough Sidewalk Grid (15-P)** - Which could extend outside the Borough, where appropriate.
- **The Oxford Loop Trail (15-P)** - Which includes segments of trails and sidewalks surrounding the Borough that link to the school complexes southeast of the Borough.

**Figure 15-O: Oxford Region Trail and Bicycle Plan**



**Figure 15-P: Oxford Borough Trail and Bicycle Plan**

Figures 15-O and 15-P were developed based on the following guidelines: Major Roadways should be avoided, and if they are crossed, they should be crossed at a four way intersection and not at complex intersections; Wherever it is feasible and practicable, the network should accommodate horseback riders and buggy drivers; In terms of bicycle use, the network should have loops and not dead ends; The network should extend to schools, universities, municipal parks, and scenic features; The network should promote access to Octoraro Creek and Elk Creek; The network should link to Nottingham County Park, the State Game Lands and Elk Township’s Serpentine Barrens as well as other identified trail destinations.

The Octoraro Bikeway network (OVB):

- **East Nottingham Township** - The Octoraro Bikeway (OVB) would link most parts of the Township with Nottingham County Park, the Serpentine Barrens, and downtown Oxford.
- **Elk Township** - The OVB would link the Township’s central residential areas with Elk Creek, the Serpentine Barrens, and downtown Oxford.
- **Lower Oxford Township** - The OVB would link the Township’s eastern residential areas, including Lincoln University, to its municipal park and the Oxford Loop Trail and downtown Oxford.
- **Oxford Borough** - The Oxford Borough Sidewalk Grid and the Oxford Loop Trail would link, via the OVB, with Lincoln University, the Serpentine Barrens, Nottingham County Park, Elk Creek, and the Octoraro Creek.
- **Upper Oxford Township** - The OVB would link the Township’s southern residential areas to the township park, and Lower Oxford’s park.

- **West Nottingham Township** – The OVB would link Nottingham County Park to the Octoraro Creek, Elk Creek, and Oxford Borough.

**Action 15-5** In each municipality, plan a recreational network of trails, paths, sidewalks and bicycle routes that provide links to adjoining municipal networks in accordance with any regional recreation plans.

**Action 15-6** Update municipal ordinances to include provisions which ensure that the planning and funding of trails, paths, and bicycle routes are addressed through the land development process.

**Action 15-7** Pursue projects and grant-funding to support pedestrian, bicycle, and motorist safety initiatives with an emphasis on protecting children walking to school.

**Action 15-8** Continue to coordinate with PennDOT engineers and maintenance crews to find opportunities to improve roads so that they better accommodate bicycles and buggies.

✓These actions address Objectives: 15-B and 15-C

## **Community Events, Sports, Schools, and Traditional Recreation**

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### **Overview and Inventory**

Until recently, the Oxford Region was largely rural and its recreation activities either occurred close to the population center of Oxford Borough, or on privately owned farms and forests. The growth in recent decades has increased the need for more recreation facilities, such as sports fields, and a variety of activities, which in recreation planning is called “programming.” The challenge for the region is how to maintain its existing small town and rural recreation, while accommodating new needs that will likely increase.

#### **Community Events**

Community events, such as parades or downtown festivals, are an important form of recreation patronized by a wide variety of residents. With the exception of recreation events that take place in Nottingham County Park, such as the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Fireworks, most community events in the Region occur in Oxford Borough.



The most prominent organizer of community events in the Region is the non-profit Oxford Mainstreet, Incorporated (OMI). Funding for OMI comes from a tax that is levied on businesses in the Oxford Central Business District and which is administered by the Borough. OMI has two part-time employees. It operates on a five-year contract which is renewed based on a vote by the contributing businesses. Their current contract runs from 2008 through 2012.

OMI cooperates with Oxford Borough and the Chamber of Commerce on a variety of projects, many of which are funded through grants. OMI participated in the planned improvements to the downtown streetscape completed in 2010. This project included decorative paving, streetlamps, signage, and banners. OMI also sponsors events throughout the year including: the Downtown Easter Egg Hunt, the Plant and Garden Sale, the 5K Run, the Old Country Christmas and Scavenger Hunt, and the Oxford Village Market, held on Tuesdays from May through October. Their website is <http://www.downtownoxfordpa.org>

The Oxford Arts Alliance hosts shows, dinners and documentaries throughout the year at the Art Gallery located on South Third Street in Oxford Borough and at various other local locations. They also coordinate Art Stroll events on the first Friday of each month.

