

PARKS, OPEN SPACE AND GREENWAYS PLAN

■ TODAY'S CONDITIONS

Across the nation, easy access to parks and open space has become a new measure of community wealth – an important way to attract businesses and residents by guaranteeing both healthy communities and economic health. Recent research indicates that the health outcomes of individuals are determined to a large degree by the environments in which they live. According to the Center for Healthy Communities, environmental factors unrelated to the health care delivery system – like air and water quality and access to parks and recreation – are vital to a healthy life. Businesses are free to shop for an appealing location and today, according to the Trust for Public Land, prefer communities with a high quality of life, including an abundance of open space, nearby recreation and pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods.

Parks, open space and greenways provide a variety of benefits that contribute to livable communities including economic, environmental, recreational, educational and health benefits.

THE BENEFITS OF OPEN SPACE

According to the *1995 Allegheny County Greenways Plan*, parks, open space and greenways provide a variety of benefits that contribute to livable communities. Some of these benefits include:

- **Economic benefits** – attracting and retaining businesses, increasing property values by making communities more desirable, enhancing place identity, and reducing public costs through better management of natural events such as flooding.
- **Environmental benefits** – protecting natural areas, protecting and improving water quality, improving air quality, reducing flooding and related stormwater damage, and protecting wildlife corridors that link habitats.
- **Recreational and transportation benefits** – providing opportunities for rails-to-trails, commuter bikeways, and riverfront development, and enhancing road and highway corridors.

- **Educational benefits** – providing outdoor classrooms for children and adults.
- **Health benefits** – increasing opportunities for exercise and reducing stress.

DEFINITIONS

The following definitions are provided for the purposes of this Plan. Some types of facilities, such as trails, may fit more than one definition.

Conservation Areas: open spaces, primarily undeveloped land, that have the specific purpose of protecting natural resources.

DCNR: the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

Greenways: corridors of open space that serve to link natural resource-based or manmade features. Greenways may incorporate both public and private property and be either land- or water-based. Greenway corridors often follow abandoned railways, canals, ridge tops, rivers and stream valleys. Greenways can have many functions:

- **Conservation Greenways:** unimproved corridors primarily intended for natural resource protection.
- **Major Greenway Corridors:** long-distance corridors (at least 50 miles long) that pass through two or more counties and are recognized in official planning documents by counties. They represent the major “arteries” of the developing statewide greenway system.
- **Mega Greenways:** greenways of one hundred miles or more, with a completed plan.
- **Recreational Greenways:** corridors that accommodate hiking trails or bikeways, water trails and multi-use trails.

Greenways Network: a linked system of greenways and hubs of specifically identified natural resources or open space and manmade features or destinations that influence the development of the linear greenway corridor.



Heritage Park Regions: specifically-designated portions of the state that implement a regional strategy for promoting Pennsylvania's rich industrial and cultural heritage to stimulate community revitalization and economic development.

"Livable" Communities: communities that offer a wide range of recreation and transportation alternatives, including bicycling and walking, and have a unique character defined by natural and/or cultural features. Places are intended to be livable communities.

Open Spaces: areas of natural quality, either publicly- or privately-owned, designated for the protection of natural resources, nature-oriented outdoor recreation or trail-related activities.

Parks: areas, usually publicly-owned, set aside for recreation and relaxation.

- **Regional:** a "destination" recreation facility, usually large in size, that people will drive long distances to get to because of the amenities or the events located there. These parks are usually 200 acres or more in size, but can be less if it has state or national significance.
- **Community:** a destination facility on a smaller scale than a regional park that contains at least 1 'Community Significant Feature' (see page 4E-6 for complete list).
- **Special Use:** a destination facility that has a unique feature or attraction.
- **Linear:** usually a greenway or trail that follows a waterway, abandoned railroad corridor, or ridge line, and is longer than it is wide.
- **Municipal:** parks owned by municipalities that do not include a Community-Significant Feature.
- **Park Node:** a small pocket park that primarily serves one residential, commercial, or office development.

Trails:

- **Bikeways:** off-road bicycle trails and dedicated bike lanes along roads.

■ **Millennium Trails:** a national initiative of the White House Millennium Council, in partnership with the *Department of Transportation, Rail-to-Trails Conservancy*, the *American Hiking Society*, and the *National Endowment for the Arts*, that recognize, promote and stimulate the creation of trails to "Honor the Past and Imagine the Future" as part of America's legacy for the year 2000. There are three levels of Millennium Trails:

- (1) 16 National Millennium Trails;
- (2) 52 Millennium Legacy Trails (State Level); and
- (3) 2,000 Community Millennium Trails.

