OVERVIEW

The Open Space, Recreation, and Greenway Plan is a component of the County’s comprehensive plan, Delaware County 2035, which establishes an overall vision for the future of the County through the year 2035. It also sets policies for development, redevelopment, conservation, and economic initiatives. The Plan provides the County’s 49 municipalities with a framework for the strategic use of public resources to improve the quality of life for all its residents.

Delaware County 2035 consists of a central Land Use Policy Framework Plan and a number of related and interconnected, but more detailed, component plans. Some of these component plans – addressing additional planning-related elements within the County – have already been developed, such as the County Bicycle Plan; more are under development. Each component plan will use the same framework and build off of the land use policies laid out in the Framework Plan. Individual municipal plans serve as a basis for these plans.

The Open Space Component Plan serves as a guide and resource for countywide, multi-municipal, and municipal open space planning efforts. It examines the policies and trends identified in the Delaware County 2035 Land Use Framework Plan with particular regard to open space, recreation, and greenway needs and opportunities specific to the County.

To integrate all of the information, analysis, and goals of this plan into a manageable format, the Open Space, Recreation, and Greenway Plan was organized into four separate volumes:

**Volume I: Open Space and Recreation Plan**
Volume I provides a complete review of municipal, county, state, and federal open space within Delaware County. It includes an inventory of existing open spaces and natural resources, analysis of open space and recreational needs and opportunities, and an overview of implementation methods for municipalities and the County to consider.

**Volume II: Countywide Greenway Plan**
Volume II is Delaware County’s first ever countywide greenway plan. It identifies a Primary Trail Network which connects recreational and cultural hubs via trails, as well as conservation greenways along stream corridors.

**Volume III: County Parks and Recreation**
Volume III specifically examines the Delaware County Parks and Recreation system, and includes long range site development drawings and accompanying narratives for several of the major County parks.

**Volume IV: Public Participation**
Volume IV is the accumulation of public participation materials from the planning process used for the development of the plan. This includes public presentation documents, public comments, meeting agendas and minutes/comments, stakeholder interview lists, and online survey results.
As part of the planning process, three overarching goals were identified to guide the open space planning efforts in the County. They are the result of public participation, consultation with the Open Space Task Force, and an analysis of existing open space needs and opportunities. They also take into account the objectives from Delaware County 2035, along with their respective policies and actions. The goals of the Open Space Plan are:

**Goal 1: Conserve**
Conserve the natural and cultural resources of the County

**Goal 2: Enhance**
Increase and enhance the environmental and/or recreational value of developed and undeveloped lands

**Goal 3: Connect**
Develop a greenway network that connects natural features and people to community and regional destinations

These interrelated goals represent a three-pronged approach to addressing the County’s open space needs and opportunities and long term sustainable quality of life in the 21st century. The goals are indicative of widespread opportunities to continue to conserve, enhance, and connect various features of Delaware County’s open space system. As such, they serve as the basis for both discussion and recommendations made in this plan.
## OBJECTIVES

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<th>OPEN SPACE</th>
<th>COUNTY PARKS</th>
<th>GREENWAY</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Recognize the importance of Delaware County’s natural features as resources to be conserved and enhanced.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Identify, enhance, and expand Delaware County’s open space network in order to serve the needs of the public.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Create a Countywide trail network that enhances quality of life by connecting people and places.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Enhance and expand access to recreational programs for all ages and abilities.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Implement the actions of the Open Space, Recreation, and Greenway Plan to conserve, enhance, and connect the County’s open space network.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Create a countywide greenway network that connects Delaware County’s environmental, recreational, and cultural resources.</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Maintain a County park system that contains county-scale parks, and offers facilities, services, and programs that attract countywide interest and participation.</td>
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The objectives identified in this plan are intended to guide open space planning efforts and policies throughout the County. They represent overarching strategies to address the needs and opportunities recognized within the Plan. Each objective is supported by more specific actions that can be found within the respective section of the Plan. The actions vary significantly – some are short term implementation projects, while others are ongoing policies.

