



City of Easton Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan

Prepared for:



City of Easton

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Executive Summary

The City of Easton, Pennsylvania, has embarked on an ambitious effort to revitalize its economic base, improve the quality of life for its residents, and attract new residents. A key asset that must be effectively utilized in this effort is the city's extensive system of parks, active recreation facilities, trails, and open spaces.

These assets are particularly important in Easton because of the city's dramatic location. The city perches on a hilly site on the bank of the Delaware River, where the Lehigh River, once at the center of Pennsylvania's coal and iron industries, and the Bushkill Creek, one of the great natural trout streams in the northeast US, join the Delaware. The park, recreation and open space system in Easton occupies a pivotal location in the region, and represents a key amenity to the city's approximately 26,000 residents.

The precise scope of activities addressed in preparing the Action Plan was developed by the City of Easton and follows the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) guidelines for Comprehensive Recreation, Park and Open Space Plans. The planning

process was led by a volunteer Steering Committee of concerned Easton citizens supported by professional staff from the city's departments of planning and public works and its bureau of recreation, as well as a consultant team.

A key early activity for the Advisory Committee was to set goals for the effort – and more importantly – to set expectations for what can be achieved within the park, recreation and open space system. In summary, the principle goals can be characterized as follows:

1. Protect and Enrich Existing Parks:

Current recreation infrastructure and programming allows for a wide array of activities within Easton parks. However, existing facilities could be improved still further, and important repairs from flood damage remain to be accomplished. These needs should be addressed.

2. Provide Ample Recreational Facilities and Open Space:

Though Easton has several beautiful neighborhood and regional parks, there are shortages of active sports fields and not all areas have good access to passive recreation areas and open space. As these needs are better

defined additional open space, parks and active recreation facilities may need to be developed.

3. Downtown / Waterfront Development and Programming:

The city has three excellent parks on the Delaware: Eddyside, Riverside, and Scott. Riverside and Scott contribute directly to the vitality of downtown. Increased recreational programming and supporting facilities would add activity to these parks, and generate earned income for the Recreation Department.

4. Enhance Recreational Opportunities and Programming:

Programming and activity options throughout the park system should be enhanced. Developing an approach that will increase the overall resources available to the community is essential, through both the addition of facilities and enhancements that will permit greater use of existing resources.

5. Complete, Repair, and Connect River Trail Systems:

The Bushkill Corridor Trail is planned and funding for the first stages of the project has been identified. The Lehigh path is largely in place although extensive flood damage has severely compromised its value from the confluence and further along the

Delaware. Improving key connections, such as from the South Side to Hugh Moore Park, and appropriate guide signage to make clearer connections to downtown, will be crucial to making these fabulous trails part of the community. Again, operational and programming capability beyond what is now available will be needed.

6. Enhance Maintenance Capability for Existing and Expanded Facilities:

The City of Easton currently maintains the vast majority of available facilities. This capability is currently pressed to its practical limits. The maintenance capability, like the active programming issues described earlier, should be enhanced. Given very constrained city budgets, opportunities to bring resources and funding from other sources to bear on these demands need to be identified.

7. Enhance Existing Special Events Programming:

The City of Easton provides active support for a variety of organizations that sponsor special events such as waterfront festivals and parades. These activities add vitality and excitement to the community and attract visitors. At the present time the capacity to expand such programming is extremely limited. Again, resources other than the very constrained city budget will be needed

to accomplish this important mission.

Key Themes that Emerged in the Planning Process

Opportunities and ideas were found in abundance throughout the effort. Many programming and development ideas have advanced well into the planning stages and others appear to be within reach but for additional resources. There are strong ideas for creation of trails, additions to parks, additions to active recreation facilities, more active programming and for increasing participation in sports.

Assets were found in abundance. In part because of the dramatic geography of Easton, and in part because of the transition from an industrial town, which has left former mill and railroad properties under utilized or vacant, there are attractive locations for potential additions to the system of parks and open spaces. Some of these are well integrated in ongoing planning, such as for the Bushkill Creek Trail, while others await detailed study.

Constrained Resources are a constant problem for the City of Easton. The current level of programming and quality of maintenance is absolutely

outstanding given that the entire system is supported by less than 10 individuals. The question going forward will be, how can more resources be focused on these potent opportunities?

Functions of the Plan

The Parks, Recreation and Open Space Action Plan is meant to meet multiple needs.

- First, it is a review of all the current facilities and programs to assess their condition and adequacy and to recommend corrections and additions.
- Second, it is an evaluation of the available opportunities to enhance the system and a prioritization of investments in new capacity and facilities.
- Third, it is an evaluation of the financial structures, administration and governance of the system that is focused on ways to improve efficiency and increase capability.

Action Plan Recommendations

Existing Facilities

A careful inventory was made of the existing system of parks and active recreation facilities. A variety of defects, largely minor in nature, some relating to safety, others in equipment or

features that would benefit from being added or modified, were found in the parks and playgrounds and these have been identified in an appendix to this report. These defects covered many types of items including: play features, fencing, cracked paving, trip hazards, tot lot safety fences, play surfaces, graffiti, new drinking fountains, benches and signage. In some cases, items of this kind can be addressed over time in the course of routine maintenance. In other cases more substantial investments may be needed.

In summary, there are a number of specific recommendations regarding existing facilities that are noteworthy.

Very Small Parks

There are eight very small 'vest pocket' sized parks, generally the size of a single house lot. They present maintenance and security problems in some cases. The City of Easton should reevaluate these and consider either selling some of them for reuse by others, or, if they have appropriate orientation, equipping them as community gardens with topsoil beds and fencing so that they could be operated as gardens by nearby residents.

Intensively Used Fields

A careful evaluation of field usage is needed for baseball, softball, football and soccer. At the present time some baseball fields are under utilized, and perhaps require upgrading to bring them into active service. In that context there are multi-use fields where the range of users should be reevaluated to determine if needs can be met at other locations to reduce conflicts among activities. Several of the existing play fields are used so intensively that it is very difficult to maintain the grass surfaces. Certain sports, football and soccer, where participants normally wear cleats, are particularly hard on grass surfaces. The plan recommends that the City of Easton consider investing in artificial surfaces for these fields once the review of uses and assignments has been completed. While there is significant initial cost, and some maintenance will continue to be required, the ability to schedule the fields over a longer season, and to avoid intensive work required to keep the grass surfaces in acceptable condition, likely makes the investment worthwhile. The main soccer/football field at Heil Park may be a candidate for a permanent surface.

The Pools

The City of Easton maintains two pool

complexes, at Eddyside and Heil Park. These pools are well maintained and attractive. However, under current circumstances they put significant pressure on the city from a cost standpoint, largely due to the necessity of hiring lifeguards. While seasonal fees are charged for pool use these fees are not sufficient to cover all costs, and raising these fees enough to cover these costs would almost certainly cause many residents to be excluded from pool use. It is recommended that the pools stay open as they are, and that fee increases, if any, be modest. Like all other recreation, including football, baseball and soccer, the pools cannot be self sustaining.

At Eddyside a strong opportunity to bring private investment to the site exists. It is recommended that the City of Easton prepare a comprehensive feasibility study for the site. Many possibilities exist for attractive and commercially viable activities at this waters edge site. For example, the city could incur the capital cost to provide substantial sewer, water and electric service to pads on the site that could then be used by trailer based food and beverage businesses. Many other possibilities exist, especially combinations of uses with water sports. It should be noted that the Delaware

River beach at Eddyside has been out of service for several seasons due to flood related debris. Use of this site to generate revenue might be greatly enhanced if the beach were reopened, which is recommended to be evaluated as part of the feasibility study.

Track and Field

An important addition to the sports offerings in the City of Easton could be a track and field program. Some interest in operating such a program was expressed to the study team. Track and field activities are attractive because they are based on fundamentals that most people can meet, and, in the realm of the running sports, require that the participant have little more than sneakers and a pair of shorts. Cottingham Stadium is well located for such a program and it is recommended that discussions with school leadership be initiated to make this possible.

New Facilities

Play Fields

Much discussion among the Steering Committee and comments from the public was focused on shortfalls in fields for soccer, football and baseball. While all of these needs were found to be valid, i.e. that there were seasons

and times when all interests could not be accommodated, the most needed additions appeared to be one or more fields that could accommodate soccer and football. Some relief of this shortfall would result from equipping one or two existing fields with artificial surfaces, which would extend their useful seasons considerably. Development of another field was also explored. The hilly topography of Easton makes locating play fields challenging – large, generally level sites are scarce. Possible sites were found along the river valleys, mostly in flood prone areas, but this flaw would not preclude successful design of a field.

For instance, it may be possible to develop potential sites along the north bank of the Lehigh River, such as a former lumberyard site. Similarly there is property adjacent to the railroad on the south side of the river that has long term recreation potential. There is also property on the South Side, east of Heil Park that could be developed for active recreation.

Community Centers

The City of Easton has a number of facilities that function as community centers, with indoor recreation, meeting and classroom spaces. These include the Third Street Alliance, the YMCA,

Boys & Girls Club of Easton, Easton Area Community Center and the Easton Area Neighborhood Center. Interest was expressed in having an additional center in the downtown although a consensus regarding programming and identification of an operator has not yet been developed. This potential should be explored in the future in close coordination with other strategic investments in the downtown area.

Water Access

The Bushkill Trail will open up public access to the banks of the creek. A useful addition to the creek system would be additional water access points where kayaks, canoes and other non-motorized craft might be launched. A public access point on the north side of the Lehigh River is also recommended, perhaps near the Lafayette College boat house.

Neighborhood Parks

One very remarkable opportunity exists to add an open space and focal community feature in the West Ward. The site for this potential square is the lot associated with St. Anthony's Roman Catholic Church at 9th and Walnut Streets. A conceptual plan for a passive park and open space, that could be used periodically for neighborhood festivals, was included

in the Ten Year Strategic Plan for the West Ward, published in June 2005. This site is in private ownership, which may prevent its reuse as a park. However, this neighborhood appears to be under served with open space, and it is recommended that a process of negotiation between the owner and the City of Easton be initiated to identify and eliminate obstacles to its development.

Management and Resources

At the present time the City of Easton has an eight person staff dedicated to parks and recreation operations and maintenance. One of these is the manager of the bureau. Six are parks personnel who are largely assigned to maintenance activity. One individual provides liaison with all sport volunteer and outside organizations, manages league sign-ups for major sports and assists with special events. On a case by case basis, support by several additional people is provided for special events by other departments. This operation is very efficient, park maintenance is generally very good, and the sports programs and pools open each year as expected. Identifying additional resources to add more facilities, improve maintenance, and increase programming quality is necessary.

It is also important to note that other organizations provide recreation programming, both independently and in concert with the city. These include Easton Area Community Center, Third Street Alliance, Police Athletic League, YMCA and the Boys & Girls Club of Easton. Educational programs at Hugh Moore Park are also coordinated with the city.

In the past, sports programs in Easton had been run by an outside, largely volunteer, organization. Over time the key organization involved weakened and, rather than drop the programs, such as little league baseball, the city took over operation of the sport. The current structural model, virtually all city run, is reliable but is severely constrained:

- It cannot readily be expanded;
- Publicity for its programs is uneven, there is real concern that some who may want to participate are unaware of the potential;
- There is insufficient staff time to cultivate sponsorships and other sources of outside support
- New programming opportunities, including special events and cultural offerings, are seldom developed, and there is strong sentiment that much more could be done.

In order to expand recreational and cultural event programming the city will need to increase funding, specifically to add personnel for sponsorship coordination, special events development and publicity. Given the current demands on the City of Easton budget the addition of two to three permanent positions seems very unlikely.

The team has examined three scenarios:

- Add city staff, minimum two, for general outreach, fund-raising and sponsorships, special events, manage with same structure as at present;
- Create structure with full support to existing non-profit entities to run all sports and recreation activities, manage and promote special events only, retain maintenance role;
- Create a new entity, that might be known as a Recreation Commission, and establish it as a non-profit organization. Initially, the city would contract with the new organization and provide it with sufficient funding to get underway. This organization would gradually take over operations of leagues, seek sponsorships and grant funds and develop publicity

programs. Facility maintenance functions would remain with the city. A two year start-up period appears likely to be needed. Given a basic goal of providing more and better services it is the view of the planning team that a new entity is needed. The City of Easton has done a fine job but expansion will require more resources. There are good models for such independent commissions including one in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, that can provide guidance if Easton chooses to establish a new entity.



Children enjoying the play facility at Condran Park



The view from Hacketts Park

1. Introduction

1.1 Existing Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Amenities

The City of Easton, Pennsylvania has a tradition of public appreciation for natural features and recreational activities. Easton's recreation heritage is shaped by its beautiful waterways and dramatic topography. The unique rolling topography, abundant water amenities, and sweeping views shape the identity of the City. Easton is the confluence of the Delaware River, Lehigh River, and Bushkill Creek, each distinct with its own history, ecology, and recreation opportunities. Public parks, water access points, and walking and bicycle paths surround the waterway junctions and link these amenities to the downtown and soon to trail systems throughout Eastern Pennsylvania. Pocket parks, recreation areas, sports complexes, and riverside parks are set among natural features and offer active and passive recreation options to the public.

Easton's topography is an important part of the City's character but often presents challenges to development and the ways that residents access and interact with the waterways and other recreation areas. Extreme topography

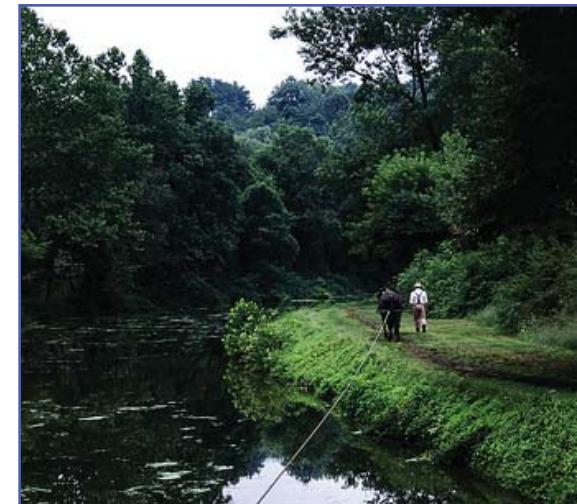
affects Easton residents in that it creates neighborhood boundaries, difficulty in accessing water amenities, land development challenges, and floodplain issues.

The topographical variations can be used as assets. Appropriate access measures and land uses would encourage uses less vulnerable to flood damage such as stairways, bike path, and recreation areas.