■ **Multi-use Trails:** greenways designed for recreational purposes that accommodate more than one type of use (e.g. horseback riding, hiking, bicycling, etc.)

■ **Rail-Trails:** former railroad corridors converted to trails.

■ **Water Trails:** a recreational waterway on a lake, river, or ocean between specific points, containing access points, and day use and/or camping sites for the boating public (North American Water Trail Association).

Allegheny County is fortunate to have an extensive network of parks, open spaces, conservation areas, trails and greenways, as shown on Maps 4E.1a through 4E.1d.

Table 4E.1 establishes classification standards for each type of park. The standards were developed for Allegheny County because the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) standards do not fit this topographically complex and primarily urban county with 130 municipalities very well. Allegheny County has 718 municipal parks, 125 community parks, and 16 regional parks, for a total of 859 parks encompassing approximately 26,900 acres. According to NRPA standards, Allegheny County as a whole has more than 3 times the recommended park acreage per capita. Yet when the NRPA standard is applied to an individual municipality, it may show a much higher or lower ratio of park acres per capita.

The distance between population centers and parks, usually measured as a radius centered on the park, is also often used as a way to assess the need for new or additional park and recreation facilities. However, in Allegheny County, the effect of geography on road systems means there is often a major difference between "crow-fly" miles and miles traveled. The

Table 4E.1 – Park Definitions and Classification Standards for Allegheny County

PARK STANDARDS				
Classification	Definition	Minimum Size Criteria	Service Radius/Area	Examples
REGIONAL PARK	A destination facility, usually large in size, that people will drive long distances to get to because of the amenities or events located there.	Usually 200 acres, but can be less if it has state or national significance	20 Miles/Allegheny County and surrounding areas	Point State Park, Hartwood Acres Park
COMMUNITY PARK	A destination facility on a smaller scale than a regional park that contains at least 1 significant feature. *	NA	3 miles/Multi-municipal	Boyce/Mayview Park
SPECIAL USE PARK	A destination facility that has a unique feature or attraction.	NA	15 miles/County-wide	Renziehausen Park, Round Hill Park, Allegheny Islands State Park
LINEAR PARK	Usually a greenway or trail that follows a waterway, abandoned railroad corridor, or ridge line, and is longer than it is wide.	NA	Dependent on length and presence of trails	Three Rivers Park
MUNICIPAL PARK	Parks owned by municipalities that do not include a Community-Significant Feature.	NA	1 mile/Primarily local residents	Twin Hills Park
PARK NODE	A small pocket park that primarily serves one residential, office or commercial development.	NA	0.5 mile/Occupants of the development	Tot Lots, Plazas, Open Space
* A list of Community Significant Features can be found on page 4E-6.				

Please note some exceptions may apply to the standards above.

park standards developed for Allegheny County therefore consider service areas as more significant than distances. The more facilities a park contains or the more unique it is, the larger its service area is likely to be.

Service areas also provide a rationale for multi-municipal park and recreation planning. Multi-municipal park and recreation planning is especially important, as there are many municipalities, including the County itself, that struggle to afford basic maintenance and upkeep of existing parks.

REGIONAL PARKS

Allegheny County's regional parks are described below. All are considered to be destination parks. Most of the County's regional parks are at least 200 acres in size. One exception to the above size criteria for Regional Parks is Point State Park. It is considered a Regional Park due to the events held at the park, its location in downtown Pittsburgh, and the fact that it is owned by the State.

State Owned

There are two regional, State-owned parks in the County:

- Point State Park is located at the tip of Pittsburgh's "Golden Triangle". This 36-acre park is a National Historic Landmark that commemorates and preserves the strategic and historic heritage of the area during the French and Indian War. The Fort Pitt Museum, the Fort Pitt Blockhouse and many plaques interpret the history and significance of the area. The park is managed and maintained by the City of Pittsburgh and is the annual site of several regional special events. Point State Park is undergoing significant renovations in honor of Pittsburgh's 250th birthday. The phased construction began in 2006 and is expected to continue through 2009. For more information see <http://www.pointstatepark.com/about/>.
- State Game Land, # 203 is located in Marshall Township and Franklin Park Borough. It preserves some 1,246 acres of open space in the northwest corner of the County. State Game Lands were established to manage and preserve wildlife habitats in Pennsylvania. Game lands permit lawful hunting and trapping during open seasons. Compatible recreation, such as hiking, is also permitted.



Photo credit: McCormick Taylor

County Parks

The Allegheny County Park system consists of nine parks comprising over 12,000 acres. The parks are enjoyed by more than 11 million visitors annually. Each County Park has evolved around a signature feature, as described in Table 4E.2.