The Oxford Area Chamber of Commerce also sponsors annual events including the Halloween Parade, summer movies in the park, and self-guided historic walking tours. Their website is <http://www.oxfordart.org>

### **Sports Leagues and Athletic Events**

None of the municipalities in the Oxford Region manage athletic programming. The Oxford Athletic Association sponsors the Men's and Woman's Adult Softball League, as well as the Girl's Softball League. The Oxford Golden Bear Youth Football League plays at the Oxford High School Grounds, with four football teams and two cheerleading squads. Oxford Little League/District 28 offers tee ball, baseball (senior, junior, major, minor A, and minor B) and softball (senior, major, minor A, and minor B).

The league holds meetings at Union Fire Company No. 1 on Market Street in Oxford Borough and uses the following fields:

- Butch Dean AA Field on Oxford Road in East Nottingham Township.
- Corner of Elkview and Elkdale Roads in Lower Oxford Township.
- Elk Ridge High School Field on 8th Street in Oxford Borough.
- Nottingham Elementary School Field on Garfield Street in Oxford Borough.
- Octorara/Christiana Lower Field in Christiana, Lancaster County.
- Old Oxford High School Field on 5th Street in Oxford Borough.
- Pennock Field in Kennett Square Borough.
- Tipton Field on Mt. Pleasant Road in East Nottingham Township.
- Wickersham Field at Wickersham and Apple Tree Road in East Nottingham Township.

### **Public School Athletics and Facilities**

The Oxford Regional School District offers a range of intramural sports from 5<sup>th</sup> grade through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. It also offers interscholastic programs in football, baseball, basketball, soccer wrestling, and swimming. The School District offers its fields and gymnasiums at the High School, Middle School and Hopewell and Nottingham Elementary Schools for use by the Region’s sports leagues. Scheduling is done by the leagues, who must fill out an application.

The School District only charges a fee if there is a need to cover operating costs, such as providing staffing on weekends. To date, the School District coordinates with leagues more so than the OARA. The School District’s facilities are used frequently and throughout the year. Although the School District has a desire to increase the number of its fields, they do not anticipate that they will be able to expand in the foreseeable future due to budget constraints and rising land costs.

### **YMCA**

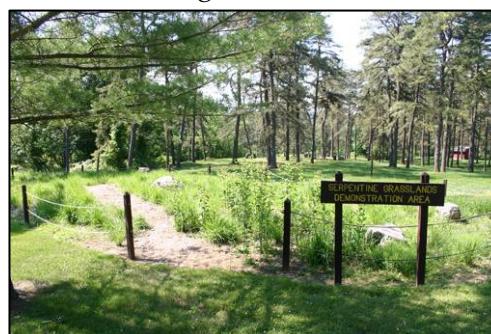
The Jennersville YMCA (which is located outside of the Region) is the primary provider for indoor recreational facilities and programming for the Oxford Region. It has a gymnasium and a pool, and offers activities for children and seniors. It also has courts and leagues for indoor sports, such as basketball and volleyball, as well as multi-purpose outdoor fields. It offers fitness classes such as aerobics, yoga, and cycling. The Jennersville YMCA is part of the YMCA of the Brandywine Valley which serves south and central Chester County. The Jennerville facility is approximately 25 years old and is in good condition. It is heavily used and recently expanded its parking lot. The Jennersville YMCA is planning on expanding their existing summer camp program in Oxford Borough, but has no plans to operate a branch or satellite in the Oxford Region.



<http://www.ymcabwv.org/jvvt.html>

### **Non-Sports Programs**

The most active provider of recreation programming for seniors in the Oxford Region is the Oxford Area Senior Center. Nottingham County Park provides extensive programming mostly dealing with natural resource education. The Oxford Library is a focal point for a variety of indoor activities. It provides programs and classes for all ages and access to state of the art technologies. The Oxford Public Library is scheduled to undergo a major expansion within the year, which will include additional parking, a new amphitheater, a caterpillar garden, and a children’s outdoor play area. (See Chapter 8: Community Facilities and Services)



The Oxford Region hosts a number of fraternal and service clubs with private memberships, which host events and commonly participate in public community events. These clubs include: the American Legion Post, the Eagles Club, the Elks Club, the Jaycees (United States Junior



Chamber), the Lions Club, the Masonic Lodge, the Order of the Eastern Star, the Oxford Redmen, and the Rotary Club. Many youth-related activities and events within the Oxford Region are provided by civic groups including: the 4-H Club, the Boy Scouts of America, the Girl Scouts of America, and the Russellville Grange and Junior Grange. The Region's churches and houses of worship are also active in hosting civic events.