1.2 History of Parks, Recreation, and Open Space in Easton

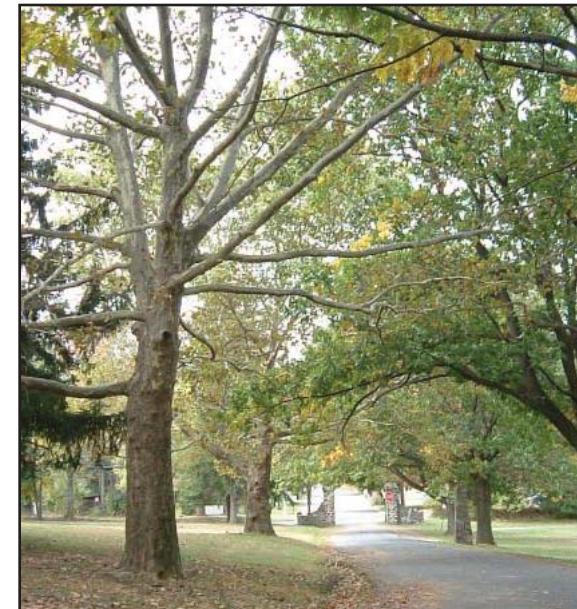
Parks and Recreation Facilities and Events

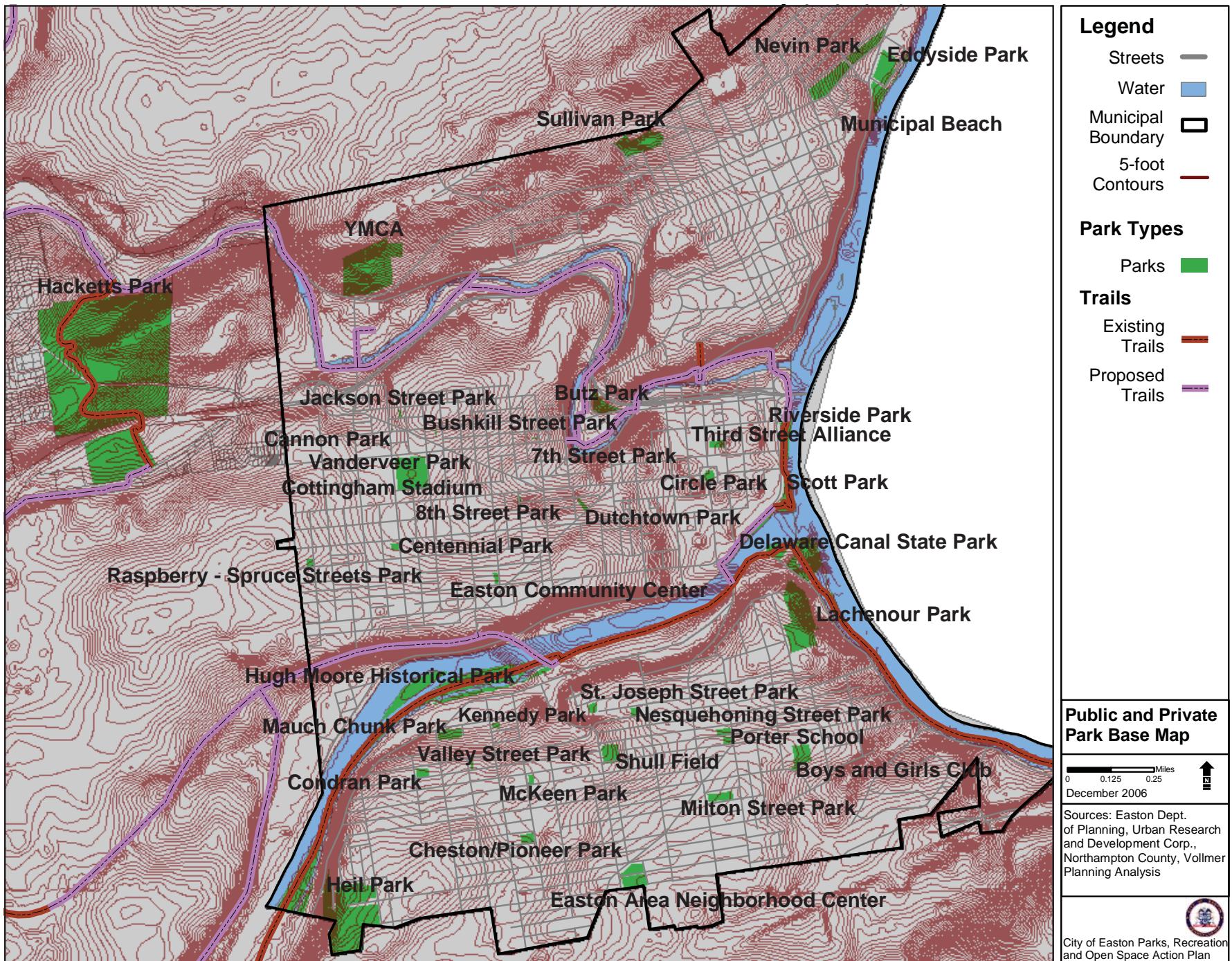
Easton has several venues for public gatherings and special events. When the city was founded in the 1750's, the Great Square, now Centre Square or Circle Park, was a gathering place for residents and travelers. In July of 1776, the square was the site of one of three public readings of the Declaration of Independence and later the site of an Indian Council during the French and Indian War. (Historic Guide of Easton, William Peterson) Centre Square has remained an important gathering place, featuring a special event or festival nearly every week in the summer months. Easton parks have also routinely held public gatherings and events, such as Easton Area



Hugh Moore Historical Canal Park

Hacketts Park





Heritage Day, summer concert series, and sports tournaments. Other parks and recreation areas developed over time as city's population grew and the need for recreation spaces increased.

Pedestrian and transit connections facilitate access for residents to public amenities, parks and recreation facilities, and the downtown business district. During the industrial boom in Easton, roughly from 1875 to World War II, pedestrian and transit facilities connected downtown Easton, the train station, and the industrial sites along the Lehigh and Bushkill to residential neighborhoods. To aid residents in traversing the steep landscape, an elaborate stairway system ran from the South and West Ward neighborhoods to the lower elevation downtown and industrial areas where pedestrian bridges spanned the Lehigh. After most industries left the area, pedestrian bridges were demolished; a few stairways remain and are active in the South and West Wards, but most have been blocked or removed because of safety hazards or infrequent use.

As Easton grew, the City and Lafayette College established pedestrian connections from downtown to the College Hill neighborhood. One active staircase exists on Third Street

and connects Lafayette directly with downtown Easton. This impressive staircase traverses a vertical drop of over 70 feet.

Past Recreation Organization

Structure

Adult and youth recreation activities in the City of Easton have been organized by several formal and informal entities. From the mid-1950's to the mid-1990's, youth sports activities were coordinated by the non-profit Easton Midgets Association. The City provided facilities and maintenance services for the league. When the Easton Midgets Association was unable to continue the youth sports role because of internal organizational issues, the City of Easton Parks Department formed a Recreation sub-department to handle the responsibilities.

Past Plans and Initiatives

The City of Easton has sponsored several planning studies that, when implemented, will affect parks, open space, and recreation.

The *2003 Bushkill Creek Corridor Enhancement Study* focuses on key attributes of the Bushkill Creek Corridor and identifies passive recreation, redevelopment, and Easton-Lafayette College coordination opportunities.

This study initiated a very substantial investment effort to create the Bushkill Trail, for which construction and planning is now underway.

Northampton County Parks-2010, completed in 2002, offers information on the County's municipal open space and natural areas, municipal park acquisition and development, and farmland preservation programs.

The Ten-Year Strategic Neighborhood Revitalization Program for the Easton West Ward Neighborhood, written in 2005, identifies comprehensive strategies to improve the quality of life in the West Ward neighborhood. The plan offers specific parks, recreation, and open space goals, possible funding sources for neighborhood revitalizations, and a proposal to establish a park adjacent to the Easton Community Center site, formerly the St. Anthony's Community Center. If built, the park would become a centerpiece for the neighborhood.

The Two Rivers Area Greenway Plan, prepared for the Two Rivers Area Council of Governments in January of 2005 by Urban Research & Development Corporation, describes regional trail amenities throughout Northampton County and within and

connecting to the City of Easton. The plan recommends specific greenway and trail enhancements throughout the study area and Easton City as well as funding sources and cost estimates. The plan has been adopted by at least 8 of the 17 municipalities covered by the study.

The *Economic Development Plan for the Easton, PA Central Business District*, presented in May of 2006, details strategic initiatives to achieve a prosperous and sustainable economy for the Central Business District. The plan outlines actions to promote riverfront development and encourage park usage.

The Lehigh Valley Greenways Initiative, a DCNR-led effort representing public and private greenway and conservation-minded stakeholders in the Lehigh Valley, has developed resources and identified future projects to save critical natural landscapes in the Lehigh Valley. The concept is to coordinate local grassroots organizations with state agencies to help advance regional conservation work. The effort involves a proposed Bushkill Creek Trail initiatives, which will connect downtown Easton directly to a regional trail network. The City of Easton received DCNR,

PennDOT, and Delaware & Lehigh Nation Heritage Corridor, and Lehigh Valley Greenways grant monies for an urban forestry program. The urban forestry program has several ambitious goals for a 3-year implementation period, including:

- Completion of a shade tree inventory,
- Preparation of a multi-year shade tree planting plan,
- Research for amendment to the Shade Tree Ordinance, and
- Oversight of Community Outreach and Re-Green Programs.

The variety of and resources behind the many existing plans will enhance opportunities for Easton parks, recreation, and open space amenities.

1.3 Need for an Action Plan

Summary of Existing Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Facilities

The City of Easton owns 28 parks which range in size from nearly 100 acres to under one-fourth of an acre. Park types and uses vary widely and include active, passive, waterfront, historic, and neighborhood pocket parks.

Park land area owned by Easton City totals 152.7 acres. Parkland within Easton, including Northampton County, State, and non-profit recreation-owned

Table 1- City of Easton Park Space by Population

Easton City-owned Land Only	
Estimated 2005 Population ¹	26,267
Total Acreage	152.7
Acres/1000 population	5.8
Acreage Need Based on 6.25 Ac./1000 Pop. ²	170.7
Addition Acreage Needed 6.25 Ac./1000 Pop.	18.0
Including All Park Land	
Total Park Acreage	211.9
Acres/1000 population	8.1
Acreage Need Based on 6.25 Ac./1000 Pop.	-
Addition Acreage Needed 6.25 Ac./1000 Pop.	-

¹Lehigh Valley Planning Commission

² Acreage need is based on the National Recreation and Park Association suggestion minimum guideline of 6.25

land totals 211.9 acres.

The Easton City-owned park acreage is just below the National Recreation and Park Association minimum guideline of 6.25 acres/1,000 population. With the inclusion of recreation space inside Easton city limits owned by other entities, total park land exceeds the park area per population guidelines. As part of this study, the consultant and steering committee teams identified additional challenges to Easton's existing system, including accessibility, equipment repair, and facility needs.

Demographic Profile

The population of Easton has remained stable for the past decade. At the 2000 Census, the population was 26,263.

According to the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, the 2005 municipal population was estimated at 26,267 residents. The Planning Commission projects a 2010 population of 26,300 residents. Recent investment in apartment conversion of older commercial buildings may result in a greater net increase in population, but the change is likely to be modest.

Demographic analysis supports the park facilities and recreation programming needs identified by public meetings and the Steering Committee. Easton residents identified a need for passive recreation and elderly recreation options.

According to Census tract analysis, the largest proportion of population 65 years and above is in Tract 144, which encompasses downtown Easton from the Lehigh to the Bushkill and east of 6th Street. Downtown will soon have a strong connection to the Bushkill Creek Trail and possibly an extension of the Palmer Trail, which will expand passive recreation options for downtown residents. Additional water access opportunities are also planned for the downtown neighborhood.

Easton residents under 18 years old make up 21.9 percent of the

population. The highest relative concentrations of Easton residents under 18 years old are located in the western West Ward and South Ward neighborhoods, at concentrations ranging from well over 36 percent to 48 percent of the population. Areas with high concentrations of youth need accessible facilities and strong recreation programming.

Economic Profile

The City of Easton, Pennsylvania, has embarked on an ambitious effort to revitalize the economic base, improve the quality of life for residents, and attract new residents. These efforts are designed to improve the vibrancy and fiscal health of the City.

The top employers in the Easton area include Northampton County, Victaulic Co., Easton Hospital, Binney & Smith, and the Easton Area School District. These employers represent sustainable government, cultural, and business interests in the City.

The City's median household income was \$39,990 in 2000, which is slightly higher than Allentown but less affluent than Bethlehem. Over the next five years, household incomes are forecast to increase by nearly 20%, suggesting real income growth above the current rate of inflation. This growth in

income will increase the buying power of residents, which currently totals approximately \$125 million per year for the City's approximately 10,000 households. (Economic Development Plan for the Easton, PA CBD)

1.4 Purpose and Objectives of Action Plan

The precise scope of the Action Plan was developed by the City of Easton and follows the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) guidelines for Comprehensive Recreation, Park, and Open Space Plans. The Steering Committee developed a series of objectives that the Action Plan should meet. These include:

- Protect and Enrich Existing Parks
- Provide Ample Recreational Facilities and Open Space
- Enhance Downtown / Waterfront



Waterfront Access at Riverside Park

Development and Programming

- Enhance Recreational Opportunities and Programming
- Complete, Repair, and Connect River Trail Systems
- Enhance Maintenance Capability for Existing and Expanded Facilities
- Enhance Existing Special Events Programming

The following goals were added during the planning process:

- Explore Alternate Parks and Recreation Department Organization Structures
- Explore Financial Strategies to Enhance Park and Recreation Resources

These objectives are address in the Action Plan section of this report.

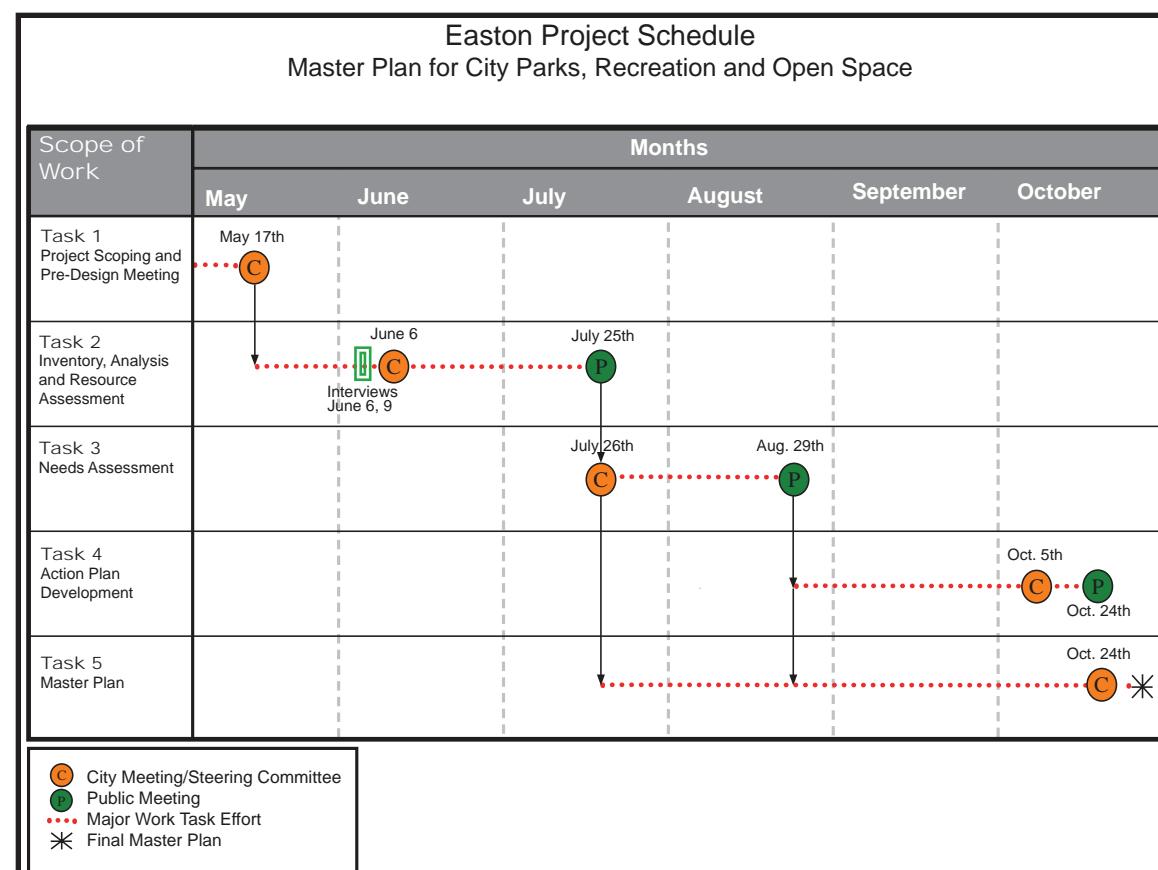
1.5 Planning Process

Process and Participants

The planning process began in May of 2006. The plan was sponsored by a grant from the Pennsylvania State Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. The City of Easton convened a volunteer Steering Committee of concerned Easton citizens supported by professional staff from the city's departments of planning, public works, and parks and recreation.

Members of the Steering Committee include representatives from the City of Easton Planning and Public Works Departments and Parks and Recreation Bureau, the West Ward Neighborhood Partnership, Genesis Bicycles, the South Side Civic Association, Easton City Council, the Downtown Neighborhood Association, the Coalition for Better Neighborhoods, the Delaware and Lehigh Heritage Corridor, and the Easton Main Street Initiative.

The consultant team worked with staff of Planning, Public Works, and Parks and Recreation to conduct a full parks and recreation facility inventory. The inventory, Appendix D of this report, printed as a separate document, includes aerial and GIS images of each park, a list of amenities, venues, sports equipment, and passive equipment, park usage and design observations, and identification of primary user audience.