The County's Park System is managed by the Allegheny County Parks Department, with a full-time staff of 24 and a seasonal workforce of nearly 340. Park maintenance and capital projects are performed by the Public Works Department, with an additional full-time staff of nearly 120 dedicated to these purposes.

City of Pittsburgh Parks

In addition to numerous neighborhood and community parks, the City of Pittsburgh has five regional parks:

- **Frick Park** – The largest of the City's four parks, Frick Park's 600 acres encompasses steep valleys and wooded slopes. In addition to an extensive trail system, park amenities include the Frick Art & Historical Center, educational programming by the Frick Environmental Center, Blue Slide Playground, the Frick Gatehouse, red clay tennis courts and a bowling green.
- **Highland Park** – The walkway encircling a historic reservoir is one of many popular features of this East End park, which also includes the City's only long-course swimming pool and the Washington Boulevard

Cycling Track. Other highlights of the 380-acre park are the Pittsburgh Zoo and PPG Aquarium, Lake Carnegie, sand volleyball courts, a 'super playground', trails, picnic shelters and tennis courts.



Photo credit: McCormick Taylor

- **Riverview Park** – This 287-acre park is nestled between several neighborhoods just north of Downtown Pittsburgh. The park's extensive network of trails serves as a popular destination for hikers, joggers and horseback riders. Other highlights include the landmark Allegheny Observatory, swimming pool, ball fields and picnic shelters, and a 'space age' playground located near the observatory.
- **Schenley Park** – Situated in the heart of Oakland, the 420-acre park has a visitor center, swimming pool, ice skating rink, and plenty of open space for playing sports. Schenley Plaza is a recently renovated addition between the Carnegie Library and the University of Pittsburgh's Hillman Library. The plaza includes a carousel and a large music tent. Phipps Conservatory, a newly-expanded, world class, LEED-certified conservatory, is also located here. The Vintage Grand Prix is an annual event that draws car enthusiasts from all over the world.
- **The Grand View Scenic Byway Park (GVSBP)** – Created in December 2005 by a unanimous vote of the Pittsburgh City Council, and declared Pittsburgh's Fifth Regional Park in April 2007. The u-shaped Park includes a Pennsylvania State Scenic Byway, as well as nearly 240 acres of open space, playing fields, trails, and other recreational amenities that wrap across three Pittsburgh neighborhoods – Allentown, Mount

Table 4E.2 – County Park Facilities

PARK	ACRES	LOCATION	THEMES AND MAIN FEATURES
Boyce	1,096	Municipality of Monroeville, Plum Borough	The County's first regional park, named for founder of the Boy Scouts, William D. Boyce. Only location for downhill skiing in County. Ski lodge; wave pool; action park (bikes, blades & boards).
Deer Lakes	1,180	Frazier & West Deer townships	Fishing in 3 spring-fed, man-made lakes stocked by state fisheries; observatory, disc golf.
Harrison Hills	500	Harrison Township	Watts Memorial Overlook of the Allegheny River Valley, birding area (mid-Atlantic flyway).
Hartwood	629	Hampton & Indiana townships	Stately Tudor mansion (circa 1929), cottage, stable complex and gate lodge, outdoor amphitheater.
North Park	3,075	Hampton, McCandless & Pine townships	Largest of County Parks, it includes 114 picnic shelters, 8 rental buildings, 18-hole golf course, 75-acre lake with boathouse, ice skating rink, big swimming pool.
Round Hill	1,101	Elizabeth Township	Exhibit Farm, where visitors can experience a 'day on the farm'.
Settler's Cabin	1,610	Collier, North Fayette & Robinson townships	Along with namesake log cabin, park has both wave and diving pools. A 452-acre botanical garden is planned.
South Park	2,013	Municipality of Bethel Park & South Park Township	The most developed of the County Parks. Oliver Miller Homestead; 9- and 18-hole golf courses; horse show ring; buffalo herd; BMX track; indoor theater; outdoor amphitheater; wave pool; ice skating rink.
White Oak	810	White Oak Borough	Gardens abound at this park, including the Angora Gardens, Allegheny County Gardens and the Wedding Garden.
Total Park Acreage	12,014		

Washington and Duquesne Heights. The GVSBP includes one of the top tourist destinations in the region with over 1 million people coming each year to enjoy the views from the Park's northern face. The GVSBP is

a model for urban sustainable development, protecting fragile hillsides and urban wildlife habitats, and providing efficient storm water management and air quality protection.