### **Traditional Recreation**

Traditionally, hunting and fishing have been a common recreation activity in the Oxford Region. These activities have typically taken place on private properties with the permission of landowners. The only public land now regularly used for hunting is part of the Elk Township Chrome Barrens Preserve east of Barren Road. Nottingham County Park holds two regulated shotgun deer hunts each year. Archery hunting is also permitted throughout the archery season, but hunters must sign up and meet competency requirements. Fishing is also permitted at the Park's 2.5-acre MacPherson Lake, and a smaller unnamed lake, both of which support pan fish and bass.

### **Previous Municipal Recreation Planning**

Over the last two decades, all of the Oxford Region's municipalities have completed an Open Space, Recreation and Environmental Resources (OSRER) Plan. None of the Region's municipalities currently have a Parks and Recreation Board or Commission, although Lower Oxford Township and Upper Oxford had one in the past. Oxford Borough's 2002 OSRER Plan noted that they are involved with limited recreation programming mostly with the Oxford Area School District. The OSRER Plan's for the remaining Oxford Region municipalities noted that they did not anticipate establishing recreational programming.

## **Evaluation of Current Conditions and Future Needs**

### **Opportunities and Obstacles**

Community recreational events are vibrant in the Oxford Region, with most of them occurring in or around Oxford Borough. This situation supports the Borough's economy, and in general these events are patronized by residents from throughout the Region. However, there appears to be a shortfall of activities taking place in the more rural parts of the Region. As a result, the more rural communities do not always perceive that they have "ownership" of the events or facilities in and around the Borough. This perception can make it difficult for regional planning efforts to gather funding.

Sports leagues are quite active in the Oxford Region, and in general there is a desire for more sports fields. With ongoing growth, this situation can be expected to increase. Currently, the public schools provide many facilities for youth and adult leagues. There is an opportunity for these leagues, the OASD, and OARA to formally coordinate their efforts. Such an initiative might result in the creation of a regional authority that includes both participating municipalities and the OASD. OASD participation is common in many of the successful authorities throughout the state.

Opportunities for increasing fishing in the Region could be combined with overall efforts to restore streams and plant stream riparian buffers with trees (See Chapter 12: Natural Resources). In general, fish thrive in ecosystems in which streams are shaded by trees.

The ongoing use of land in the Region for farms and development limits opportunities to designate large areas of woodland for deer hunting. However, the interconnected rural and wooded portions of the Oxford Region are large enough that they could be cooperatively managed by landowners and hunters to promote a healthy and sustainable herd of deer. This kind of cooperative management approach, called Quality Deer Management (QDM) typically involves the protection of young bucks combined with an adequate harvest of does to maintain a healthy population in balance with existing habitat conditions and landowner desires. Technical information on DQM is available from the Quality Deer Management Association, a non-profit wildlife conservation organization with a Delaware Valley Chapter.

**☑ RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMMUNITY EVENTS, SPORTS, AND SCHOOL ACTIVITIES**

**Action 15-9** Support a balanced diversity of competitive sports and non-sports recreation to meet the various interests of the public.

**Action 15-10** Continue to support and cooperate with adult and youth athletic leagues, including those whose area of service may cross municipal boundaries.

**Action 15-11** Accommodate special events to build community awareness of parks and downtowns as community centers. Such events may include parades, historic tours, or seasonal festivals.

**Action 15-12** Continue to coordinate municipal recreation initiatives with public, private, and institutional stakeholders such as: sports leagues; local school boards; health clubs and commercial gyms; and trail, hiking, and equestrian advocacy groups.

✓These actions address Objectives: 15-D, E, and F.

**☑ RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TRADITIONAL RECREATION – HUNTING, FISHING, ETC.**

**Action 15-13** Support the continuation of responsible hunting, fishing, horseback riding, and outdoor water-based recreation, as a formally recognized form of public recreation.

✓This action addresses Objectives: 15-D, E, and F.