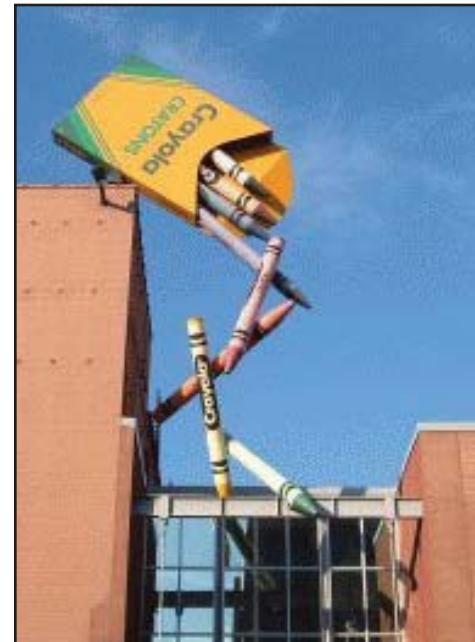


The consultant team then conducted public interviews with key Easton residents and neighborhood representatives identified by the Steering Committee. Through these interviews, Steering Committee interactions, and an initial public meeting, the consultant team compiled a draft list of concerns regarding facilities, recreation programming, and the Department of Parks and Recreation Bureau staff and structure. A list of interview participants and a summary of the issues raised is included in Appendix C of this report.

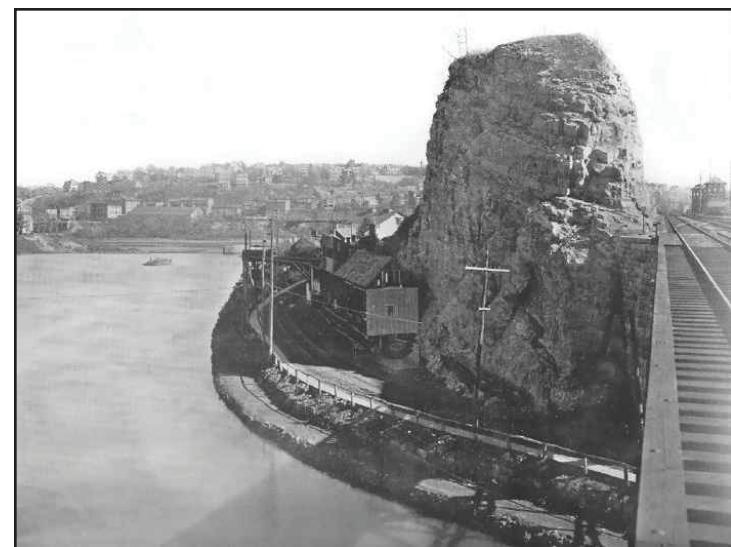
The modified project goals and objectives were then developed into preliminary Action Plan items and presented at the second public meeting. The consultant team gathered public comments and further amended Action Plan items to include recommendations for short and long term goals.

Action Plan

The Action Plan section of this report includes specific recommendations for park improvements, land acquisitions goals, outside entity partnership, Park and Recreation Department management and operations, recreation programming, and preliminary cost projections.



Public Art at the Crayola Factory



Historical View of Delaware River along Route 611 and Delaware Canal State Park

2. Parks and Recreation Department Structure

2.1 Department Organization

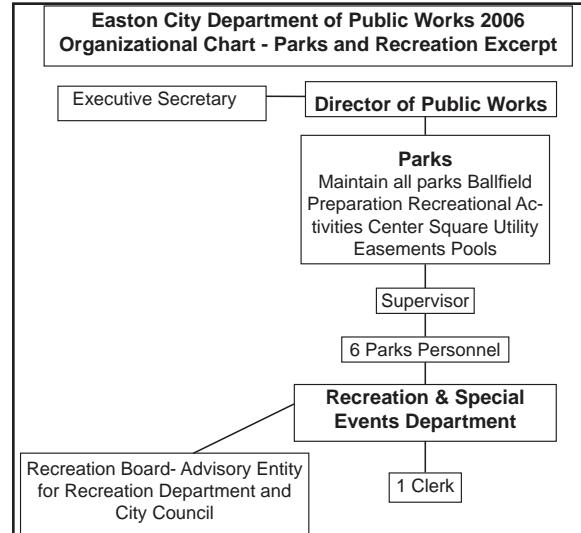
Parks and Recreation Department

The City of Easton Parks and Recreation Departments coordinates special events, and organizes youth sports leagues for Easton residents, but most of its resources go to maintenance of park facilities.

The Parks and Recreation Bureau is organized under the Department of Public Works. The Parks and Recreation & Special Events Bureaus share a supervisor and coordinate on a daily basis. Recreation and Special Events are combined under the same department heading but there is no dedicated special events staff. Responsibilities include maintaining all City parks and sports facilities, organizing and administering City sports leagues, and authorizing and coordinating public and privately-run special events.

Staff

The Recreation Bureau consists of a supervisor, one clerk, six parks personnel, and the advisory Recreation Board. Current Parks and Recreation Bureau staff is responsible for all



Source: Easton City Organizational Chart

City sports league management and equipment, authorization and coordination of public and privately-run special events, and park and sports facilities maintenance. The Department and Steering Committee identified a clear need for additional staff to maintain and expand Bureau responsibilities. There is currently no funding available in the City budget for staff additions.

The Recreation Board is mayor-appointed and City Council approved. Board members coordinate closely with the Parks and Recreation Department and sports league staff to recommend actions to the City Council. The role of the Recreation Board is advisory to City Council.

Private/Non-Profit Involvement

Private and non-profit groups coordinate with the Parks and Recreation Bureau for use of park facilities and staging special events. The following groups offer sports leagues and recreation activities in Easton: the YMCA, Easton Area Community Center, the Third Street Alliance for Women and Children, the Boys and Girls Club of Easton, and ProJeCt of Easton. Specific coordination will be explored in the facilities section of this report.

School and College Involvement

Easton Area School District works with the Parks and Recreation Bureau to share school and City facilities for recreation use. This relationship will be further explored in the facilities section of this report.

2.2 Operations

Public Outreach

Special event advertising is primarily the responsibility of the organization responsible for the event. A special events calendar is posted on the Easton City website for public viewing.

Youth sports programs are currently advertised via mailings sent to each

household with youth that participated in the previous year. Notice is also given to the local newspaper. Residents commented at the public meeting that new participants hear of recreation programming largely through word-of-mouth. Several residents pointed out the need for a wider advertisement campaign to promote recreation programming to a wider audience of residents.

Equipment

A comprehensive official list of Parks and Recreation Bureau equipment does not exist at this time. However, the Parks and Recreation Bureau was able to provide a rough list.

2.3 Financing

Budget Process

The budget is set each year by City Council based upon each Department's projected needs. The Director of Public Works coordinates the budgeting needs for the Parks and Recreation Bureau. A certified playground inspector and professional parks supervisor are hired to inventory the grounds and facilities in the parks and recommend improvements that require increased capital budget allocations. Capital projects are funded as budget surpluses are available.

Table 2- Easton Public Works Equipment		
Equipment	Count	Notes
Push Mowers	-	Unknown Quantity
Sit-Down Mowers	-	Unknown Quantity
Sixteen-foot span mower	2	Roughly 10 years old
Eight-foot Trailer	2	Roughly 15 years old
Sixteen-foot Open Trailer	1	Roughly 15 years old
Sixteen-foot Landscape Trailer	1	Roughly 15 years old
		Roughly 15 years old, one new pick-up will be purchased next year
Pick-up Truck	3	
Dump Truck	2	Roughly 15 years old
Source: Easton Bureau of Recreation		



Shull Field

Table 3- Parks and Recreation Bureau Budget History Summary

	Parks	Recreation	Cultural Recreation
2002			
Expenditure	Not Reported	130,224	
Revenue			54,000
2003			
Expenditure	555,957	116,652	
Revenue			63,000
2004			
Expenditure	579,660	141,293	
Revenue			63,000
2005			
Expenditure	437,349	261,271	
Revenue			104,000
2006 (Preliminary)			
Expenditure	510,782	172,537	
Revenue			Not Reported
Percent of Total Easton Budget*	1.48%	0.50%	
Note: Percent of Total Budget was available only for 2006 preliminary budget values.			
Source: City of Easton annual budget documents			

Expenditures and Revenues

A summary of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Recreation expenditure and revenues for the past five years is included here. Parks and Recreation allocations are configured separately and the Cultural Recreation column represents pool facilities. Budget expenditures are filled primarily by the Easton General Fund, which comes mostly from City taxes.

Revenue values represent swimming pool fees, pavilion and field use fees, and General Fund contributions. Parks and Recreation Bureau fee revenue goes directly into the City general fund, not back to Bureau operations.

Parks and Recreation expenditures make up approximately 1.5% and 0.5% of the overall Easton City budget allocations respectively.

Additional Funding Sources

Parks and Recreation Bureau staff identified several City bureaus that offer services free of charge.

The City has also received several capital funding grants designated for park, recreation, greenway, infrastructure, and other related needs.

Table 4- Outside Entity Contributions to the Parks and Recreation Department

Entity	Service	Estimated Annual Cost Donation
Bureau of Maintenance & Property Management	Parks Materials and Labor	\$10,530
Bureau of Highways	Labor and Equipment on Park Roads	\$8,100
Bureau of Electric	Labor and Materials for Electrical Repair	\$10,108
Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)	Federal Funding for Park Improvements	\$20,000 minimum
DCNR	Grants	various
Private	Grants for Eddyside Pool Improvements, Heil Fieldhouse	various

Source: City of Easton Budget documents

Table 5- Past Capital Funding Grants to the City of Easton

Entity	Use	Approximate Grant Amount
Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)	Road Reconstruction	\$125,000
	Infrastructure Improvements	\$100,000
	Parks	\$25,000
PA Department of Community and Economic Development	Miscellaneous	\$264,000
	Bike and Lighting Improvements	\$296,000
Lehigh Valley Planning Commission	Hometown Streets Program, crosswalks and lighting	\$483,000
	Manmade Wetlands Construction in Sullivan Park	\$12,000
Growing Greener	Park improvement grants	various
Department of Conservation and Natural Resources	Park and Recreation planning	\$25,000
	Signage Grant for Gateways	\$10,000
	Shade Street Grant	\$98,000

*Approximate Values from the Easton Department of Public Works

Mural at Centennial Park



3. Park Facilities

The structure of the Parks Facilities section includes a description of the parks inventory process and results, analysis of park facility issues, and recommendations.

A discussion of non City-owned facilities is also included to give a contextual picture of regional parks and recreation options.

3.1 Inventory

Inventory Process

The consultant team worked with the Bureau of Parks and Recreation to conduct an inventory of City-owned park property, County and State parks, and non-profit park facilities. Consultants toured the major park facilities with the Parks and Recreation and Public Works Department Directors. Facility history, usage, access, expansion plans, and location observations were recorded at this time and supplemented with public comments. A detailed photo inventory was also conducted for each park. Aerial and street context maps were produced to identify location and context of each park in the associated neighborhood. Inventory materials were verified with the Parks and Recreation Bureau and used to

guide design, usage, and other facility recommendations. The complete parks inventory is included as Appendix X of this report.

3.2 Easton Park Facilities

Analysis by Park Type and Neighborhood

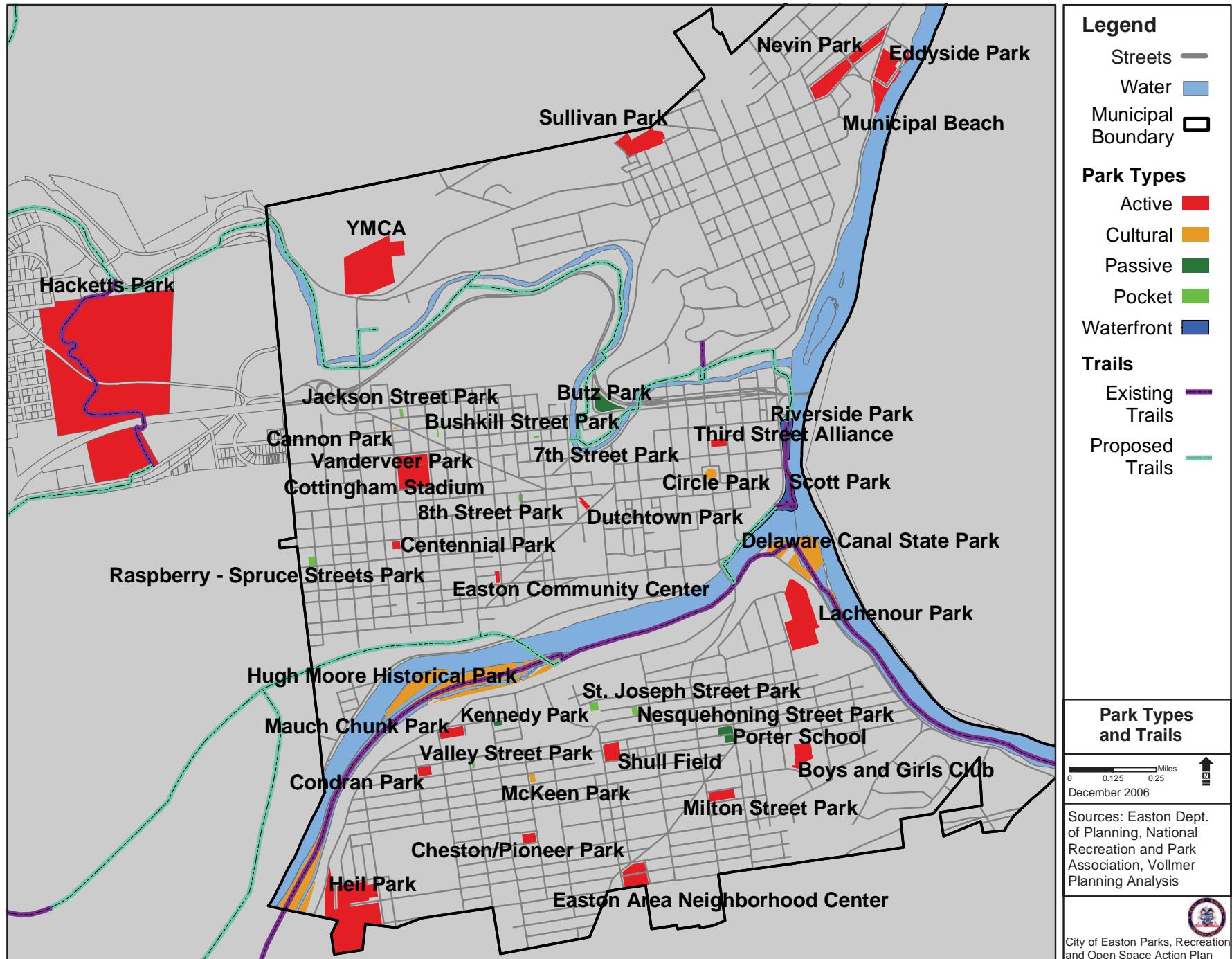
The National Recreation and Park Association has several park use categories by acreage and location, including Mini-Neighborhood, Neighborhood, Community, Metropolitan, and Regional Park types. The consultant team adapted these classifications to fit the topography and neighborhood types in Easton. The table to the left represents an interpretation of the National Recreation Park Association park type designations.

The thirty Easton-owned park facilities, two state-owned park facilities and four privately-owned recreation facilities are broken into five park type groups for purposes of this analysis. Parks in each of these groups will be described by neighborhood.