The objectives and actions for each chapter often relate to more than one, if not all, of the three goals. Therefore, objectives and actions are organized by chapter rather than by goal, and reflect the specific needs and opportunities discussed in that chapter.
Open Space

Open space provides significant economic and cultural benefits to the community. According to a report released by GreenSpace Alliance and Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission in 2011, the protected open space system in southeastern Pennsylvania adds an estimated $16.3 billion to the value of its housing stock. It also helps to promote healthy communities by providing residents a place to recreate and exercise within the community. For these reasons, the Open Space, Recreation, and Greenway Plan identifies needs and opportunities for open space within the County.

In order to meet those needs, this Plan proposes a three-pronged approach: Conserve remaining significant natural features, such as woodlands and stream valleys; Enhance existing open spaces through sound stewardship and maintenance and providing high quality park facilities; and Connect open spaces together and to other cultural destinations.

Kent County Park, Upper Darby Township

Recreation Trends

The results of public input show that recreation trends in Delaware County tend to mimic current national recreation trends toward walking and nature watching. There is increasing participation in sports, such as soccer and lacrosse, and greater desire for recreation that emphasizes fitness and wellness. More self-directed programs, such as bicycling, tennis, and socializing, are also strongly preferred in the County.
The open space network in Delaware County consists of resources protected at the federal, state, county, and municipal level. It also includes privately protected lands, such as conservation organizations and homeowners associations. It is important to consider all of these lands as part of the countywide open space network because they contribute to the character of the community while also providing environmental benefits. Together, these open spaces create a wide ranging network that provides diverse recreational opportunities for Delaware County communities, while conserving significant natural features.
GREENWAYS

This Plan recognizes two overarching, yet interrelated purposes of greenways. The first purpose is to conserve contiguous areas of natural features such as stream valley and woodlands in order to prevent further fragmentation of remaining natural corridors. The second purpose is to develop a countywide trail network for recreation and alternative transportation that connects destination hubs and enhances the quality of life for County residents. The two purposes were the basis for identification of two associated greenway networks: Conservation Greenways and Recreation Greenways. The intent of the Delaware County Greenway Network is two-fold: combine Conservation and Recreation Greenways to conserve and enhance natural features of environmental significance, and to connect them to other open spaces and destinations. As such, the planned Greenway Network includes intersecting ribbons of open space along natural and man-made recreational and greenspace corridors across the County.

CONSERVATION GREENWAY

Conservation Greenways emphasize the protection and connection of environmental features. They may follow specific linear natural features, such as a stream, or may connect other open spaces, such as woodlands; they can also serve as wildlife corridors. Stream corridors were the primary resource used to designate the Countywide Conservation Greenway Network.

RECREATION GREENWAY

Recreation Greenways provide access to, on, and between natural features and other destinations. These Greenways are generally classified as trails and may overlap with Conservation Greenways or follow a separate route. They serve as the spines of a network that connects other recreation greenways, parks, open spaces, Central Places, and points of interest throughout the County.
HUBS AND SPOKES

The driving concept behind the Greenway Network was to identify corridors, or spokes, that have the potential to create a connected web of destinations, or hubs.

Hubs are public or private places of interest (i.e., parks, historic sites, downtowns, Central Places, etc.). They can be large open space tracts, such as community and regional parks or nature preserves, but can also include smaller destinations like schools and neighborhood parks.

The spokes in the network are the linear corridors that connect the hubs. They can include public trails or consist completely of natural features and open spaces.
The Countywide Primary Trail Network is comprised of the Recreation Greenways. They were identified at a large scale; as such, they show potential segments, but not specific alignments. The Primary Trails can be considered “planning corridors” for more detailed trail studies in the future. While several Primary Trails have already been constructed, many are just conceptual. As more detailed studies are completed on these trails, alternate routes may need to be considered.

The Primary Trails serve as the main spokes in the countywide network of trails. The purpose behind creating the Primary Trail Network is to direct the energies of the County, municipalities, and trail proponents into developing a trail system in such a manner that they either construct segments of the Primary Trail Network or design their internal trail network to connect to Primary Trails. When combined, the 25 Primary Trails identified form a network of interconnected travel and recreation corridors near and between all corners of the County.

78% of public survey participants identified managing trails within County parks as one of the highest priorities.