## **Recreation Programming, Maintenance, and Funding**

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### **Overview and Inventory**

In the past, municipal recreation planning focused primarily on acquiring and building parks and recreation facilities. However, local governments are now using civic events such as parades, concerts, and crafts festivals, as a way to improve their quality-of-life while helping the local economy by revitalizing downtowns and village centers. The coordination of recreational events is called “programming.” The following section addresses three key interrelated programming, maintenance, and funding topics:

1. Recreation programming, administration, and staffing
2. Recreation maintenance, security, safety, and liability
3. Recreation budget and funding

### **Programming, Administration, and Staffing**

- **Oxford Borough** - has no formal programming or staffing. However, the Borough has been coordinating with the Jennersville YMCA to provide for a summer camp program popular with low income families, which takes place in the Borough’s Park. The budget for this program comes from the Jennersville YMCA through the Smithson Endowment, which targets funding to the Borough.
- **Upper Oxford Township** - has no formal programming or staffing. They have a Park Development Committee which oversees the purchase and development of park land.
- **East Nottingham, Elk, Lower Oxford and West Nottingham Townships** - have no formal programming or staffing.

### **Recreation maintenance, security, safety, and liability**

Oxford Borough, and Elk, Lower Oxford, and Upper Oxford townships all provide the same maintenance, security, safety, and liability for their recreational facilities as they do for all other municipal property. Lower Oxford Township established a set of rules and regulation for its parks, and requires little leagues that use Township fields to provide proof of liability. Elk Township’s only recreational facility is the Spring Lawn Trail, which is given periodic field visits to identify maintenance needs. East Nottingham and West Nottingham townships have no recreation facilities.

In Pennsylvania, the Recreation Use of Land and Water Act (RULWA) of 2003 limits the legal liability of private landowners who make their land available to the public without charge for recreation, such as hiking, fishing, or mountain biking. The goal of this law is to make it easier for people to open their land for public recreation. Under RULWA, a land owner “owes no duty of care to keep the premises safe for entry or use by others for recreational purposes, or to give any warning of a dangerous condition, use, structure, or activity on such premises to persons entering for such purposes.” In general this law states that, a land owner who does not charge an entrance fee and who maintains his or her land

using safe, conventional management practices cannot be successfully sued by someone who has an accident while using the land for recreation, such as hiking.

### Recreation Budget and Funding

There are few existing large-scale recreation facilities in the Oxford Region and most of the recreation programming occurs in or around Oxford Borough. This pattern is reflected in the funding for recreation with is listed in Figure 15-Q. What is not shown on this table is the funding that is paid by municipalities to the OARA.

**Figure 15-Q: Municipal Recreation Expenses and Revenues.**

Municipality	2011 Recreation Budget Expenses	2011 Revenues
Lower Oxford	\$3,686 was spent for maintenance, and supplies (\$5,000 to \$6,000 was a typical budget in recent years)	\$75.00 from pavilion and building rental fees
Oxford	\$10,000 for maintenance, and supplies. (Up to \$8,000 was budgeted in prior years)	\$21,711 from rental fees
Upper Oxford	\$13,000 for maintenance and professional services (Up to \$80,000 was budgeted for park development in recent years)	None, however the township does accept donations.
Elk, and East and West Nottingham	None	None

Source: Oxford Region Municipalities

## Evaluation of Current Conditions and Future Needs

### Programming, Administration, and Staffing

The existing recreation programming in the Oxford Region has two major facets: downtown community events and sports/play facilities. The downtown events are largely coordinated by non-profits in Oxford Borough. However, these events are popular with residents from surrounding municipalities and improve the quality-of-life throughout the Region.

Currently, OMI is gradually expanding its role and activities, and may require an expansion of administration.

Sports and play activities in the Region are largely coordinated by non-profit leagues often using school facilities. These programs are popular throughout the Region, and the need for additional fields has been identified. Such a situation is common in growth areas, so it can be expected that this trend will continue, especially along the U.S. Route 1 corridor. In general, the more rural areas surrounding Oxford Borough have few public recreation opportunities, but they have easy access to the Borough.

### **Recreation Maintenance, Security, Safety, and Liability**

None of the Region’s municipalities have developed specific guidelines for addressing security, safety, and liability on public recreational land. Such guidelines are commonly developed, either formally or informally, by a municipal parks and recreation board. As the Oxford Region grows in population it can be expected that park and other recreation areas will require more coordination with security and emergency services. Ongoing issues are vandalism and ensuring that emergency vehicles can reach all parts of recreation facilities. There is an increasing need to address the growing population of elderly facility users who are more likely to fall or have cardiac episodes during exercise.

**Safety was identified as the primary concern by the Planning Committee regarding parks and trails.**

Recreational Resources Survey

### **Recreation Budget and Funding**

The municipalities in the Oxford Region currently focus their recreation funding on facilities within their boundaries, with the exception of the Oxford Area Recreation Authority (OARA) projects. There have been a number of successes in garnering grants for the acquisition of property. There is also a great deal of volunteer “sweat equity” donations by the participants in the various sports leagues. This level of funding and coordination has been sufficient to date, but further growth may require more coordination to improve the efficiency of how money is spent, and better realize revenue from rental fees and possibly even user fees.