1. Active – Parks with Playground or other active features
2. Passive – Parks with no active features

Table 6- City-owned and Private Park Acreage and Type				
NAME	TYPE	NRPA Type	OWNER	ACRES
7th Street Park	Pocket	Neighborhood	PUBLIC	0.07
8th Street Park	Passive	Neighborhood	PUBLIC	0.15
Boys and Girls Club	Active	Community	PRIVATE	1.89
Bushkill Street Park	Pocket	Neighborhood	PUBLIC	0.08
Butz Park	Passive	Neighborhood	PUBLIC	1.62
Cannon Park	Cultural	Neighborhood	PUBLIC	0.03
Centennial Park	Active	Neighborhood	PUBLIC	0.31
Cheston/Pioneer Park	Active	Neighborhood	PUBLIC	0.66
Circle Park	Cultural	Community	PUBLIC	0.55
Condran Park	Active	Neighborhood	PUBLIC	0.64
Cottingham Stadium	Active	Community	SCHOOL	3.78
Delaware Canal State Park	Cultural	Regional	STATE	11.82
Dutchtown Park	Active	Neighborhood	PUBLIC	0.29
Easton Area Neighborhood Center	Active	Community	PRIVATE	2.52
Eddyside Park	Active	Community	PUBLIC	3.74
Hacketts Park	Active	Regional	PUBLIC	96.07
Heil Park	Active	Regional	PUBLIC	15.02
Hugh Moore Historical Park	Cultural	Regional	STATE	25.83
Jackson Street Park	Pocket	Neighborhood	PUBLIC	0.14
Kennedy Park	Passive	Neighborhood	PUBLIC	0.20
Lachenour Park	Active	Neighborhood	PUBLIC	8.55
Mauch Chunk Park	Active	Neighborhood	PUBLIC	1.15
McKeen Park	Cultural	Neighborhood	PUBLIC	0.25
Milton Street Park	Active	Neighborhood	PUBLIC	1.27
Municipal Beach	Active	Neighborhood	CLOSED	0.72
Nesquehoning Street Park	Pocket	Neighborhood	PUBLIC	0.28
Nevin Park	Active	Neighborhood	PUBLIC	5.34
Porter School	Passive	Neighborhood	PUBLIC	0.91
Raspberry - Spruce Streets Park	Pocket	Neighborhood	PUBLIC	0.34
Riverside Park	Waterfront	Community	PUBLIC	1.87
Scott Park	Waterfront	Community	PUBLIC	3.31
Shull Field	Active	Neighborhood	SCHOOL	1.47
St. Anthony's Youth Center	Active	Community	PRIVATE	0.26
St. Joseph Street Park	Pocket	Neighborhood	PUBLIC	0.36
Sullivan Park	Active	Neighborhood	PUBLIC	3.98
Third Street Alliance	Active	Community	PRIVATE	0.59
Valley Street Playlot	Pocket	Neighborhood	PUBLIC	0.14
Vanderveer Park	Active	Neighborhood	PUBLIC	1.65
YMCA	Active	Community	PRIVATE	12.52

Source: City of Easton, Northampton County, National Recreation and Park Association, Vollmer Planning Analysis



3. Waterfront –Parks along the waterfront
4. Pocket/Neighborhood –Small parcel-sized parks within a residential area
5. Cultural –Parks with historical or cultural significance

3.2.1 South Ward

Active Parks in the South Ward include:

- Mauch Chunk Park
- Condran Park
- Heil Park
- Shull Field
- Milton Street Park
- Lachenour Park
- Cheston-Pioneer Park
- Boys and Girls Club
- Easton Area Neighborhood Center

Major sports facilities in the South Ward are located at Heil Park, Shull Field, and Lachenour Park. Heil Park is a major facility that includes one of the two Easton pool facilities as well as lighted football and baseball fields. Shull Field is owned by a private entity and used by the City. It features a lighted baseball diamond. Lachenour Park includes a playground, lighted baseball diamond, and passive green space.

Mauch Chunk, Condran, Milton Street,

and Cheston-Pioneer Parks each feature play structures and passive green space. Cheston-Pioneer and Condran Parks include a basketball court.

The Boys and Girls Club of Easton and the Easton Area Neighborhood Center are independently-operated organizations with outdoor and indoor recreation facilities.



St. Joseph Street Park



Mauch Chunk Park



Playfields at Heil Park

Passive:

- Porter School
- Kennedy Park

Porter School, the site of the former City skate park, now includes two bare fenced lots separated by West Burr Street, with grass and concrete ground cover respectively. These two separate spaces within the site are utilized very little. Kennedy Park features benches and passive green space.

Pocket/Neighborhood:

- St. Joseph's Street Park
- Valley Street Park
- Nesquehoning Street Park

St. Joseph's and Valley Street Parks each include a play structure and minimal green space. Nesquehoning Street Park once had a basketball court. It is now an area with cracked concrete ground cover.

Cultural:

- Delaware Canal State Park
- Hugh Moore Historical Park
- McKeen Park

Delaware Canal State Park and Hugh Moore Historical Park are owned by the State of Pennsylvania and feature historic canals and activities. They are regional in nature and cater to

park users statewide. Hugh Moore Park includes water access points for canoeing, a mountain bike and pedestrian trail, and a historical mule-drawn barge ride. The park also features a new large multipurpose building. McKeen Park is owned by the American Legion but maintained by the City of Easton. The park features several memorial plaques and cannons dedicated to Easton soldiers.



Porter School lower lot



Valley Street Playlot

3.2.2 West Ward/Downtown

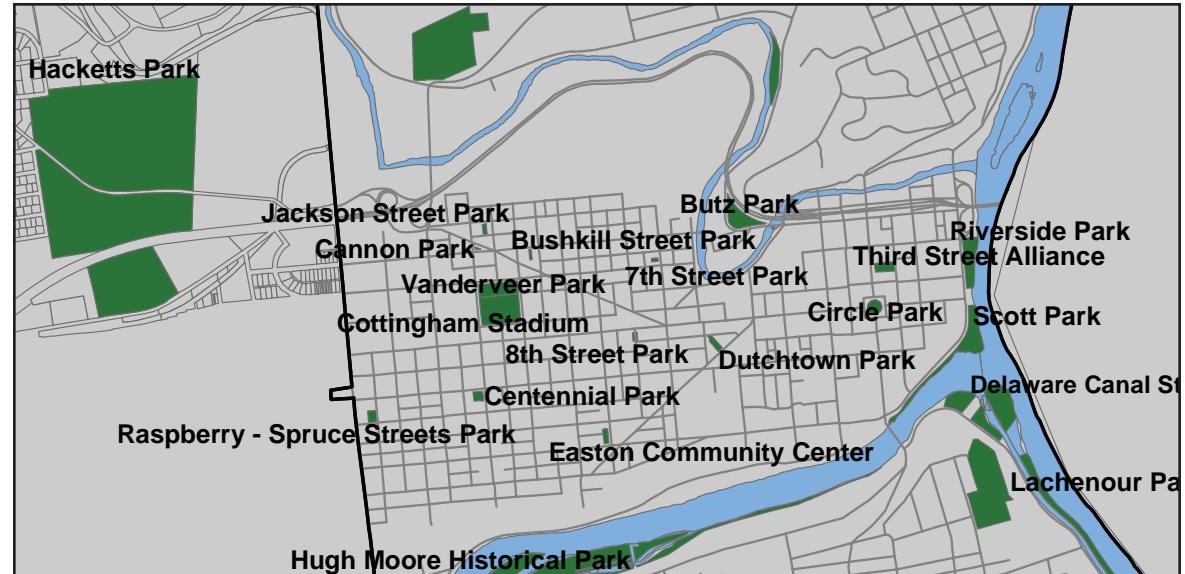
Active:

- Vanderveer Park
- Hacketts Park
- Centennial Park
- Cottingham Stadium
- Third Street Alliance
- Easton Community Center
- YMCA
- Dutchtown Park

Vanderveer, Hacketts, and Centennial Parks provide several play features and sporting facilities. Hacketts Park is located outside of the City limits but owned and operated by the City.

Lighted baseball fields, a community garden, a golf driving range, and a planned Frisbee golf area are main features, along with open green space and sweeping views of the valley below. Vanderveer and Centennial Parks both feature basketball courts and playground features as well as open hardtop areas. Centennial Park also has a colorful mosaic mural.

Cottingham Stadium, adjacent to Vanderveer Park, is owned and operated by the Easton Area School District and is a venue for several Parks and Recreation Department events.



West Ward/Downtown Neighborhoods



Bob Rute Field at Hacketts Park

The Third Street Alliance, YMCA, and the Easton Community Center, formerly St. Anthony's Youth Center, are independently-owned organizations with outdoor and indoor recreation facilities. Dutchtown Park is a shaded park with a play feature, benches and grass ground cover.

Passive:

- 8th Street Park

Eighth Street Park is a public stairway with a steeply-graded green space.



Cottingham Stadium

Waterfront:

- Scott Park
- Riverside Park

Scott and Riverside Parks are adjacent to the Delaware River just east of downtown Easton. These parks feature water access, public art, an amphitheater, and open green space. These Delaware riverfront parks provide downtown Easton with beautiful areas for celebrations and events.



Scott Park

Pocket/Neighborhood:

- Raspberry-Spruce Streets Park
- 7th Street Park
- Jackson Street Park

- Bushkill Street Park

Jackson Street, Bushkill Street, and Raspberry-Spruce Street Parks are small pocket parks that feature playground features and small green spaces. Raspberry-Spruce Street Park also has a large hardtop area and mural project.

Cultural:

- Circle Park
- Cannon Park

Circle Park is the perceived center of downtown Easton and is, in some respects, the central “image” of Easton. It prominently features a 75-foot high Civil War Memorial obelisk centered on the intersection of Third and Northampton Street. A farmers market operates in the square each summer season. Cannon Park is a small triangular park in the West Ward which features a memorial cannon.

3.2.3 College Hill

Active:

- Eddyside Park
- Nevin Park
- Sullivan Park
- YMCA

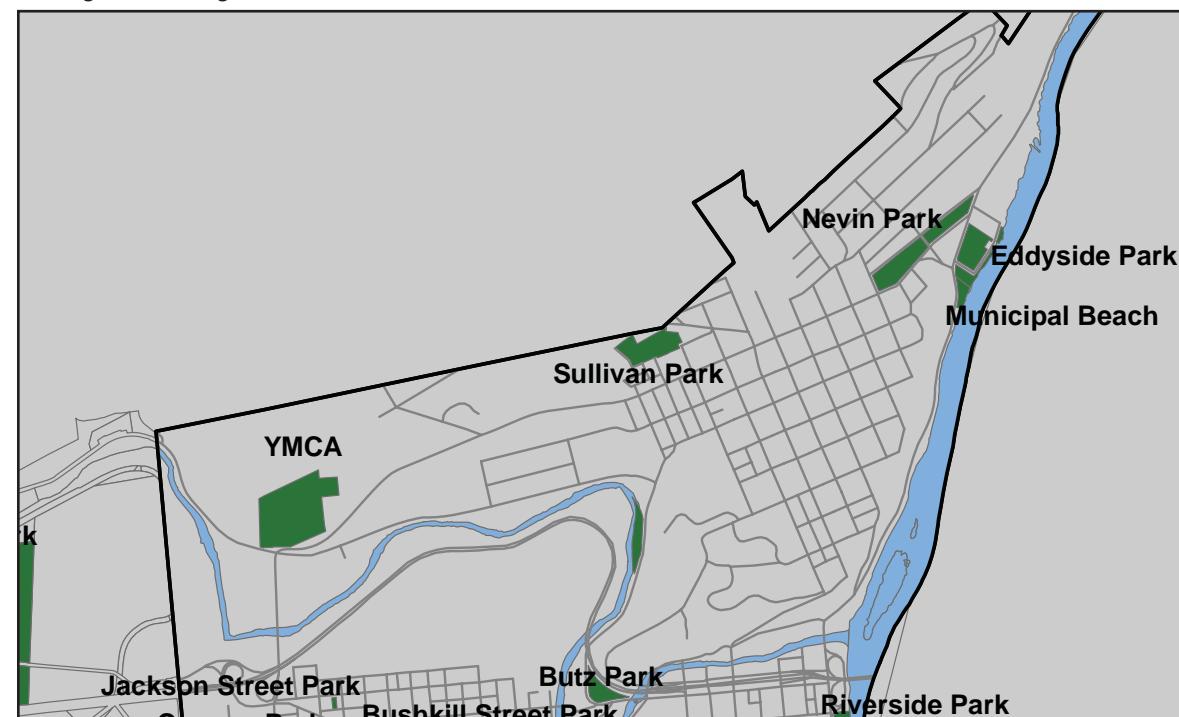
Eddyside, Nevin, and Sullivan Parks

each feature distinct active recreation facilities. Eddyside is the location of the second municipal pool, a sand volleyball court, a wading pool, two large pavilions, and a playground structure. Eddyside once featured connection to the Municipal Beach on the Delaware and could, in the future, again become an important water access point. The Municipal Beach property is currently inaccessible to the public due to maintenance and dredging needs. Nevin Park features a play structure, tennis courts, and a large open green space. Sullivan Park



College Hill Neighborhood

Circle Park



includes a play structure, basketball court, and an open green space.

Passive:

- Butz Park

Butz Park is a preserved parcel adjacent to State Route 22. The topography is extremely steep and no recreation features exist on the park. It is a remainder parcel from highway construction.

Use by Sport and Activity

A summary of active park facilities is offered in the following table. Only Easton-City operated facilities are included in the analysis.



Municipal Pool at Eddyside Park



Pavilion at Eddyside Park



Sullivan Park

3.3 Easton City and Regional Trails

Several local and regional trails traverse or are adjacent to the City of Easton. Easton City maintains two trails, one through Riverside and Scott Parks on the Delaware River and the other through Hacketts Park.

The Delaware Canal State Park and Hugh Moore Historical Park both feature excellent pedestrian and

bicycle trails which are major regional amenities. The Hugh Moore trail is approximately 6.5 miles long and the Delaware Canal State Park trail is approximately 60 miles long. Both trails have significant maintenance issues due to flooding damage.

A regional trail system was recently proposed that will connect downtown Easton to the Delaware Canal, Hugh Moore, and Palmer trails as well as add a Bushkill Creek

trail system. In accordance with the Two Rivers Greenway Plan, Lehigh Valley Greenways Initiative, Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, and the Bushkill Stream Conservancy are awaiting funding support for this effort. A representation of all existing and proposed trail facilities can be seen at the beginning of this section.

Table 7- Easton City Park Facility by Use

	Playground/ Tot Lot	Pavilion	Volleyball	Tennis	Swimming	Softball	Baseball	Basketball	Golf	Amphitheater	Comm. Gardens	Water Access
Bushkill St.	X											
Centennial	X	X							X			
Condran	X											
Eddyside	X	X	X		X							
Hacketts	X	X				X	X		X			
Heil	X	X	X		X	X	X				X	
Jackson Street	X											
Kennedy												
Lachenour	X					X	X					
Mauch Chunk	X	X							X			
McKeen	X											
Milton St.	X	X							X			
Nesquehoning	X								X			
Nevin	X		X	X								
Cheston-Pioneer	X	X							X			
Riverside Park											X	
Scott Park												X
Shull Field								X				
Raspberry- Spruce St.	X											
St. Joseph's St.									X			
Sullivan	X					X			X			
Valley Street	X											
Vanderveer	X	X						X				

3.4 Issues

The Steering Committee and consultant team identified a variety of issues in Easton park facilities that require City attention.

Maintenance

The Parks and Recreation Bureau Supervisor and the six City maintenance personnel do an outstanding job maintaining the wide variety of City facilities. Overall, the park facilities are in fair to good condition. However, there were several specific maintenance issues that became evident during the inventory of parks.

Several wooden fences are in poor repair, notably in St. Joseph's and Jackson Street Parks.

Walkways and benches are in varied state of repair. Seventh Street Park includes uneven and unsafe walkway pavement and broken and splintered benches. Cracked pavement in play areas also exists in Nesquehoning and Mauch Chunk Parks. Nesquehoning Street Park also has cracked pavement as well as garbage and leaf debris, and missing play features.

Cheston-Pioneer, Jackson Street, and St. Joseph's Street Parks are inundated with



Bench and Landscaping Issues in 7th Street Park



Fence and Graffiti Issues in St. Joseph's Street Park



graffiti, which creates an unwelcoming atmosphere and gives the impression of an unsafe and dirty play environment.

Safety

Several parks contain unsafe play features. These include unsafe play equipment, trip hazards, and unsafe playground surfaces.

Milton Street Park contains a broken play feature with two metal pipes protruding from the ground. This could cause harm to a running child and is an impalement hazard.

The wood carpet play surface in Cheston-Pioneer Park has weathered and eroded to expose underlying geotextile liner, which is a trip hazard.

To contain the mulch playground cover, a high timber or plastic border is placed around each play structures. This is a trip hazard for small children. The border presents a dilemma in that it is effective in containing the loose safety impact materials around the play equipment.