COMMUNITY AND MUNICIPAL PARKS

Allegheny County's 130 municipalities provide local residents with a variety of recreational opportunities. Municipal parks range from larger parks that have both active and passive recreation and hold community events to small "tot lots" that act as the neighborhood back yard. Amenities offered through the municipal park and recreation system cover a broad spectrum of activities and serve a diversity of needs.

The level of need differs from municipality to municipality as does the current condition of municipal parks, which ranges from excellent to substandard. While some municipalities have a healthy tax base and are proactive in addressing recreational needs, others are struggling and have fallen behind, even on the routine maintenance of existing facilities.

In 2006, a municipal survey of parks was done for *Allegheny Places* to inventory and classify parks by size and their facilities, and to map their locations.

Parks were classified in three broad categories: community, municipal, and regional. Community parks were identified as those that had at least one special feature, as defined below.

Community Significant Features:

- Amphitheater Present
- Baseball/Softball Fields (with 4 or more fields)
- Small Stadium – Open to Public
- Boating Access
- Campground
- Recreation Center (Minimum of 30,000 sq. feet; could include one or more: pool, classroom, fitness center.)
- Disc Golf Course
- Fenced Dog Park
- Golf Course
- Ice Rink
- Picnic Pavilion (4 or more)
- Pavilion with Amenities (All-weather, kitchen, etc.)
- Pond/Lake
- Skate Park
- Soccer/Hockey Facility (4 or more)
- Designated Swimming Beach
- Swimming Pool
- Tennis Courts (6 or more)
- Nature/Environmental Centers

- Trails (Multi-municipal, 10 miles +, or part of existing trail)
- Motorized Access
- Equestrian Facility
- Mountain Bike/Hiking (Greater than 5 miles/not to include Rail Trails)
- Hunting/Fishing Access

The 125 municipalities that responded to the survey reported 125 community parks, 718 municipal parks and 16 regional parks, for a total of 859 parks encompassing approximately 26,900 acres. Park information is missing from those municipalities that did not respond to the survey.

The survey also asked for the following information:

- Number of Municipalities with Recreation Department Staff 25
- Total Number of Recreation Department Staff 65
- Number of Municipalities with Commission/Advisory Board 73
- Number of Municipalities with Recreation Comprehensive Plans 39

More survey results are included in the Supporting Documents.

Special Use Parks

Special Use Parks are considered to be destination parks because they have a unique feature or attraction. Special Use Parks can be owned by municipalities, the County, or the State. For example:

- **Renziehausen Park** in the City of McKeesport contains the **Arboretum Rose Garden**, the second largest rose garden in Pennsylvania (the garden at Hershey being the largest). There are currently more than 1,200 varieties of roses grown in the 3.5 acre park.
- **Round Hill Park**, one of the County's 9 Regional Parks, is an 'Exhibit Farm' where visitors can experience a sense of farm life. Located in Elizabeth Township, the Farm is open year-round and includes 17 picnic shelters.
- **Allegheny Islands State Park** is in the Allegheny River, offshore of Harmar Township in northeastern Pittsburgh. It consists of three islands totaling 43 acres.

The park is undeveloped and there are no public facilities. Group camping is permitted.

Linear Parks

Linear Parks are usually a greenway or trail that follows a waterway, abandoned railroad corridor, or ridge line, and is longer than it is wide. Existing and proposed Linear Parks are described in the Greenways Section below – see Mega Greenways, Allegheny County Riverfront Project, and Three Rivers Heritage Trail and Park.

GREENWAYS

Greenways are extremely important to Pennsylvania residents as well as to state agencies, such as the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR). In 2001 Pennsylvania published *Pennsylvania Greenways: An Action Plan for Creating Connections*. This document established a vision for the creation of a greenway network throughout Pennsylvania, which would enhance recreation and tourism opportunities.

An interconnected network of open space along streams, rivers and ridge lines will form the backbone of the *Allegheny Places* Greenways Network. The network is working to connect municipalities and Places designated on the Future Land Use map to parks, recreation, cultural and economic centers.