Although there is no immediate need to greatly increase funding for recreation, it can be expected that further growth and the opening of the Oxford Area Regional Park will likely require significant ongoing capital improvement funding. Ideally such a Capital Improvements Program would:

- Be designed to fiscally plan for future parks and recreation facilities for the next five years.
- Be coordinated with the policies and planning efforts of the Oxford Regional Recreation Authority and the School District.
- Accommodate the requirements of county, state, and federal grant programs.
- Include infrastructure-related costs, such as land acquisition, playground, and other structures and installations
- Include the replacement and upgrade of recreation, sports, and playground equipment that is public property.

The creation of more park facilities will also increase opportunities for garnering revenue through rental fees or user fees. User fees should be based on a logical and practical rationale that is developed with community input. A user-fee discount can be included for Oxford Region residents who participate in municipally-funded recreation programs, or who use municipal facilities. Anticipated new developments can also generate fees or land donation through fee-in-lieu ordinance provisions. 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.



### **Obstacles and Opportunities**

As a whole, the Oxford Region is still in the early stages of conducting coordinated recreation planning. This provides a great opportunity to develop such planning without having to modify existing programming. However, there is an overall shortfall in terms of formal recreational coordination, which has worked sufficiently in the past, but may be stressed in the coming years. A coordinated approach to recreation planning could be effective in establishing policies and guidelines to address:

- Managing staff and decision-making through a chain of command.
- Ground and facilities maintenance including risk assessments and scheduling inspections.
- Security and emergency response on public park and recreation property, or on property with a recreation right-of-way.
- Grant writing, marketing, public relations, and event planning.
- Setting rates and guidelines for renting facilities.
- Programming recreational activities and organizing volunteer and “friends-of” groups.
- Cooperative agreements with other public or private entities.

There are currently no major causes for concern regarding public safety and liability. However, growth projections suggest it might be prudent to establish formal guidelines regarding:

- Activities that may be restricted or limited, or require a permit or proof of liability insurance.
- Public access restrictions to facilities, such as dusk til dawn use.
- 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 a natural or historic resources area as locations that can accommodate the disabled.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MAINTENANCE, SECURITY, SAFETY, AND LIABILITY**

**Action 15-14** Ensure that maintenance, security, safety, ADA compliance, and liability are addressed when planning, developing, and constructing parks and recreation facilities.

**Action 15-15** Continue to regularly coordinate with police and emergency service providers to provide them with updates on new and improved recreation facilities, and options for patrolling them or accessing them with emergency vehicles.

**Action 15-16** In each municipality, formally designate who is responsible for the maintenance, safety, and liability of park and recreation facilities.

✓These actions address Objectives: 15-C

☑ **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RECREATION BUDGET AND FUNDING**

**Action 15-17** Establish and/or regularly update a Capital Improvements Program that focuses on funding recreational land acquisition and the construction of facilities in a way that will help leverage matching grants.

**Action 15-18** Consider establishing a park and recreation endowment fund that can receive cash donations as gifts. Also, maintain a gift catalog that describes needed recreation equipment and structures that can be funded by a donation.

**Action 15-19** Consider establishing fee-in-lieu provisions, to be updated at least every five years, which can be used for projects including, but not limited to:

- Fund parks and recreational facilities, including the acquisition of land. Fund the construction of recreation infrastructure such as play equipment, structures or parking facilities.
- Fund projects either on public land, or parts of private land with publicly-owned recreation easements.

**Action 15-20** Consider establishing user fees at facilities that provide funding to recreation facilities without discouraging users.

**Action 15-21** Include options for reducing municipal recreation costs through multi-municipal cooperation when evaluating or planning recreation initiatives.

✓These actions address Objectives: 15-G

## **Regional Recreation Planning**

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### **Overview & Inventory**

Since the early 1990s, municipalities in the Oxford Region have been participating in regional recreation planning, mostly in response to requests for more youth sports fields. In 2003, three of the six Oxford Region municipalities cooperated in an effort to acquire land for a park and sports complex west of Oxford Borough. This initiative led to the creation of the OARA and the purchase of the Oxford Area Regional Park, previously known as the Gray Tracts, as shown in Figure 15-R.