Access and Connectivity

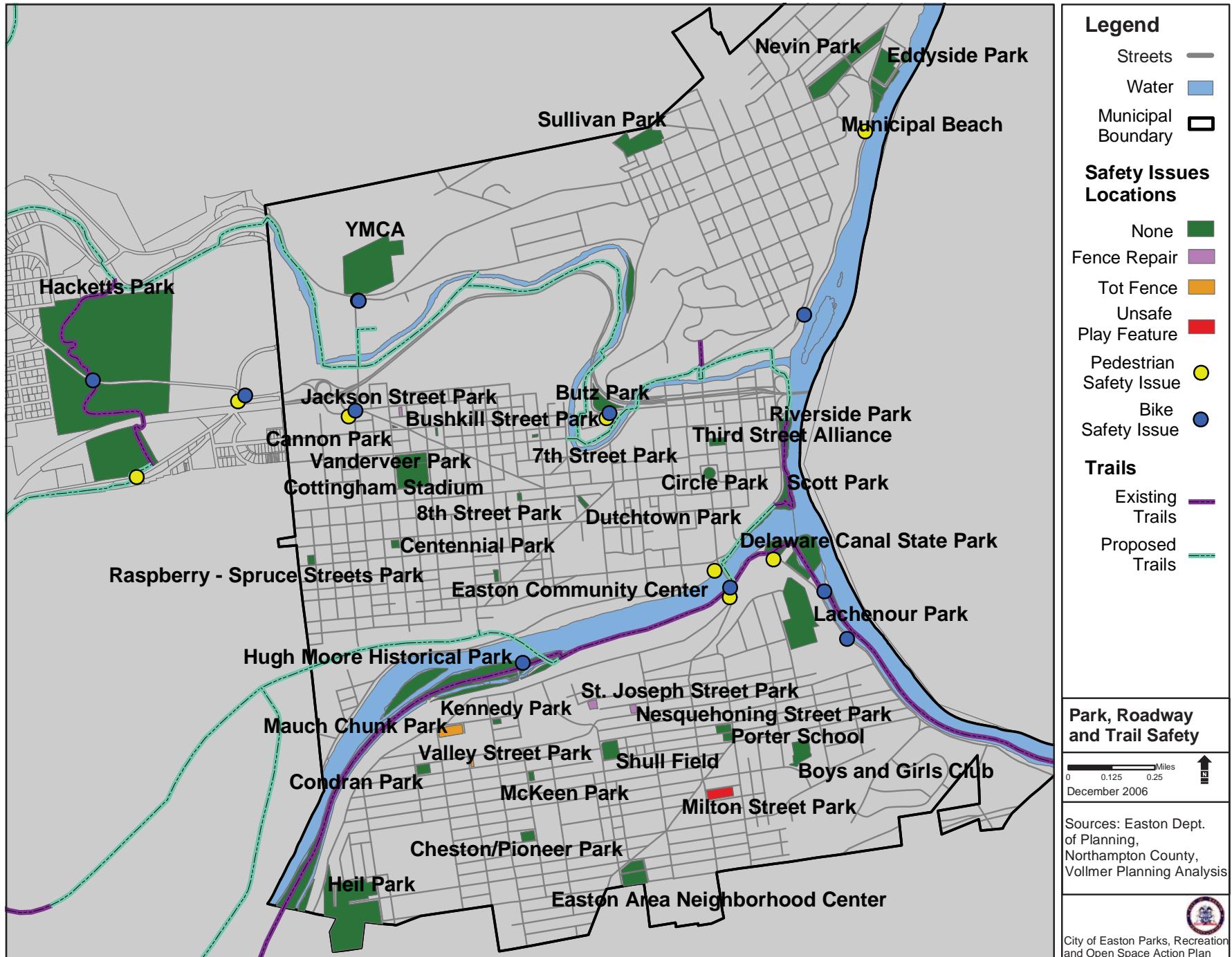
Playground, sports, and recreation facilities should be accessible to all Easton residents. Most Easton parks are within neighborhoods and are



Trip hazards in Cheston-Pioneer Park



Flood-damaged bike path along the Lehigh River



easily accessible to children on foot or by bicycle. However, several major park facilities, including Hacketts Park and regional trail facilities, are particularly inaccessible to residents without cars. Pedestrian and bicycle access to these parks pose significant safety concerns.

Hacketts Park is located outside of the Easton City limits and bordered by Wood Street to the south and bisected by Hackett Avenue. The pedestrian and bicycle connections to the park along City streets are notably dangerous, particularly in the 13th Street and Hackett Avenue area, where a ramp system connects to US Route 22. No sidewalk, bike lanes, or cross walks are provided. The connection to the park along Wood Street is more accessible but there are no pedestrian or bicycle facilities. Access to the YMCA on West Lafayette is by automobile only, as distinct No Pedestrian signs are posted at the driveway.

Pedestrian and bicycle connections to Eddyside Park also pose safety issues. No bicycle lane is provided on Route 611, which is narrow at this point, and sidewalks from downtown to Eddyside along Larry Holmes Drive are narrow and in disrepair.

The bike path along the Lehigh River in Hugh Moore Historical Park is a valuable and attractive resource for Easton and regional residents, but flood damage has significantly damaged this resource. The path is washed away in several areas. Warning signage does not exist at these dangerous points. The path is a very significant amenity and flood damage needs to be repaired as soon as possible.

Pedestrian and bicycle access between Easton neighborhoods is unsafe at several key locations. Connections between Smith Avenue and Larry Holmes Drive between the South Ward and downtown are poor. Narrow or missing sidewalk facilities, poor sight distances for motorists around the rail underpass, and heavy traffic contribute to the problem. These connections are important to maximize park usage and connectivity between neighborhoods.

Existing regional trails, such as the Palmer and Easton Williams Trails, do not have established connections to Easton downtown or neighborhoods. Pedestrians or bicyclists accessing trails from the street network often face unsafe conditions.

Park Features

Several parks are listed by the City as accessible to disabled individuals under the Americans with Disabilities Act. The consultant team believes that these parks have ADA accessible deficiencies. For example, the border around the tot equipment areas does not allow disabled individuals to easily access play features.

Standard Easton park signage identifies the space as Easton-owned and lists park rules and hours of operation, however there is no attempt to "brand" the parks with name signs for each park or surrounding neighborhood.



ADA-inaccessible play structure at Raspberry-Spruce Park

Public and Private Facility Usage

The Parks and Recreation Department and the Easton Area School District share several recreation facilities. The School District allows Recreation Department programs limited use of gym space for winter basketball and the high school track, which is outside of Easton, for the track and field events. School District events take precedence over City recreation needs for facility use. The School District occasionally uses Bob Rute Field at Hacketts Park for night baseball games.

Lafayette College facilities are not open to Recreation Department use.

Private and non-profit organization use Easton park facilities. Sports leagues and other recreation entities pay for field and pavilion use.

Palmer, Forks, and other adjacent municipalities rarely coordinate with Easton Department of Parks and Recreation for cross-municipality facilities use.

Potential Facility Needs

The Steering Committee and public comments identified several facilities that would increase recreation opportunities for City residents.

A central, City-operated community center downtown would offer active, educational, and cultural classes and meeting space in an accessible central location. Though this idea has been active in Easton for several years, no specific site or uses have been proposed. A facility of this type might be especially useful to older residents who represent a large portion of the downtown population.

The Parks and Recreation Department identified the need for an additional combination soccer/football field. Concurrent football and soccer seasons significantly damage the Heil field and cause maintenance problems on the

grass. Program scheduling is difficult with limited facilities for both sports.

The City of Easton park inventory currently lacks formal passive recreation areas. The Easton Cemetery is used for passive recreation and dog walking. Hugh Moore Historical Park offers passive use areas for picnicking and walking. Both facilities are difficult to access from most Easton neighborhoods.

Public comments revealed interest in several new park types, including a dog park and a skateboard park.

Because of City budget constraints, City



Informal Passive Recreation Areas owned by the Easton Cemetery

officials have recently discussed closure of the municipal pools. Most residents do not support this suggestion.

3.5 Recommendations

Maintenance

Various maintenance issues were detailed by the consult team's landscape architects, who have expertise in park design. For example, maintenance efficiency could be increased by extending pavement to facilitate a concrete pad underneath fences, seating structures, posts, and other features grounded in grass. This would simplify mowing and other grounds maintenance and provide a stronger foundation for each feature. Plastic-coated chain link would provide a sturdy and aesthetically pleasing alternative to wood or galvanized chain link fences. Walkways and benches should be repaired or removed. Graffiti should also be eliminated on a weekly basis.

Access

For trail connectivity and enhancement, the City of Easton should collaborate closely with the implementing agencies of the *Two Rivers Greenway Plan*. The Two Rivers plan recommends connecting regional trail amenities through downtown Easton by

establishing additional trail facilities on natural greenways and abandoned rail beds.

Directional signage indicating safe pedestrian and bicycle routes to trails, parks and other City destinations would increase the safety of Easton residents and visitors. Signage on and to trails is important. Adding posted mile marker signs is useful to residents who exercise and crucial to safety of pedestrians and bicyclists as it would enable emergency crews to locate injured trail users with precision.

Safety improvements on sidewalks and roads would improve access to parks



No Pedestrian sign on West Lafayette Avenue, near the YMCA



Basketball Facilities with no team benches or water fountains

and general circulation in Easton. Identified unsafe areas, such as Larry Holmes Drive between Riverside and Eddyside Parks, Hackett Avenue, and the bridge over the Lehigh at Larry Holmes Drive, should be prioritized for improvement. Pedestrian facilities should also be added on West Lafayette Street to enable better access to the YMCA. In terms of responsibility, the sidewalk issues fall either to the state or city but coordination and advocacy for these upgrades is important to the Parks and Recreation Department.

Park Design Features

Park facilities can be more efficiently designed to minimize maintenance and maximize user experience. Several design issues could improve the safety, aesthetics, and user experience of Easton park facilities, including:

- Additional safety features
- Greenway and sidewalk improvements
- Improved ADA accessibility
- Signage standards
- Benches adjacent to sports facilities
- Drinking Fountains
- Additional seating

Specific design and safety recommendations by City-owned park are offered in Appendix B of this report.

Design additions and recommendations will be listed by Action Plan priority in Section 6 of this plan.

Private/Public Partnership for Facility Use

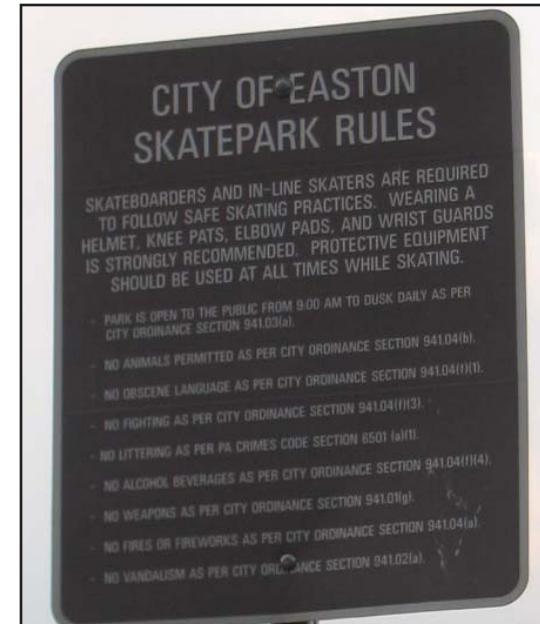
Easton Area School District, Easton Department of Parks and Recreation, Lafayette College, and non-profit entities should increase collaboration on facility usage. For instance, the Easton Area School District could provide bussing to the YMCA and other facilities for after school activities.

The School District and the Parks and Recreation Department should formally discuss options for joint use and funding of Cottingham Stadium. For example, the question was raised whether a running track could be established there that could support a City track and field program.

Easton City lands are often used for non-profit programs. This relationship should be formalized and the entities should explore collaboration with the School District for winter facility usage.

New Park Uses

The Steering Committee identified a need for additional sports facilities. A combination soccer/football field located at a new or rehabilitated park



Rule Posting for the former Easton Skate Park

location would serve this need. Possible land acquisition sites are discussed in the Action Plan section.

The playing field at Heil Park is intensively used for several sports as playing seasons overlap. It is difficult to maintain the field surface. One option to respond to the intense field usage is to install an artificial field surface. The cost and specifics associated with an artificial field will be discussed in the Action Plan section of this plan.

Public and City discussion regarding a downtown community center should continue. A citizens' action group

or City-led action committee should spearhead this effort.

Passive recreation opportunities should be expanded by improving access to existing facilities and ensuring easy access to planned facilities, like the Bushkill Creek Corridor Trail and the East Palmer Trail connections. Promotional signage, neighborhood connection points, and collaboration with owners of the State and regional trails in Easton will ensure increased passive recreation connections.

Several “pocket” parks are underutilized and in poor repair. The opportunity for community gardens or other neighborhood-based development on these lands should be explored.

The Steering Committee indicated the desire for a skateboard park. The previous skate park, located at Porter School Park, was vandalized, fell into disrepair, and was disassembled by the City for safety reasons. Planning a new skate park should be initiated only with youth involvement in design and maintenance, access based on individual commitment to facility regulations, and posted safety and conduct rules.

Dog facilities in Easton are extremely



Pool at Heil Park



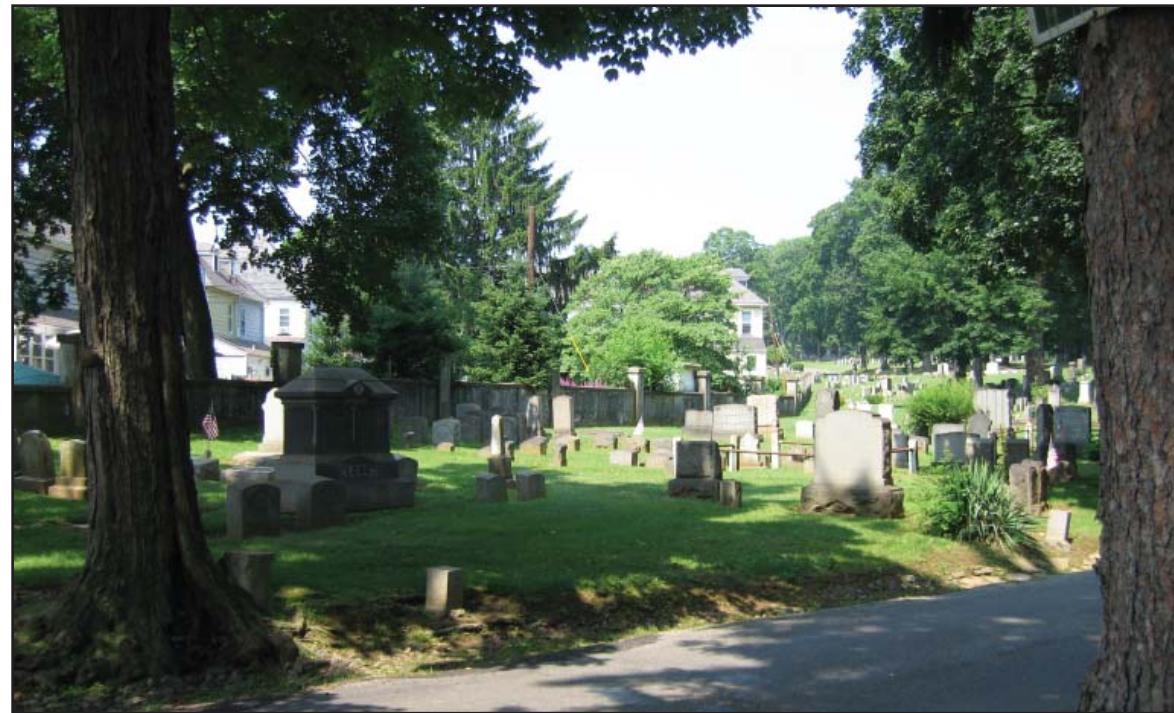
Scott Park on the Delaware River

limited. The Easton Cemetery is the unofficial dog park for the City. Because of past safety issues, dogs are not allowed in selected parks or on City trails. With posted rules for conduct and clean-up, including a leash provision, dogs should be allowed in parks and on trails. The Steering Committee suggested developing a dog park facility if interest persists and dog owners agree on a location and clean-up rules. The unused lower field at Porter School Park, which is already fenced, was cited as one potential dog park site.

Easton Municipal Pools

Easton pools are a valuable asset to the City. They provide refreshing and safe neighborhood entertainment options throughout the summer months. Flood damage to the pools at Eddyside and lower membership have decreased pool revenue in the past several years. Despite this recent membership decrease, City budget constraints should not limit the continued use of the pools in any way.