The Parks, Open Space and Greenways Resource Panel established the following guidelines for the Greenways Network:

- Linear systems that connect people, places and parks, and focus on one or more of these characteristics:
 - **Environmental** – largely undisturbed; typically along riparian ways; and primarily for the benefit of wildlife, plant life and natural systems
 - **Cultural** – more developed; may be as narrow as a trail or as large as a regional park
 - **Viewsheets** – largely undisturbed; typically vegetated hillsides or ridge tops

- Located along both sides of the Ohio, Monongahela, Allegheny and Youghiogheny Rivers, and their major tributaries
- Lands meeting certain environmental criteria (such as steep slopes, woodlands, landslide-prone soils, wetlands and floodplains)
- Connect to the many municipalities and communities, providing access to the greenways systems
- Connect to the greenways of surrounding counties
- Connect to Places identified on the Future Land Use map
- Connect to the PA Greenways Network, which includes systems that are regional

To further define the guidelines, the County used GIS technology to identify the following:

- 40% steep slopes
- 25% steep slopes within woodlands of 10 acres or more
- 15% steep slopes within both landslide-prone soils and woodlands of 10 acres or more
- Conservation stream corridors* with a minimum 50-ft. buffer (updated from the 1995 Conservation Corridor Plan)
- Forested floodplains
- Wetlands of 1 acre or more with a 50-ft. buffer
- River frontage (buffered by a minimum of 100 ft.)
- Protected land – land trust properties and agricultural easement areas
- Parks – regional, state, community, and municipal parks (12+ acres)
- Pittsburgh Greenways
- Public golf courses

* Revised Conservation Stream corridors include “high” and “medium” priority corridors identified in the 1995 *Conservation Corridor Plan*, as well as streams that are adjacent to forested floodplains and steep slopes, as defined above.

Connections to ‘Places’ are made through conservation stream corridors and trails, if not already connected through the criteria listed above.

Additional work was done by the Allegheny Land Trust (ALT) to develop a GREENPRINT of the County. The GREENPRINT used the technology of GIS to specifically identify priority conservation areas, including biological diversity, water



management, and landscape character (See page 4E-17 for more detail). The ALT GREENPRINT is incorporated into the Greenways Network.

MEGA GREENWAYS

DCNR has identified 34 major or mega greenway corridors that are at least 50 miles, pass through two or more counties, and are recognized in an official planning document. Five of these mega greenways have been targeted by DCNR for increased funding and staff assistance. Two of the five pass through Allegheny County: the Great Allegheny Passage and the Pittsburgh to Harrisburg Mainline Canal. The Erie to Pittsburgh Greenway also has a good chance of being

included in this group due to its strategic location and the number of residents and communities it can join together.

The Great Allegheny Passage

The Great Allegheny Passage (GAP), Figure 4E.1, is a 152-mile bicycle and walking trail connecting Cumberland, Maryland with Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. In Cumberland, the trail links with the C & O Canal Towpath, creating a continuous trail from Pittsburgh to Washington, DC. The GAP is designated as a National Recreation Trail and is a segment of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail. For a map of the entire trail see www.atatrail.org.



Figure 4E.1 – The Great Allegheny Passage

Source: Allegheny Trail Alliance

DCNR's highest priority for greenways funding in western Pennsylvania is the completion of a nine-mile section of the GAP from McKeesport to the City of Pittsburgh, which will complete the GAP from Pittsburgh to Cumberland, MD. Within the nine-mile section, there are 28 different properties involved. As of August 2008, easements and acquisitions of 27 properties are underway, but there is one property that does not have a resolution. In addition to acquiring easements and ownership of property, the Allegheny Trail Alliance is constructing two new bridges to cross over active railroad tracks. The retrofitting of the Riverton Bridge, connecting McKeesport to Duquesne, is also underway. The Riverton Bridge was donated to the County by the US Steel Corporation. The nine-mile section, with the exception of one property gap, is expected to be completed by late 2009.

The GAP is being built by the Allegheny Trail Alliance (ATA), a coalition of seven rails-to-trails organizations. The ATA member trail organizations are:

- Allegheny Highlands Trail of Maryland (from Cumberland to the Mason-Dixon Line)
- Allegheny Highlands Trail of Pennsylvania (from the Mason-Dixon Line to Confluence)
- Youghiogheny River Trail South (from Confluence to Connellsville)
- Youghiogheny River Trail North (from Connellsville to McKeesport)
- Steel Valley Trail (from Clairton to Homestead)
- Three Rivers Heritage Trail (from Homestead to Pittsburgh)
- Montour Trail Council – this trail is not part of the GAP, but the organization is a member of the Allegheny Trail Alliance

Pittsburgh-to-Harrisburg Mainline Canal Greenway™

The Pittsburgh-to-Harrisburg Mainline Canal Greenway™, Figure 4E.2, is a 320-mile long corridor that follows the path of the historic Pennsylvania Mainline Canal. The section of the greenway in Allegheny County runs from Pittsburgh to Freeport, along the Allegheny River. This greenway has been designated Pennsylvania's Millennium Legacy Trail – one of 52 state significant trails that link heritage, culture and recreation. The Pittsburgh-to-Harrisburg Mainline Canal Greenway™ will encompass both land and river trails to complete the corridor connections. For a map of the entire trail see www.alleghenyridge.org.