#### **Oxford Area Recreation Authority (OARA)**

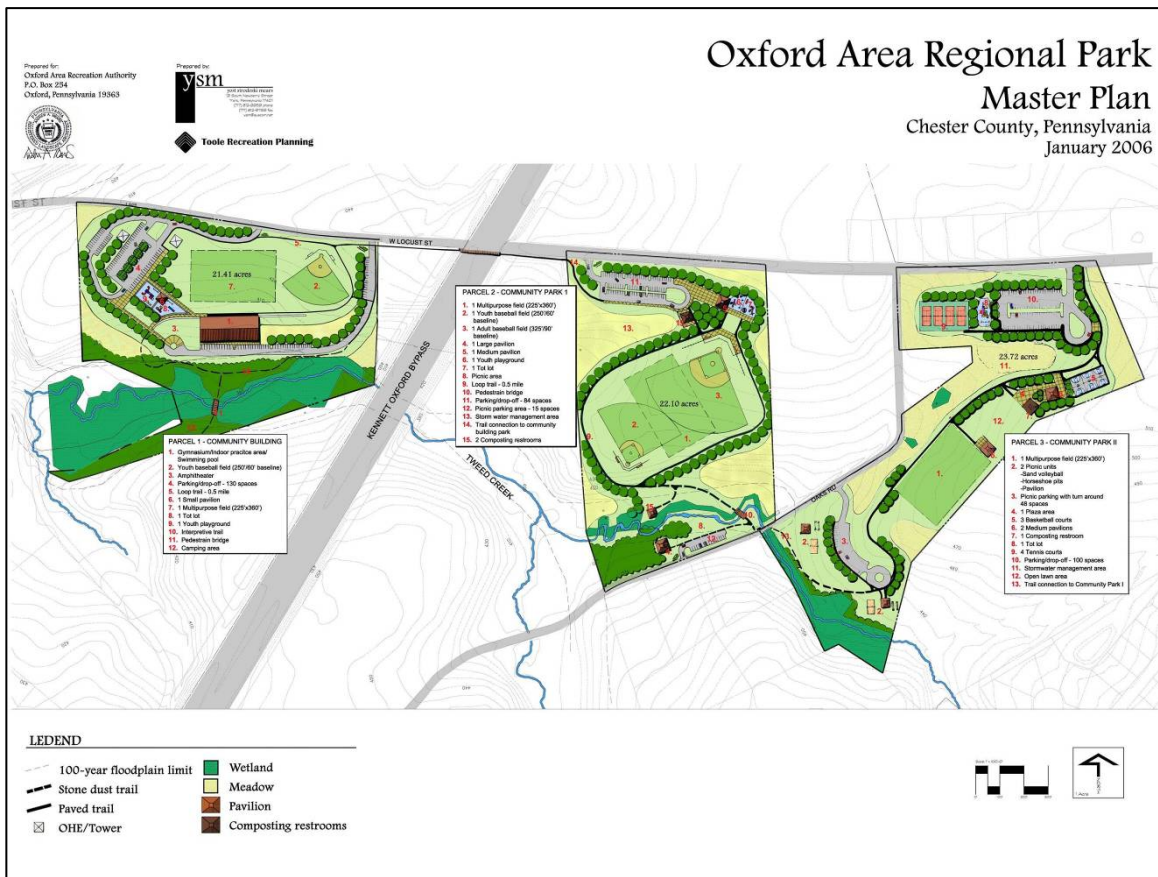
The OARA was created in 2003 as a multi-municipal authority, which now represents Oxford Borough, and East Nottingham, West Nottingham, Lower Oxford, and Elk Townships. OARA's mission is to provide "quality visitor experiences in the Oxford Area Regional Park by providing an attractive, safe and clean environment with quality facilities and effective public services." The OARA board consists of two members from each municipality.

In 2006 OARA hired a consulting firm to complete a master plan for the future park. This master plan estimated that the park design and construction would require \$13 million in funding. In 2007 OARA was awarded a grant from the Oxford Foundation totaling \$24,000 a year for a period of five years. In 2007, this foundation awarded a second grant for \$25,000 a year for five years. OARA also received a County grant for \$250,000 and a State DCNR Grant for \$200,000 for the acquisition of the Future Park.



Construction is currently underway for Phase one of the Oxford Area Regional Park, which will include the construction of 26 parking spaces, a youth baseball field, and a multi-purpose field, as shown in Figure 15-R. The work for this Phase is budgeted at \$600,000. Detailed plans for further Phases have not yet been developed.