Revenue-generating programming and possible additional pool park uses include: leasing open land at Eddyside for various uses, increasing pool special events, a modest increase in fees, possible replacement with spray



Easton Cemetery path

parks, and changes in vending policy. To further explore these issues, a Pool Facilities Study should be undertaken. These options will be discussed in the Action Plan section of this report.



8th Street Park

4. Recreation and Special Events Programming

4.1 Existing Programs

Easton Recreation Programs

The Department of Recreation is responsible for organization, scheduling, equipment, and uniforms for each City sports league. The City offers recreational programming in baseball, softball, cheerleading, football, and soccer. Per child, each program costs \$25 plus a uniform deposit for players over twelve. All league play takes place at Easton park facilities with the exception of basketball, which is located in the Easton Area School District gyms. Though there was no track and field program this year, funding for the program is included in the FY 2007 City budget.

Recreation and Cultural Programs Provided by Others

Easton has several non-profit recreation and educational organizations run sports and recreation programs. These programs often use Easton City facilities. These entities include:

- Easton Community Center (formerly St. Anthony's Community Center)
- Easton Neighborhood Center
- Boys and Girls Club of Easton
- Third Street Alliance
- YMCA
- ProJeCt

Some of these organizations have duplicate leagues for sports such as basketball, cheerleading, soccer, swimming lessons, and wrestling. These leagues do not coordinate on programming, facilities, or scheduling.



Baseball Programming at Bob Rute Field

Non-profit sports and recreation activities include:

- Basketball
- Cheerleading
- Soccer
- Swimming Lessons
- Wrestling
- Swim Team
- Ballet
- Gymnastics
- Water Aerobics
- Adult Basketball
- Adult Volleyball
- Senior Arthritic Aerobics

Many organizations offer adult and youth cultural recreation programs and events. A spoken word and poetry program is offered at the Boys and Girls Club of Easton. An informal theatre group is administered at the Easton

Table 8- City of Easton Recreation Programming

Program	Season	Location	Kids Served	Target Group
Baseball	April - July	City of Easton Facilities	450 (w/ softball)	6 - 18 years
Softball	April - July	City of Easton Facilities	450 (w/ baseball)	6 - 18 years
Cheering	April - July	City of Easton Facilities	70	6 - 13 years
Football	Aug - Nov	City of Easton Facilities	160	6 - 13 years
Soccer	Aug - Nov	City of Easton Facilities	120	6 - 15 years

Source: City of Easton Bureau of Recreation

Neighborhood Center. The Third Street Alliance offers ballet classes.

Special Events

The Recreation Department includes a special events coordination role, which is currently handled by the recreation clerk. There are approximately 35 special events each year, including Heritage Day, Creative Arts in the Park, the Winter Nights Program, and the Shad Festival. Independent organizations, largely cultural and corporate in nature, fund and operate each event. The Recreation Department provides park space and coordinates other City Department roles for the special events.

4.2 Issues

Program Options and Organization

During public and Steering Committee meetings, many long-time Easton residents spoke of region-wide sporting events, expansion of recreational programming, and the potential for neighborhood playground-based programs. These comments indicate interest in a wider variety of recreation and cultural programs.

Recreation Department Staff

Easton City sports leagues successfully motivate and involve hundreds of

Easton children each year. However, the Recreation Department staff is extremely limited in the amount of additional programming tasks they can undertake. Currently, one clerk and one supervisor work with the Recreation Board and volunteer coaches and parents to organize league activities, schedules, and equipment. The existing paid and volunteer staff is unable to provide time and resources to additional programming activities.

Volunteer and Community Involvement

Volunteer resources are a valuable resource for the City. All City Recreation Board members and sports coaches are resident or parents volunteers. Volunteers also help to run the special events. Maintaining involvement has become an issue and volunteer numbers have decreased in the past several years.

Residents expressed the need for police, fire, and emergency response personnel involvement in recreation programs to promote mentorship and increase visibility of these groups. There is currently no youth-police involvement, even through the Police Athletic League.

Adult and Water-based Programming

Adult recreation programming is not organized by the City Recreation Department. Several private organizations offer adult sports leagues and use City facilities. Residents showed interest in expansion and increased coordination of these programs.

Additionally, there is no water-based recreation programming from City water access points in the Lehigh and Delaware Rivers. Water programming would enable Easton youth to develop a greater appreciation for these natural

Table 9- Redundant Youth Recreation Programming in Easton

Program	Organization	Facility	Age Group
Basketball	Easton Community Center	Easton Community Center	8 - 16 years
	Boys and Girls Club	City/Boys and Girls Club	Coed 5-18 years
Soccer	City of Easton Recreation	City of Easton	6 - 15 years
	Family YMCA	YMCA	6 - 12 years
Swimming Lessons	3rd Street Alliance	3rd Street Alliance	All
	City of Easton Recreation	City of Easton	Youth
	Family YMCA	YMCA	3 - 12 years
Teen Night Events	3rd Street Alliance	3rd Street Alliance	Teen
	Family YMCA	YMCA	Teen
Wrestling	Easton Community Center	Easton Community Center	8 - 16 years
	Police Athletic League	Valley Elementary Wrestling League	Boys

Sources: Entity Promotional Materials, City of Easton Recreation Bureau

features.

Residents also expressed a desire for more water-based programming at the City pools, where currently only swimming lessons are held.

Organized Cultural Programming

Several public comments recommended additional and coordinated cultural programming, either through a private entity, the City Recreation Department, or a guide of cultural programs.

Redundant Sports Programming

Many of the Easton non-profit recreation organizations offer duplicate sports leagues. These organizations run distinct league operations despite overlapping age groups and sports, as listed below.

4.3 Recommendations

Additional City Recreation Programming

The Recreation Department should work to increase programming options by increasing adult and water-based programming options. The Recreation Department should work with the Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor and the Wildlands Conservancy, both of which have existing programs along the Lehigh



Water Access Point and Cultural Recreation at Hugh Moore Historical Park

and Delaware Rivers. Programming options and special events could include canoeing, kayaking, and tubing.

Eddyside and Heil Pools should also increase programming options. This year, the City held a fund raising party at the Heil Pool, which was extremely successful. Neighborhood events and aquatic programming would increase revenue and resident involvement in the pools.

Volunteer and Community Involvement

With additional recreation programming, there will be an increased need for volunteer support. The Recreation Department staff in charge of coordinating volunteers should reach out to community organization, the School District, senior

associations, and existing volunteers to garner additional support. Staff should also contact police and emergency personnel to explore involvement with youth programming as a community outreach measure.

Collaboration between Other Recreation Providers

The Recreation Department should encourage entities to coordinate events and sports leagues. Multi-entity involvement in sports leagues will increase facility availability, youth involvement, and healthy competition between Easton neighborhoods. Collaboration between entities would also increase the availability of funding for sports leagues and events.

Additional Recreation Department

Staff

Additional programs and increased coordination with outside entities will require additional Recreation Department staff. The additional staff position should organize and promote volunteer involvement, organize cultural activities, promote additional programming, and encourage coordination between Easton recreation entities.



Memorial at McKeen Park



Shad Festival art show at Scott Park

5. Action Plan- Description and Investment Recommendations

5.1 Current Facilities – Recognizing Ongoing Capital Needs

The parks inventory and discussions with key city staff, the Steering Committee and with the public have resulted in recommendations for both minor and more substantial investments in the existing recreation system. In some cases these can be characterized as ongoing improvements that must be recognized as needed and as budgetary items over time. An example of these is the installation of additional water fountains at recreation sites. In other cases these include more substantial actions including consideration of the installation of artificial surface on the very active soccer and football field at the Heil Recreation Center.

Taken collectively, the smaller improvements such as the fountains represent an assumed budget, and plan, to make important upgrades to active facilities on a continuous basis over the coming six-year period. Flexibility in the assignment of budget

from year to year should be assumed but cuts in the overall budget for these items would be ill advised. In summary these planned improvements – which would be installed in an ongoing basis -- include but are not limited to the following:

Safety Problem Corrections

Minor defects in facilities need to be corrected on an ongoing basis. A small capital allocation for this purpose appears in the capital investment budget each year.

Additional Safety Features

Additional safety elements are needed from time to time as equipment is added or modified. Again, a small annual allocation should be recognized in the capital budget.

Sidewalk Upgrades

There are numerous walkways and paths in the facilities. The need to replace cracked and broken sidewalks with new ones should be recognized in the budget.

Drinking Fountains

Fountains are much appreciated by facility users and a program to provide fountains in more locations, over time, is appropriate. Again, an annual budget item for this purpose is

Table 10- Park, Recreation, and Open Space Plan Goals

1. Protect and Enrich Existing Parks
2. Provide Ample Recreation Facilities and Open Space
3. Increase Downtown and Waterfront Development and Programming
4. Enhance Recreation Opportunities and Programming
5. Complete, Repair, and Connect River Trail Systems
6. Enhance Maintenance Capacities for Existing and Expanded Facilities
7. Enhance Existing Special Events Programming

Table 11- Recommendations and Corresponding Plan Goals

Action Plan Recommendation	Original Plan Goal
Repair Existing Safety Hazards	1, 4, 6
New Safety Features	1, 4, 6
Sidewalk Improvements	5, 1
Drinking Fountains	1, 4
Sports Benches	1, 4
Paving around Playground Features	1, 6
Trees	1, 2, 4, 7
Beach and Pool Facilities Study	1, 2, 4, 7
Hacketts Lower Field Improvements	1, 2, 4, 6
Water Access Location Additions	1, 2, 4
Passive Recreation Sites	1, 2, 5
Promote Greenway Links	2, 5
Downtown Community Center	1, 2, 5
Dog Park	1, 2, 4
Skate Park	1, 2, 4
Pool Improvements	1, 2, 4, 7
Re-use of Pocket Parks	1, 6
Reorganization of Recreation Entity	1, 4, 6, 7
Multiple-Entity Coordination	2, 3, 4, 7
Land Acquisition for New Facilities	2, 3, 4, 5

proposed.

Courtside Benches

Additional benches would add to the value of various courts by encouraging spectators and providing a place to take a breather during play. Again, an ongoing budget item should be included in the program.

Paving Replacement

Paved surfaces, usually asphalt, are found in many park locations. These surfaces vary, with some in poor condition. The resurfacing of courts and general play areas with fresh asphalt, and if needed, repainting of court lines, should be recognized as a budget item.

Trees

Shade is very valuable, especially in the quieter areas of parks and playgrounds, and existing trees must be removed from time to time. A budget for replacement and additions of trees should be provided.

To restate, the items described here should be viewed collectively, as a budget for continuous improvements to existing facilities. As proposed, the annual budget for items in this group would be \$50,000 to \$60,000.



Example of artificial municipal field in Nutley, NJ



Under utilized land at Eddyside Park

5.2 Current Facilities— Recognizing Major Capital Needs

Several major investments in current facilities were identified in the course of the planning effort. Each situation required a unique response.

Heil Park – Main Field Surface

As noted earlier in this document the main field, at the south end of the park, is difficult to maintain because it is intensely used. It was suggested that an artificial surface might support more intensive scheduling of the field, which the consulting team believes is true. We have included funding for a new surface at Heil's main field. While funds for this purpose are included in the budget the team would caution that if a large investment in the field is to be made other amenities such as bleachers and additional lighting and fencing might also be desirable. These issues should be the subject of further study before committing to a particular investment program at Heil Park. Funds for such a study are also included in the program.

Lower Ball Field at Hacketts Park

There is a baseball ball field on the lower side of Hacketts Park that has seen little use due to significant

drainage problems. No engineering assessment was conducted as part of this effort. It is believed that a vigorous effort to resolve the problem should be made, as the field would be useful and could be supported by a parking lot created from the former in-line skate area to the north of the creek.

5.3 New Facilities

Land Acquisition

To accommodate the active play field and passive recreation needs identified by Easton residents, it will be necessary in the future for the City to acquire land for additional recreation facilities. Identifying land for possible acquisition is difficult because of the steep topography and because Easton

Table 12- Possible Easton Area Land Acquisition for Recreation Facilities

	Map Location	Location	Owner	Area	Notes
Bushkill Creek Properties					
Simon Silk Mill	1	13th St and Bushkill Dr. and Rt. 22	Various	Together: 15.9 acres	The Silk Mill and nearby sites are planned for redevelopment
Municipal Works Yard	2	500 Bushkill Drive	Easton City	5.6 acres	Municipal Works yard floods frequently and a potentially expensive relocation will be required.
Easton Cemetery Land	3	Along Bushkill adjacent to Active Cemetery	Easton Cemetery	16.41 acres	Unused parcel in Easton Cemetery, in sale negotiation with the Bushkill Conservancy
Norfolk Southern Land 1	4	Along Bushkill attached to Cemetery	Norfolk Southern	7.9 Acres	In sale negotiation with Bushkill Conservancy
Norfolk Southern Land 2	5	Along Bushkill attached to Cemetery	Norfolk Southern	3.25 Acres	Would provide access to North side areas with adequate bridge, in purchase negotiation with Bushkill Conservancy
Lehigh River Properties					
Private Parcel 1	6	Close to Hugh Moore Park	Roundhouse Enterprises LLC	3.39 ac	Recreation and field opportunities
Private Parcel- Riverfront	7	Along Lehigh by Lafayette Boat House and RR Tressle	Lumber Yards, Metropolitan Edison, Easton Economic Development	Together: 7.72	Field and water access opportunities, current location of Lafayette College Boat House, no Public water access
Other					
Private Parcel 2	8	Along SW Easton Boundary, adjacent to residential and industrial uses	Twin Rivers Music, Inc.	4.26	Recreation and field opportunities

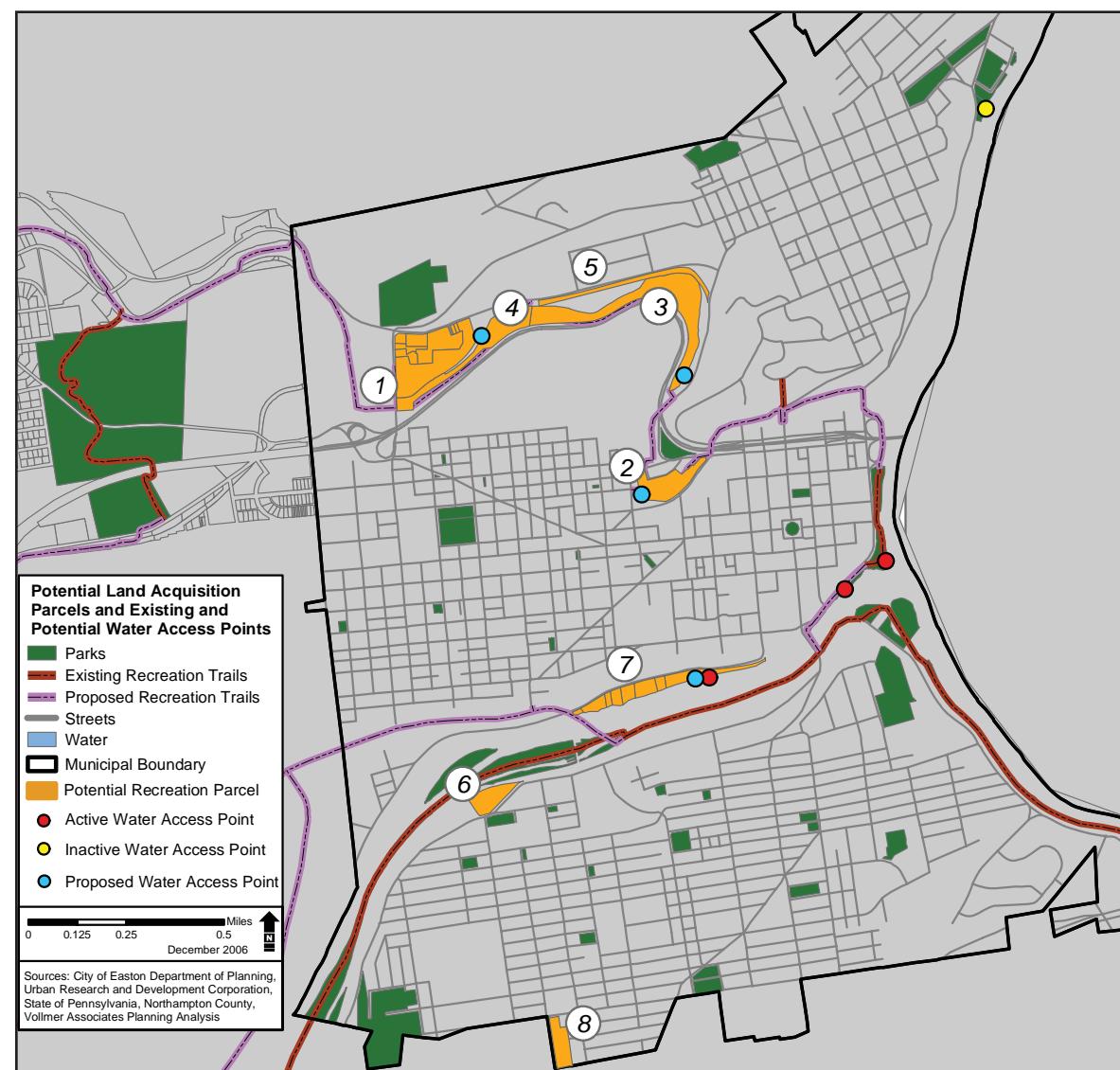
Source: City of Easton Tax Assessment data, Steering Committee and Vollmer Associates Analysis

is nearly built-out. The consultant team reviewed topography and land use information to identify vacant or under-utilized land that is relatively flat where development of soccer or football fields appears feasible.