Erie to Pittsburgh Mega Greenway

DCNR's second priority for greenways funding in western Pennsylvania is the Erie to Pittsburgh Greenway, a recently designated greenway in the PA Greenways Program. The Erie to Pittsburgh Greenway incorporates trail systems both built and planned along the Allegheny River, and overlaps the Pittsburgh to Harrisburg Mainline Canal Greenway™ within Allegheny County's borders. Trail organizations from Pittsburgh to Erie are working to connect a number of land trails to it.

The concept for the Erie to Pittsburgh Greenway emerged from local communities and trail organizations. The success of other community and regional trails built in the western part of the Commonwealth over the years provided good models for the Erie to Pittsburgh Greenway. With trails such as the Three Rivers Heritage Trail, Armstrong Trail, Allegheny River Trail, McClintock Trail, Oil Creek Gorge Trail, Ernst Trail, Pymatuning Spillway Trail, and many others, the Erie to Pittsburgh Greenway can unify the Western Pennsylvania Trail Network. This potential mega greenway will enhance the existing trail system, give it a regional identity, make additional connections, raise the visibility of individual trail projects in the region and elevate the value of recreational resources in local communities. Once the Erie to Pittsburgh regional trail system is completed, it can then connect to The Great Allegheny Passage, linking Erie to Washington, DC.

Adjacent County Greenways

Three adjacent counties have current Greenway Plans: Beaver, Washington and Westmoreland. The *Allegheny Places* greenways plan includes and proposes connections to the following trails and greenways:

- **Beaver County** – Bike Route A and the Proposed Raccoon Park Trail
- **Washington County** – Arrowhead Trail, Bike Route A, Monongahela River Trail, Montour Trail and the Panhandle Trail
- **Westmoreland County** – The proposed Allegheny River Trail, Plum Creek Trail, the proposed Westmoreland Heritage Trail and the Youghiogheny River Trail