70% of public survey participants identified trails as a facility to emphasize in planning over the next 10 years.
PRIMARY TRAIL NETWORK

1: Brandywine Creek Greenway
2: Octoraro Rail Trail
3: PECO Right-of-Way Trail
4: Chester Creek Trail—North Extension
5: Rocky Run Trail
6: Chester Creek Trail
7: Chester Creek Trail—ECG Connector
8: East Coast Greenway (ECG)
9: Blue Route Bikeway—ECG Connector
10: Blue Route Bikeway—Leiper to Kinder Connector
11: Blue Route Bikeway—Leiper-Smedley Trail
12: Media-Smedley Connector Trail
13: Ridley Creek Greenway (North and South Sections)
14: Ridley Creek State Park Trails
15: Blue Route Bikeway—Smedley to Darby Creek
16: Darby Creek Trail—Haverford Township
17: Darby Creek Trail—Drexel Hill Connector
18: Newtown Square Branch Rail Trail
19: Route 252 Bicycle Route
20: Blue Route Bikeway—Ithan-Darby Creek Valley
21: Radnor Trail
22: Forge to Refuge Trail
23: Darby Creek Stream Valley Park Trail
24: Cobbs Creek Trail
25: Heinz Refuge Trail
The Open Space, Recreation, and Greenway Plan also examined the Delaware County Parks and Recreation system. Volume III: County Parks and Recreation Plan, provides guidance regarding how to maximize and enhance the use and function of County-owned parks, open space, and recreational programs. It also identifies unexplored opportunities and makes recommendations for modifications and improvements that will result in a parks system that best serves the needs of County residents long into the future.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES
The Plan identifies several key opportunities for the County parks and recreation system, including:

- Continue to partner with citizen groups, organizations, and municipalities to provide recreational opportunities.
- Implement the site development drawings for the County Parks.
- Act as a convener and facilitator of partners in parks and recreation endeavors including trail planning, multi-municipal planning, and other opportunities that will emerge in the future.

As part of the Open Space, Recreation, and Greenway Plan, the County completed long-range site development drawings for the following six major County parks:
- Clayton County Park
- Glen Providence County Park
- Kent County Park
- Rose Tree County Park
- Smedley County Park
- Upland County Park

At the same time, the County led a multi-municipal effort to develop a master plan for Mineral Hill County Park, including Mineral Hill County Park. These plans will help guide development of the County’s parks.
NEXT STEPS

It will take the combined efforts of many government agencies, organizations, officials, stakeholders, and motivated citizens to implement all of the ideas and actions presented in this Plan.

As an implementing element of the County’s comprehensive plan, Delaware County 2035, this Open Space, Recreation, and Greenway Plan can be used to direct the County’s open space and greenway projects and priorities, as well as provide direction for the County parks system. The objectives and actions listed throughout the Plan provide the path for the County to meet the overarching goals of Conserve, Enhance, and Connect.

The Open Space, Recreation, and Greenway Plan is intended to serve as a resource for local governments. Municipalities should reference this plan when developing their own comprehensive and open space plans, and incorporate the countywide vision as appropriate.

COUNTY
- Technical assistance
- Special purpose studies
- Coordinate open space, recreation, and greenways development
- Natural resource protection guidance
- Open space protection tools
- Education and community engagement

MUNICIPALITIES
- Land use planning and regulations
- Special purpose studies
- Open space, recreation, and greenways development and management
- Land preservation and stewardship
- Education and community engagement

PARTNERS
Organizations and Institutions
- Work with the County and municipalities to provide and maintain open space
- Community outreach

The Public
- Provide input on open space planning and implementation efforts
- Volunteer with recreation clubs, friends of groups, and other organizations

Form partnerships with state and local agencies, local institutions, and non-profits to address community open space needs.

Work together to implement the objectives and actions identified in the Open Space, Recreation, and Greenway Plan.

Periodically evaluate progress, needs, and opportunities in order to best meet the goals of the community.
This project was funded in part by a grant from the Keystone Recreation, Park, and Conservation Fund, Community Conservation Partnership Program, administered by the Bureau of Recreation and Conservation, Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.