Easton City and Easton Economic Development, Inc., own several of the targeted acquisition properties. Other parcels along the Bushkill are privately owned and in negotiation for purchase by the Bushkill Stream Conservancy and the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor, the organizations planning and implementing the Bushkill Trail along the Creek from Hacketts Park to downtown Easton. The remaining parcels are under private ownership and require negotiation with owners for acquisition. All parcels were observed to be under utilized or vacant and large enough for recreation facilities.

Sports Field

The Steering Committee and public comments revealed the need for an additional soccer and football field. A combination soccer/football fields requires a land area of as much as 120 yards by 120 yards for a professional competition-sized facility. Areas large enough to accommodate a sports field include the Lumber Yard, the Municipal



Possible Land Acquisition Parcels, Water Access Points, and Regional Trail Locations

Works Yard, the Silk Mill, and Private Parcels 1 and 2.

Passive Recreation

Easton residents identified the need for additional passive recreation lands. Residents frequently use Easton Cemetery as a pedestrian and dog-walk area. Easton Cemetery officials are receptive to continued public use of the cemetery properties, but are in negotiation to sell an unused parcel along the Bushkill Creek to the Bushkill Stream Conservancy and the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor. The Trail Conservancy is also in negotiation to purchase two parcels adjacent to the creek and the cemetery owned by Norfolk Southern Railroad. These parcels will offer additional passive recreation opportunities and a possible trail access point from the north side of the creek. The City has encouraged the Conservancy to purchase these parcels to preserve valuable passive recreation lands. This project will provide a very significant additional amenity to the City of Easton.

Water Access

Additional water access points would facilitate the use the many valuable water resources in Easton. Water access points could be used for environmental education, and water-

based recreation programming, such as rowing, canoeing and kayaking. There are several public water access points located in Hugh Moore Park along the Canal and the Lehigh River, but residents would benefit from additional points both along the north side of the Lehigh and along the Bushkill Creek. The Lafayette College crew boat house is located on the north side of the Lehigh on land owned by Easton City and leased to the college. The facility could be expanded and combined with the adjacent former lumber yard parcels to form a public water access facility with a public boathouse and parking area large enough to accommodate boat trailers. This area is also one of the potential future play field sites and a combined project at this location on the Lehigh could meet several goals.

Acquisition Phasing

The timing of land acquisitions vary with availability of funding, identified facility needs and property availability. In order to stage land acquisitions to reflect budget, land use, and programming constraints, land acquisition recommendations are broken into short and long-term categories.

Short-Term Actions

Short-term land acquisitions include parcels is being negotiated by the Bushkill Stream Conservancy and those owned by Easton City. Additional passive recreation and water access sites could be developed at low capital cost and purchase negotiation should be encouraged in the near future.

Long-Term Actions

Long-term acquisitions include both large and small privately-owned parcels as well as those parcels with stable existing uses. The Simon Silk Mill properties are mostly vacant, conveniently located, and together represent a land area that is ideal for recreation needs. The Bushkill Creek Corridor Enhancement Study, prepared in 2003 by LandConcepts, advocates redevelopment of the properties for economic development, community center, and athletic uses. (*Bushkill Creek Corridor Enhancement Study*, p. 13-18) The City will need to coordinate recreational development with these redevelopment efforts as they proceed. This plan is now adopted City policy.

The Municipal Works Yard is located on a large parcel on the north side of the Bushkill Creek. It will be challenging to find a suitable area to relocate the yard and given the "double" cost of building

a play field and relocating the yard, this option is not advisable at this time.

Private parcels along the south bank of the Lehigh should also be considered long-term acquisition. Redevelopment of these properties will require securing funding sources, negotiation with the owners, and substantial development costs.

5.4 Key Items for Further Study

Pool Operations Study

A recurring discussion during the planning effort was the future of Easton's two pools, at Eddyside and Heil Park. While it was agreed that the pools were an important community asset, it is also clear that they represent a recurring cost that is burdensome to the city budget. A separate analysis should be conducted of the pool operations that considers fee structures, concession management, potential modifications such as the replacement of a pool with a spray pool and other options. Such an analysis will allow the City of Easton to make informed decisions about the future of the pools, and, potentially how to reduce the burden on the city budget.

Greenways and Signage

One of Easton's greatest recreation

and open space assets is its pivotal position at the link between two major trail systems, the Delaware and Lehigh and the proposed Bushkill Trail. The city itself controls an important link between the two, along the Delaware across Scott and Riverside Parks. The city also has a substantial existing trail in Hackett's Park, known as the Palmer Trail after the township in which Hackett's is located, that will become a link to the Bushkill Trail as that trail is developed. It is recommended that the city celebrate and promote these linkages with a program of signage in both the downtown area and in Hackett's. An analysis and design for such a signage program should be conducted in the near future.

Pool and Municipal Beach Facilities Assessment

Several usage and financial issues need to be explored and addressed at the Heil and Eddyside pools and the Municipal Beach. First, what is the best long-term use for the combined Eddyside/Municipal Beach property? Many, fondly remembered, positive activities including river access for kayaking, canoeing and swimming, and regionally known amateur basketball tournaments have occurred here in addition to the pools at Eddyside. However, the beach is closed as a result

of flood damage, and the adjacent property is under utilized.

These properties may offer the City of Easton an opportunity to achieve a useful public-private partnership that both produces activity and fun at the site, and that generates some revenue. Rather than suggest a specific direction for the future of these well known properties the consulting team, on the advice of the Steering Committee, is recommending that a special study be conducted of the potential to generate activity on the sites with the help of private concessions. Funds to explore both the site design and economic opportunity issues at the site are shown in the budget as are some capital funds that might be needed to launch the new uses.

As noted earlier in this report, the pools at Eddyside and Heil are recommended to remain operational. Additional or supplemental uses could include water spray features and revenue. The City should consider initiating a Pool and Municipal Beach Facilities Study to discern the best use for the properties.

5.5 Structural Organization

The current organization of the Easton Parks and Recreation Bureau

includes one supervisor, one clerk, six maintenance personnel, and a volunteer advisory Recreation Board. The Bureau is currently responsible for special events management, sports league organization and management, facility maintenance and management, and equipment storage and management.

Staffing

Bureau staff and the Steering Committee identified 3 areas for which additional staffing is required: gaps in marketing of special events, sports league support, especially sponsorships, and coordination of cultural activities. Though existing staff work effectively and accomplish a great deal, it is not realistic to believe that these very substantial extra duties can be accomplished with the present staff.

The Bureau of Parks and Recreation has recently sought grants to supplement their staff with a part-time Coordinator of Tourism and Special Events. If successful, the Coordinator will be responsible for facilitation of special events and programs, coordination with non-profit organizations, and the promotion of Easton sports and recreation programs.

The consultant team strongly

recommends that this position be full-time, rather than part-time as proposed. The prohibitive issue here is funding, given the City budget constraints. Successful coordination of the roughly thirty special events in Easton each year involves marketing, logistics, and communication with other City departments. In addition, increased marketing and promotional capacity for sports leagues, coordination of leagues, equipment, and maintenance, facility use, and business sponsorship of recreation activities will require a significant time commitment. The performance expectations for the additional staff position should be expanded and the City should continue to seek funding for the position. The consultant team believes these activities can be a fertile source of additional resources.

Marketing and Sponsorship

The Parks and Recreation Bureau should expand the marketing and sponsorship of programming. Currently, sports league advertisement begins approximately three months before each respective sports season. Mailings with notice of registration are sent to each family that participated in the previous year and notice is given in the local newspaper. New participants hear of recreation programming largely

through word-of-mouth. Several Easton residents pointed out the need for a wider advertisements campaign. The Easton Area School District organizes flier hand-outs in classrooms, which would advertise recreation activities to a variety of age groups.

Parks and Recreation Bureau staff should also explore business sponsorship for special events and recreation programming. The Coordinator position should solicit local business sponsors for each sports team in each City league as well as each special event and cultural activities.



Three of the 70 Business Sponsors for Lancaster Recreation Commission sports leagues

Multiple-Entity Coordination

The Parks and Recreation Bureau should maximize coordination with Easton Area School District and Lafayette College facilities. Currently, the School District allows Recreation Department programs limited use of gym space for winter basketball and the high school track for the track and field program. School District events take precedence over City recreation needs for facility use. The School District occasionally uses Bob Rute Field at Hacketts Park for night baseball games.

The major City sport facilities are located on the periphery and, in the case of Hacketts Park, outside of the Easton City limits. Ideally, sports facilities would be located within Easton neighborhoods for maximum accessibility to Easton residents. The Recreation Department should formalize the ongoing discussions of collaboration with the School District on use of Cottingham Stadium, which is located in the heart of the West Ward residential neighborhood. There are concerns about field over-use, which could potentially be addressed by collaboration on the addition of artificial field turf. The School District has also offered coaching staff to teach and mentor the City recreation program coaches. The Recreation Bureau should

Example: Lancaster Recreation Commission

The Lancaster Recreation Commission is an intergovernmental nonprofit agency. The Commission partners with Lancaster Township, Lancaster City, and the School District to fund provide funds and facilities to support the recreation programs offered to Lancaster Township and City residents. Twenty years ago there were three staff members. Today the Commission has 30 full-time staff and between 30-100 part time staff, depending on the time of year.

The Commission offers a wide range of programs. These include numerous sports leagues serving children and adults, summer camps, cultural programs, and school year sports needs. Staff coordinates games and classes like bingo, dance, and wellness programs as well as 18 special events, including the Lancaster Senior games, holiday parties, and monthly luncheons. The Family Services division successfully ran 17 additional all-ages events, including the New Year's Eve Countdown Lancaster 2005, Easter Egg Hunt, Family Film Series, and a Teen Idol Contest.

Only 17% of the operating budget is funded by tax dollars provided by established public funding allocations from Lancaster City, Lancaster Township, and the School District of Lancaster. The remainder of the budget is derived from participation fees, donations, business sponsorships and federal and other grant funds. The Commission owns no property and instead uses tax-supported School District and City and Township facilities for all programs. (Lancaster Recreation Commission 2005 Annual Report)

initiate a discussion with the School District on both of these issues.

The Easton Area School District encompasses Palmer and Forks Townships, Martins Creek, Riegelsville, and the City of Easton. Coordination with park and recreation staff in

each of these municipalities would greatly increase recreation and park opportunities for Easton residents. There are several established recreation organizations in the region with which Easton recreation entities can coordinate, including the Palmer Township Athletic Association, and

the Forks Township Youth Sports Organization.

Lafayette College facilities are not open to Recreation Bureau use. Collaboration with Lafayette is difficult to coordinate because of highly-trafficked College facilities and the usage fee requirement. Given additional management and coordination resources there may be an opportunity to enlist Lafayette students and faculty in programs that would benefit Easton citizens such as sports coaching, mentoring, performing arts education, and marketing. The Parks and Recreation Bureau should formally explore these options to take full advantage of capabilities found at the College and to strengthen College programs focused on education, the arts, and physical development.

Recreation Entity

Recommendations in this study can not be fully implemented without additional funding resource development, staff, additional operating strategies, and capital improvements. The Easton Bureau of Parks and Recreation is limited by a strained City budget. Bureau functions rely primarily on general tax funds and recreation fees.

The necessary staff to enable expanded

operations, coordination, and programming is not available within the current budget and substantial increases are unlikely. The Steering Committee suggested exploring a restructuring of parks and recreation functions to access a wider variety of financial resources and increase public involvement, marketing, and sponsorship. The consulting team researched several alternatives for restructuring of the current Recreation Bureau structure. The following options could meet these goals:

Option 1: Increase Staff and Operating Strategies, i.e. Increased City Funding

Option 2: Increase Staff, Operating Strategies, and Create Fully Developed Non-Profit Organization and Volunteer Coordination

Option 3: Create Recreation Operations Entity Independent of City Government

Option 1 - Small Increase in City Budget

Recreation Organization Option 1 involves increasing staff and employing alternative operating strategies. Option 1 depends on public funding for increased staff to facilitate and promote special events and increase sponsorship

and promotion of Easton organization sports and recreation programs.

Option 2 – Larger Increase in City Budget

Recreation Organization Option 2 includes measures from Option 1 as well as encouraging a formal collaboration of Easton-area recreation organizations. Recreation Department coordination of and with non-profit recreation organizations would reduce redundancy in programming, encourage facility-sharing among organizations and entities, and improve the overall recreation experience for Easton residents. Option 2 would also encourage coordination of the large volunteer population in Easton.

Option 3 – Form a New Operating Entity

Option 3 involves the formation of a distinct non-profit recreation entity to operate all Easton City recreation programs and special events. It could be named the Easton Recreation Commission, and could provide coordination between Easton non-profit recreation organizations, the City of Easton, the Recreation Board, the Easton Area School District, and neighboring municipalities.

All recreation programming, special

events, marketing, and business sponsorship activities would occur through the Recreation Commission. The Recreation Commission construct would establish a system that would replace the recreation program arm of the Parks and Recreation Department. The Parks Department would continue to provide all maintenance to recreation facilities, which would remain in City ownership.

The Recreation Commission structure could be funded by a combination of Easton City, School District, business sponsorship, recreation fees, and federal grants. Similar recreation entities are formed as non-profit 501(c)(3) organization under the Internal Revenue Code. This tax structure makes the organization eligible for a wide range of funding, including federal, state, tax deductible business and personal contributions. This form of organization is the only type eligible to receive funding from charitable foundations. Expanded funding would enable the Recreation Commission to offer Easton residents more recreation, cultural, and special event opportunities.

The Easton Area School District and neighboring municipalities could also benefit from involvement in the

Recreation Commission by coordinating after-school services and facilities and offering students and residents increased regional recreation options.

Most Pennsylvania recreation commissions are multi-municipal and authorized by the Pennsylvania Intergovernmental Cooperation Law (Act 177) which allows municipalities to work together by adopting an intergovernmental agreement to share ownership and control of a service. An intergovernmental agreement can include two or more municipal governments and school districts. If neighboring municipalities or the Easton Area School District do not wish to be involved, an Easton-only Recreation Commission might still be of considerable value given the structure of the tax rules.

The first steps in the formation of the Recreation Commission is to initiate a transition process whereby the interested recreation organizations, the City, the School District and neighboring municipalities coordinate to form the structure of the organization. DCNR offers a Bureau of Recreation and Conservation Peer-to-Peer technical assistance program, a community recreation and parks consulting service. The service would match the interested

parties in Easton with a professional who has training, knowledge and experience in formation and management of a recreation entity.

5.6 Conceptual Parks and Recreation Department Budget

Conceptual Capital and Operating budget projections were formed as part of this plan. The proposed capital and major maintenance budget include all recommendations discussed in the Action Plan, including additional facility and maintenance recommendations. The tables also reflects assumptions regarding additional funding sources, private support, and continued City budget support.

The operating budget for the recreation expansion scenario includes 2005 actual budget values for reference as actual budget outlay. Assumptions include federal, state, private, and City financial support of the recreation entity, City in-kind contribution by way of facilities usage, and additional staff hires.