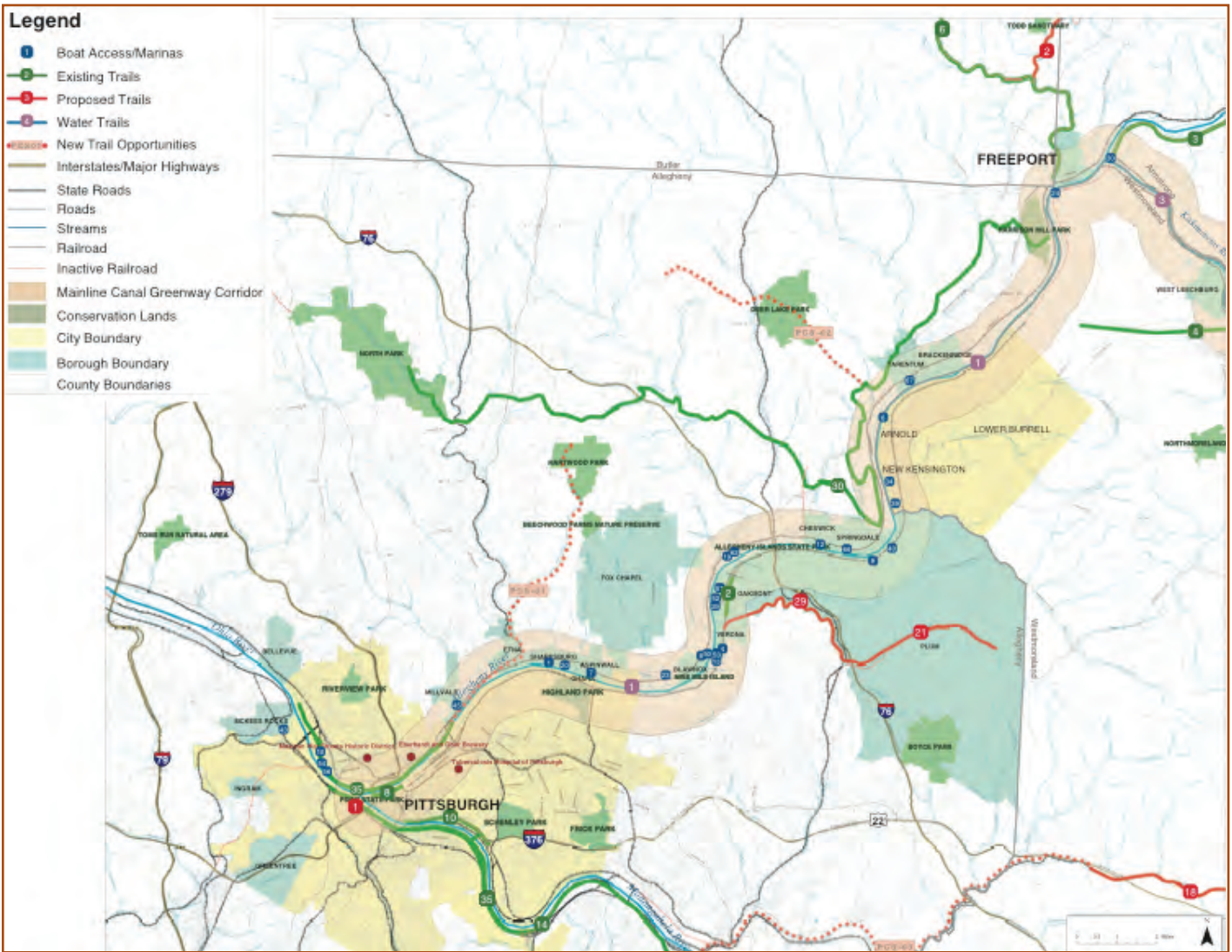


Figure 4E.2 – Pittsburgh-to-Harrisburg Mainline Canal Greenway

Source: Allegheny Ridge Corporation

LOCAL RECREATIONAL AND CONSERVATION GREENWAYS

Other notable greenways in Allegheny County, with a renewed emphasis on riverfront projects, are in various stages of development.

Allegheny County Riverfronts Project

The Allegheny County Riverfronts Projects is a collaboration between Allegheny County, Friends of the Riverfront, and the



Photo credit: McCormick Taylor

Pennsylvania Environmental Council. The Riverfronts Project's mission is to provide overall planning and coordination for the development of on-land greenways and trails along the County's four major rivers. The Riverfronts Project builds on the work of the region's many trail organizations, and coordinates the implementation of recreation, conservation, and access components of new trail and greenway segments. Through the Riverfronts Project, multi-municipal collaboration is taking place with local governments, nonprofit organizations, residents and other stakeholders to implement specific trail projects along the riverfronts.

Three Rivers Heritage Trail

The Three Rivers Heritage Trail is a bicycle and pedestrian trail and greenway system along the riverfronts around the City of Pittsburgh. Currently, 22 miles of a planned 37-mile route have been completed. This trail system includes the trails throughout Three Rivers Park within the City, and extends into County communities that follow the Allegheny, Monongahela and Ohio Rivers. It provides a route for cyclists, walkers, runners and, in some places, in-line skaters.



Photo credit: McCormick Taylor

Three Rivers Park follows the route of the Three Rivers Heritage Trail. It is a system of trails, walkways, bridges and green spaces that together will comprise a single, grand public space known as Three Rivers Park. The designated Park area is between the West End Bridge on the Ohio River, the 31st Street Bridge on the Allegheny River and the Hot Metal Bridge on the Monongahela River. It will link more than ten miles of public and private riverfront property including bridges, shorelines and adjacent development in a continuous, accessible waterfront park system.

TRAILS AND BIKEWAYS

There are a number of active trail organizations within Allegheny County, and trail systems are continually growing (see Map 4E.3). These are the main organizations:

- Allegheny Trail Alliance – a coalition of seven trails-to-trails organizations dedicated to completing the Great Allegheny Passage (GAP)
- Friends of the Riverfront
- Pennsylvania Environmental Council
- Allegheny County
- Community Trails Initiative – a coalition of 17 riverfront municipalities from Millvale through Natrona, the Friends of the Riverfront, Pennsylvania Environmental Council and Allegheny County.

Other County Trails

Other notable recreation trails in Allegheny County in various stages of development are:

- **Rachel Carson Trail** – a 35.7-mile long hiking trail that extends from Harrison Hills County Park to North Park. Although the physical trail exists, it is not protected by public easements or rights-of-way.



Photo credit: McCormick Taylor



- **Panhandle Trail** – formerly the Panhandle Railroad Line, it spans 29 miles from Walkers Mill in Collier Township to Weirton, West Virginia. Nearly seven miles of the trail are located in Allegheny County. The Panhandle Trail connects to the Montour Trail in Washington County at McDonald.
- **Montour Trail** – The Montour Trail is a multi-use rail-trail that will extend 52 miles from Coraopolis to Clairton, with a segment to Allegheny County Airport. Multiple sections of the trail totaling over 40 miles have been completed to date. Construction of a 2.5-mile trail section is scheduled to be completed in the fall of 2008. Remaining sections of the trail all require bridges.