**Figure 15-R: Master Plan for the Oxford Area Regional Park**



OARA had a 2009 budget of \$536,000, of which \$450,000 was from state and county grants. Member fees were just over \$19,000. These member fees are based on a formula in which the partner governments pay dues of \$1.00 per person in their municipalities. OARA pays for its own liability insurance, and relies on state police and the Oxford Fire Company for security and emergency services.

## Evaluation of Current Conditions and Future Needs

### OARA Capitol Projects

To date, the major focus of OARA has been the completion of the Oxford Area Regional Park. OARA anticipates that the completion of all parts of the park will take at least ten years, which is a common time frame for such projects. Given the scale of this project, a major challenge will be maintaining ongoing funding and public support. Just like commercial recreation facilities, parks need to be promoted through public relations and marketing.

A proposed walking path would link all three parts of the park. Such a path could be established on a short-term, temporary basis simply by mowing a strip of land and providing a gravel parking lot. Other municipalities in Chester County have used such a technique to permit residents to use undeveloped park parcels for hiking, prior to the construction of their brick and mortar facilities. The location of this path need not follow the design of the master plan, and could be laid out so as to permit the bulk of the property to be leased out as farmland, thus generating income.

### OARA Administration and Funding

The OARA is well-situated to expand its function to include recreational programming, much like other regional recreation authorities in the County. There is no one standard for how a regional recreation authority should operate, but some examples from the County include:

- **The Downingtown Area Recreation Consortium (DARC)** is composed of the seven municipalities in the Downingtown Area School District as well as the School District. DARC provides recreation, adult/youth education, and programs for residents, but does not own any facilities. Instead, they used the School District's school facilities, township parks and meeting rooms, and privately contracted facilities. Their annual budget is over \$900,000 with most of that income coming from fees for programs. Member municipalities jointly provide \$60,000 in dues each year, which are divided based on the number of activity participants from each municipality in the previous year. DARC has three staff members.
- **The Kennett Area Parks and Recreation Board (KAPRB)** is composed of the four member municipalities of Kennett Square Borough and the Townships of East Marlborough, Kennett, and New Garden It provides youth and adult recreation programming, and manages Herb Pennock Park which is owned by the Borough. Their annual budget is typically \$40,000 with substantial income coming from fees for programs. Each member municipality provides funding to cover the services provided to the specific municipality. Such funding ranges from \$3,000 to \$12,000. Funding is also provided by the United Way of Delaware and the United Way of Pennsylvania. KAPRB has one part time professional staff member and there are plans to hire part time staff members.

### **Obstacles and Opportunities**

OARA’s current focus is developing the Oxford Area Regional Park which is likely to take a decade or more. The phasing of this project will permit parts of the park to be open in the short term, which can be expected to result in public use and appreciation of the park. However, much of the park will remain largely undeveloped for years, which can lead to frustration by potential users. OARA could spur public interest in the park by broadening its mission to focus more on programming events dealing with sports, education, or the arts. OARA could also broaden its membership to include the School District, which may require that OARA be reorganized.

OARA could also expand its administration. The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) offers a grant funded through its Community Conservation Partnership Program called “Circuit Rider Projects,” which provides funding for regional recreation authorities. Under this program, a recreation authority can be granted funds to be used for the salary of a full-time director for a recreational authority over a period of four years. The grant would cover 100% of gross salary for the first year, 57% for the second year, 50% for the third year and 25% for the fourth year.

Because OARA already exists as a multi-municipal entity, it has opportunities to cooperate with other regional initiatives. OARA could manage the completion of a region-wide park and recreation plan that addressed parks as part of a local tourism network linked together by trails. The Oxford Region has a large network of low volume roadways that are well-suited for recreational bicycling along with a central downtown that has user facilities such as parking, grocery stores, and restaurants. OARA could also have a role in managing a regional pedestrian and trails master plan that also focuses on sidewalks and other pedestrian facilities from a transportation perspective. OARA’s website:

<http://oxfordrecreation.org>

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COOPERATION WITH OARA**

**Action 15-22** Continue and expand multimunicipal cooperation with OARA.

✓This action addresses Objectives: 15-D, E, G, and H

### **RECOMMENDATION FOR REGIONAL PLANNING**

**Action 15-23** Establish a detailed Regional Park and Recreation Network Plan, which would include parks, trails, greenways, and economic development through local tourism.