There are two critical ideas expressed in the conceptual Capital and Operating Budgets. The first is that recreation capability and park lands are of enormous value to the City of

Easton and should be considered a core element in the city's revitalization strategy. The budgets recommend increasing the depth and scope of available programs and facilities as well as include additional facilities to reflect this importance.

The second idea is that programming and facility expansions require additional resources, new partners, and entrepreneurial strategies. The Recreation Commission option, discussed previously, is the strategy that we believe is best suited to achieve this expansion. The budget expresses this in that it shows essentially flat contributions by the city – reflecting the city's tight fiscal circumstances – and increasing revenue from other sources through the Recreation Commission. This scenario is an entirely achievable outcome, as demonstrated by the Lancaster Recreation Commission and other examples.

The Conceptual Operating Budget that has been prepared for this plan, Table 14, is actually quite conservative, yet it achieves a near doubling of recreation resources in five years, without increasing city operating budget contributions.

Table 13- Capital and Major Maintenance Budget

Key:	D = design	C = Const.	S = Study										Six Year Totals	
All figures in thousands (\$000s)													(Actual Dollars)	
Action Item	Category	Instances	2007		2008		2009		2010		2011		2012	Total Project Cost
Repair Existing Safety Hazards	Safety	Several	5	C	5	C	5	C	8	C	8	C	8	C \$39,000
New Safety Features	Feature	Several	5	C	5	C	5	C	8	C	8	C	8	C \$39,000
Sidewalk Improvements	Safety	Several	8	C	8	C	8	C	12	C	12	C	12	C \$60,000
Drinking Fountains	Feature	15	6	C	6	C	6	C	6	C	6	C		\$30,000
Sports Benches	Feature	15	3	C	3	C	3	C	3	C	3	C	3	C \$18,000
Paving- Playground Features	Improvement	MANY	15	C \$90,000										
Trees	Feature	20 per Year	12	C	12	C	12	C	15	C	15	C	15	C \$81,000
Eddyside & Beach Master Plan(1)	Reuse Study	1	45	S	65	D	150	C	150	C			50	C \$460,000
Hacketts Lower Field	Improvement	1	15	C										\$15,000
Water Access Locations	New Facility	3			10	S	25	D	35	C	35	C	35	C \$140,000
Passive Recreation Sites	New Facility	2			15	S	25	D	50	C	50	C	50	C \$190,000
Downtown Community Center(2)	New Facility	1			25	S	25	D	90	D	600	C	400	C \$1,140,000
Greenways & Signage (3)	Access	Several	15	S	25	C	25	C	25	C	15	C	10	C \$115,000
Dog Park (4)	New Facility	1	5	S	10	C								\$15,000
Skate Park	New Facility	1	15	S	30	D	100	C						\$145,000
Pool Improvements	Improvement	1							50	C			50	C \$100,000
Total Capital Outlay by Year (2006 dollars)			\$149,000		\$234,000		\$404,000		\$467,000		\$767,000		\$656,000	\$2,677,000
Source of Funds -- tentative														
City of Easton General Fund			\$100,000		\$100,000		\$150,000		\$150,000		\$200,000		\$200,000	
City of Easton Bond Proceeds					\$100,000		\$100,000		\$200,000		\$250,000		\$200,000	
Intergovern Transfer (State/Cnty)			\$50,000		\$40,000		\$80,000		\$80,000		\$150,000		\$150,000	
Private Support (4)					\$20,000		\$60,000		\$50,000		\$70,000		\$100,000	
Estimated Total All Sources			\$150,000		\$260,000		\$390,000		\$480,000		\$770,000		\$650,000	
I. Plan will focus on economic opportunities at Eddyside														
2.No clearcut program or sponsor has been identified -- numerous ideas raised														
3.May be eligible for transportation funding														
4.Additional staff assumed to develop outside support														

Table 14- Conceptual Operating Budget for Recreation Expansion Scenario								
Parks and Recreation Operating Budget	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Advertising	500	500						
Machinery & Tools	34,000	34,000	36,000	36,000	34,000	34,000	34,000	34,000
Overtime	15,800	15,800	15,800	15,800	15,800	15,800	15,800	15,800
Repairs & Maintenance	60,650	60,650	65,000	60,650	60,650	60,650	60,650	60,650
Salaries	538,977	538,977	540,000	530,000	540,000	538,977	538,977	538,977
Supplies	81,096	81,096	82,000	81,096	81,096	81,096	81,096	81,096
To other Institutions	12,455	12,455			12,455	12,455	12,455	12,455
Travel Expenses	500	500	500	500	500	500	500	500
Utilities	32,000	32,000	32,000	32,000	32,000	32,000	32,000	32,000
Contribution to new Recreation Entity			75,000	70,000	65,000	65,000	65,000	65,000
Total City Operating Outlay	775,978	846,300	826,046	841,501	840,478	840,478	840,478	775,478
Advertising			5,000	7,500	7,500	7,500	7,500	7,500
Salaries			55,000	55,000	55,000	55,000	55,000	55,000
Supplies			1,500	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000
To other Institutions			20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000
Utilities			1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500
Reserves			2,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000
Total New Entity Operating Outlay			85,000	90,000	90,000	90,000	90,000	90,000
Total Outside Support & Earned Income			20,000	30,000	40,000	45,000	55,000	60,000

Appendix A:

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Photo Credits:

City of Easton Bureau of Recreation

Vollmer Associates

Holly Yvonne – Flickr.com photo of Welcome to the City of Easton, (<http://flickr.com/photos/lauryfam/>)

Seth W. – Flickr.com photos of mountain biking in Easton (<http://www.flickr.com/photos/sethw/>)

“Easton to Allentown on CNJ Trackage Rights”, from www.gingerb.com, Mt. Ida Photo - southwestward view, circa 1961, photographer unknown

Appendix B: Design Commentary

Easton Parks and Recreation Plan

Comments on Inventory Photos by Drew Arnold and Terra Edenhart-Pepe, Landscape Architects, Vollmer Associates LLP

6.30.06

Safety Surface

Synthetic tile system contained in concrete border for areas that may flood. Synthetic mulch for other parks

Standard Signage

A simple pipe arch with an identification sign would give the playground some identity.

ADA Accessibility

Many of the parks are listed in the Department of Recreation inventory as ADA accessible. However, the play surfaces are generally dirt, mulch, or grass, which are not suitable surfaces for ADA accessible play spaces. A concrete or compacted gravel path leading up to the play surface is ideal. Use concrete or asphalt only for access to play equipment where flooding is an issue (to avoid washout).

Litter Receptacles

Bins with smaller trash opening would be more functional without collecting water and serving as a dumpster. Litter receptacles should also be installed with concrete footing for permanent anchoring to make them less vandal-prone.

Drinking Fountains

Drinking fountains are not available in any Easton City park. Access to water would be especially useful near sporting fields, courts, or other recreation. An ADA Accessible water fountain would be preferable.

Benches adjacent to play fields

Benches would be a useful addition in team sport areas like basketball or volleyball courts.

Paving around feature will decrease maintenance

Fences, benches, bleachers, trash cans, and other park features would benefit from being set on a concrete pad. A concrete pad on the perimeter of each feature would decrease grass and weed maintenance. A foot-wide concrete strip along each fence would eliminate the need for chemical grass deterrents and repetitive weed whacking up to the fence fabric.

Mulch beds for large trees

Similar to a concrete base, a defined mulch bed around each tree would decrease maintenance around tree bases and clearly define the tree area.

Playground/tot lot proximity to street

Where play space is directly adjacent to the street, a dividing fence (42" high) should be required for safety reasons. Valley Street Park is a good example of a location where a boundary would increase safety. A chain link fence with black PVC coating would be economical and aesthetic in that it would blend in with the surroundings.

Trip Hazards

The perimeter (border) of the safety surface around play equipment should be flush with the play surface and the adjacent ground to minimize tripping hazards. Many parks have rubber boarders to mulch play area that are above grade compared to the surrounding surfaces, which poses a trip hazard for children.

Designated Areas

Play spaces should be separated by different materials and boundaries in order clearly define uses, age group-appropriate spaces, and features.

Tree Planting and Thinning

Some playgrounds would benefit from shade whereas others would benefit from tree pruning to let more light in, allowing the understory (turf, ground cover, etc.) to grow.

Table 15- Easton Parks Design Issues Inventory

Short Term Issues								Long Term Suggestions						General Design Suggestions					
Park	Unsafe Play Feature	Unsafe Fence	Cracked Paving	Trip Hazards	Graffiti	Tot Lot Safety Fence	Missing Sports Feature	ADA Accessibility Problem	Playground Safety Surface	Possible Artificial Playfield Surface	More Seating/ Picnic Tables Needed	Drinking Fountains	Team Benches	More Shade Trees	Signage	Paving around Features	Tree Mulch Beds	Usage Separation	Litter Receptacle Design
7th street		X		X						X					X	X		X	
Bob Rute Fields, Hackett																			
Bushkill St.																			
Butz																			
Centennial			X							X									
Centre Square																			
Cheston/Pioneer			X	X						X			X	X					
Condran			X							X			X	X					
Eddyside Park			X							X			X						
Hacketts- Lower																			
Hacketts Park																			
Heil Park			X							X	X	X			X	X			
Jackson St		X			X					X			X						
Lachenour Park				X						X	X		X	X					
Mauch Chunk			X	X			X			X	X		X	X					
McKeen																			
Milton		X		X						X	X				X	X			
Nesquehoning		X	X												X				
Nevin Park				X						X	X		X	X					
Porter School																			
Riverside																			
Scott Park																			
Spruce/Raspberry			X							X	X		X	X					
St. Joe's		X		X	X					X	X		X						
Sullivan				X						X	X		X	X					
Valley Street				X			X			X	X		X						
Van Dyke Park																			
Vanderveer			X	X						X	X		X	X					

Appendix C: Stakeholder Interviews

Participants

Carl Schumacher, City of Easton Parks Bureau

Joe Cuvo, Recreation Board, West Ward resident

Robin Porter, downtown resident and arts

Sherry Acevedo, Delaware and Lehigh Heritage Corridor

Tomias Hinchcliff, Owner, Genesis Bikes

Dean Young, Director, Boys and Girls Club of Easton

Ken Brown, City Council

Tina Woolverton Planning and Redevelopment Authority staff

Dave Hopkins director, City of Easton Public Service

Bill Mineo, Delaware and Lehigh Heritage Corridor

Julie Dunavan, downtown resident

Sandy Vulcano, City Council president, South Side resident

Kim Kmetz, Downtown Main Street manager, College Hill resident

Ken Hank, Recreation Board, South Side resident

Lehigh Valley Planning Commission Staff

Anita Mitchell Director, Easton Community Center

Ted Toth, City Maintenance/Labor Supervisor

Barb Kowitz, City of Easton Planning Department

Gordon Heller, Director, Northampton County Parks

Sandy Paul, Redevelopment Authority, downtown resident

Cathy Stoops, West Ward resident, Weed and Seed/Elm St

Walt Mushlitz, Easton Recreation Board, West Ward resident

Lori Metz, YMCA

Greg Canfield, Recreation Board, College Hill resident

Forrest Myers, Recreation Board, West Ward residents

Jennifer Miller, Easton Recreation Board, West Ward residents

Bob Freeman, PA state representative

Alan Abeshaus, owner, Circle System Sportsgear

Wayne Unangst, director, Easton Cemetery

Pam Panto, City Council vice president, South Side resident

Ellis Weitzman, Easton Recreation Board, College Hill resident

Bruce Zansitis, Easton Recreation Board, West Ward resident

City of Easton

Recreation and Open Space Plan

Points Raised by Individuals Interviewed as a Component of Project Start-up

Summary of Issues, Suggestions and Follow-up Actions

Vollmer Associates LLP

Interviews conducted June 6 and 9, 2006

This summary of comments reflects issues raised by more than 20 individuals. Some comments are repetitive, some contradictory and issues that were emphasized varied considerably. This is a quick report on those wide-ranging comments.

Issues:

Pools

Funding problems and suggested closings

Pools have a hard time keeping employees

Pools have substandard and financially unproductive concession stands

Trails

No good map of city paths, trails, etc.

Delaware Canal trail is missing south of Lehigh River due to storm damage

Signage linking downtown to trails is minimal

Trail connection from downtown to D&L towpath at Hugh Moore is bad at Rt 611

Bikes

Safety issues on bike path along river

Signage for bikes is confusing heading to Hugh Moore Park

No mile markers on bike path for emergencies – how do you tell someone where you are?

Staffing & Personnel Support

Need to get community/business organizations to support kids programs

Need a city staff member to be in charge of community relations

and special events

Need active programs for residents in the neighborhood parks

Need a staff person to manage ordering uniforms, inventory of equipment, and sports leagues

Different groups organize each special event and they are not coordinated

Linkages

Roads and intersections to Eddyside are dangerous

Community cut off from rivers: limited water access, dangerous road crossings, and natural barriers.

Transportation linkages to and from parks are not good by sidewalk or public transportation

Highway barrier effect of Larry Holmes Drive has kept park usage down

No public walkway to community gardens in Hackett's Park. It is difficult to get there without a car because public access on streets has been closed off.

Facilities

Vandalism is sometimes a problem. Example: graffiti and the Condran Park benches that are pulled out of the cement

Not very many safe park opportunities for little kids because summer programs at the parks have been canceled due to poor registration turnout

Need for a community center that is downtown

Not enough storage space for sports equipment

The beach on the Delaware at Eddyside needs to be reopened. It is closed due to flood debris and funding is needed for equipment to remove debris.

Safety

Need to reestablish bike police presence in parks

People associate downtown Easton with gangs and danger; an image change is needed

Police officers do not have time to visit the Easton Community Center and the DARE police officer is retiring.

General

Add fishing to city recreation signs and facilities
Add park space in West Ward, possibly at St. Anthony's Beach should reopen on Eddyside
Need to enhance the pedestrian environment and facilities downtown and linkages to parks and other neighborhoods
Need to look at city's long term funding strategies to enable these changes and the associated staffing needs.
Families need an outdoor place downtown after visiting cultural activities, i.e. Crayola factory and museum
Sports fees are low. Adequate support for recreation services require public subsidy.

Opportunities and Recommendations:

New Facility Proposals

Skatepark: Along with other uses for maintenance and community-watch purposes. Could the city build it and have the Y manage it? Facility would have to be managed with controlled access, attendants, and fees.
St. Anthony's Square proposed park project- widely supported
A community center similar to the Boys and Girls Club with indoor recreation and hall
Rutt Field in Hackett Park could be used for soccer fields
Turn 500 ft long wall along Delaware river into an arts project
Consider artificial turf on Heil soccer/football field
The old train station by Harlan and Walters Houses could be made into a community garden
500 Bushkill Drive, the city public service complex, could be moved to a different location and that land could be used for new fields
School facilities are available for public recreation uses as long as schools are not using them. Better coordination of this would be helpful to alleviate field shortage issues.

New Programming

Promote a water trails program on the Lehigh River with canoeing and kayaking, like the Wildlands Conservancy has done with Lehigh Sojourn.
Support Police Athletic League in reviving their recreation programs

Pools:

Stronger marketing for pool parties, business activities, etc.
To keep employees: decent hourly rates
Riverside summer concerts should be replicated elsewhere
Pocket parks could add summer concerts and movie nights
Eliminate redundancies in recreation programs and possibly combine programs to make them stronger (PAL and Youth Center both do wrestling and middle school basketball)
Encourage pocket park neighborhoods to take ownership of their parks. Consider promoting organization meetings, annual block parties, programming, the addition of small pavilions, and neighborhood resident surveillance
Consider partnerships with the Easton Garden Club for community gardening efforts
Start a children's neighborhood watch program city-wide
Encourage "park attendants" similar to those in the County Park system; retired people who monitor parks, check pavilions for reservations, etc.

General

More foot traffic is important to the success of downtown
Take better advantage of churchgoers on Sundays and special events attendees to enliven downtown
Traffic calming to help enhance access to parks, especially at Larry Holmes Park
Consider an analysis of the utilization of parks to identify the most and least popular facilities
Perform an assessment of building on most underutilized parks to enhance the city's tax base
Also coordinate with Palmer and Forks, as they are also part of the school system.
Encourage younger people to volunteer for recreation leadership positions.
A comprehensive trail, path, and bike brochure or map should be designed.



VOLLMER ASSOCIATES LLP

Engineers
Architects
Landscape Architects
Surveyors
Planners