✓These actions address Objectives: 15-A, B, C, D, G, and H

## **Assessment of Existing Ordinances and Regulations**

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The following section evaluates how thoroughly the Oxford Region’s existing municipal zoning ordinances (ZO) and subdivision and land development ordinances (SLDO) address recreation issues. The zoning ordinance and SLDO for each municipality were evaluated to determine how they address these key issues: definitions for terms commonly used in recreational planning; the ability of common open space to be used for recreation; the ownership and maintenance of open space; the use of fees-in-lieu for parkland and trails; and design standards for sidewalks and trails:

### **Elk Township**

- ZO Section 200 and SLDO Section 200 - Includes many definitions for terms relating to recreation and trails.
- ZO Section 1301.A.10.e - Notes that common open space can be used for passive parks and trails.
- ZO Section 1301.A.12.b - Addresses the ownership of open space, and notes that it shall be initially offered to the township.
- ZO Section 1301.13 - Addresses the maintenance of open space.
- SLDO Section 515 - Addresses design standards for sidewalks and trails.

### **East Nottingham Township**

- ZO Section 200 and SLDO Section 200 - Includes many definitions for terms relating to recreation and trails.
- ZO Section 1310.B. - Notes that common open space can be used for active recreation including trails.
- ZO Section 1310.H - Addresses the ownership of common open space.
- ZO Section 1310.I - Addresses the open space management plan.
- SLDO Section 512 - Addresses park and open space standards.
- SLDO Section 512.A - Establishes a minimum fee-in-lieu of \$150 per lot to be used for recreation.
- SLDO Section 503.2.A - Addresses design standards for sidewalks.

### **Lower Oxford Township**

- ZO Section 200 and SLDO Section 200 - Include few definitions for terms relating to recreation and trails.
- SLDO Section 509 - Addresses design standards for sidewalks.

### **Upper Oxford Township**

- ZO Section 200 and SLDO Section 200 – Include few definitions for terms relating to recreation and trails.

### **West Nottingham Township**

- ZO Section 201 and SLDO Section 201 - Include few definitions for terms relating to recreation and trails.
- ZO Section 1515 - Includes recreation standards mostly dealing with impacts to structures and transportation infrastructure surrounding recreation facilities.

- SLDO Section 614 -Addresses design standards for sidewalks.

### **Oxford Borough**

- ZO Section 178-8 and SLDO Section 151-5 - Include few definitions for terms relating to recreation and trails.
- ZO Section 178-85 - Addresses outdoor recreation focusing on facility development standards.
- ZO Section 178-87.B - Addresses common open space design including public “Pathways.”
- ZO 178-87C - Addresses common open space ownership and maintenance.
- SLDO Section 151-35.D - Addresses design standards for sidewalks.

### **Summary**

The way in which recreation is addresses in ordinances varies greatly within the Oxford Region. In general, the older ordinances do not address recreation in detail. Given that many recreation features, especially sports fields and trails, are used by residents from multiple municipalities, it might be valuable to consider updating the Region’s ordinances so that they are more consistent. Also, with anticipated future growth there may be opportunities for developers to assist in the acquisition of recreational facilities. It may therefore be prudent to ensure that the region ordinances are consistent in terms of fee-in-lieu ordinances.

## **Summary of Website References**

National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA): <http://www.nrpa.org>

Oxford Mainstreet (OMI), Inc: <http://www.downtownoxfordpa.org>

Oxford Arts Alliance: <http://www.oxfordart.org>

Jennersville YMCA: <http://www.ymcabwv.org/jvvt.html>

## **Figure (Map) Sources:**

**Figure 15-C: Recreation in the Oxford Region and 15-D: Recreation in the Oxford Borough Area**  
Data Sources: Municipal borders, roads – Chester County GIS; School properties – OASD; All protected open space – CCPC.

## **Figure 15-L: Inventory of Trails in the Region Figure 15-M: Oxford Borough Trail and Sidewalk Inventory**

Data Sources: Municipal borders, roads – Chester County GIS; School properties – OASD; All protected open space – CCPC. Sidewalks, Existing Recreational Bikeways – CCPC; State Parks – DCNR; Trail Destinations – CCPC, ORPC.



**Figure 15-O: Oxford Region Trail and Bicycle Plan 15-P: Oxford Borough Trail and Bicycle Plan**

Data Sources: Municipal borders, roads – Chester County GIS; School properties – OASD; All protected open space – CCPC. Sidewalks, Recreational Bikeways – CCPC; Trail Destinations – CCPC, ORPC. Octorara and Mason Dixon Greenway, Oxford Loop Trail – CCPC and ORPC.