Bikeways

Bikeways are routes designated for bicycle use. These may be exclusive bike lanes on roads or shared pathways, with pedestrians and other users, on trails.

- Bike Route A
- Coraopolis Bikeway
- Monroeville Bikeway
- North Hills Bikeway
- Ohio River Bikeway
- Proposed Pittsburgh Bikeway System

Some bikeways and trails include an 'active transportation' component, where a bicyclist/pedestrian/kayaker/etc. can travel from one destination to another. This differs from recreation trails that do not link two or more destinations. Pittsburgh's Bikeway Plan identifies proposed "complete streets" that can safely accommodate both bicycles and cars with improvements and/or signage. See the Bicycle and Pedestrian Section of the Transportation Element for more information (page 4I-41).

Water Trails

Water trails are another mode of travel and recreation in our region. Water trails are designed to provide safe non-motorized boat launches and easy shore access, maintain and respect the environment's natural character, and promote responsible use of our rivers. Water trails also:

- Improve docking facilities for both motorized and non-motorized boaters
- Provide opportunities for short-term access to communities and neighborhoods
- Connect communities
- Allow boaters a brief or long respite – an escape from the urban to natural environment, a renewal of body and mind

Water trails encourage low-impact use of the region's waterways and foster a strong sense of stewardship of the riverine environment.

- **Three Rivers Water Trail** – Just as the Allegheny County Riverfronts Project involves on-land trails and greenways along the four rivers in Allegheny County, the Three Rivers Water Trail involves all four rivers. The project is being coordinated by Friends of the Riverfront in conjunction with the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, which has the authority to designate Official Pennsylvania Water Trails. The Allegheny and Youghiogheny Rivers have an official water trail designation. Water trails planned along the Ohio and Monongahela Rivers are in the process of being officially designated. A challenge to small watercraft travel on these two rivers is the amount of barge traffic.

RIVERFRONT ACCESS

Allegheny County has an abundance of river frontage – approximately 185 miles, including island frontage. Of Allegheny County's 130 municipalities, 73 border on one of the four rivers. Because of the region's steel industry heritage, over 45% of all river frontage is currently zoned for industrial use. In addition, Allegheny County has the second largest inland port in the country and relies heavily on river barge transportation. Planning for the redevelopment and development of the riverfront for greenways, trails, parks and other recreation and conservation uses must take into consideration other active uses of the four rivers.

■ ISSUES AND ANALYSIS

This section examines what can be done to ensure that all residents can enjoy the many natural and recreational amenities that the County has to offer.

KEY CHALLENGES

In developing the Parks, Open Space and Greenways Plan, the Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Greenways Resource Panel helped to identify these key challenges:

- Lack of access to regional parks for people dependent on public transportation
- Lack of connectivity between the County's parks, trails, and greenways
- Lack of funding to maintain and improve the County Park system
- Inequities between municipal parks and the need for multi-municipal planning
- Lack of funding to expand the Greenways Network
- Lack of public access to riverfronts

The following provides an understanding of these issues.

LACK OF ACCESS TO REGIONAL PARKS FOR PEOPLE DEPENDENT ON PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Some people face barriers that prevent access to recreation opportunities. For some it's a lack of awareness of facilities and programs available in the regional parks. For others who depend on public transportation, transit service to County Parks is currently limited. Students, the elderly and low-income residents, therefore, may not be able to take advantage of the recreational and social opportunities that the parks offer.

To equitably provide for the recreation needs of all residents, convenient access to regional recreation resources should be provided. Access in this context has two distinct meanings:

- The ability to get to and around in regional parks using public transportation
- Wheelchair accessibility to the facilities found within regional parks

Currently, there is limited public transportation to only three County Parks: North Park, Settlers Cabin, and South Park during the summer season, with a bus stop at each swimming pool.

The four regional parks in the City of Pittsburgh are all accessible by public transit. However, neither the Pittsburgh Parks and Recreation website (www.city.pittsburgh.pa.us/parks) nor the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy website (www.pittsburghparks.org) provides information on how to access the parks by public transit. As with the County Parks website, the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy's website provides only driving directions to the parks.

Inconvenient transportation is a hurdle that some residents must overcome to enjoy many regional park facilities. Physical barriers to participation also exist for people with disabilities. The 2002 Parks Comprehensive Master Plan stated that "close to three-quarters of county park facilities lack adequate access to persons with disabilities....In many cases, relatively low-cost measures, such as installation of a stable, firm, and slip resistant surface from the point of access (parking lot) to the facility (e.g. picnic shelter), would make the facility accessible."



Photo credit: Bernadette E. Kazmarski

LACK OF CONNECTIVITY BETWEEN THE COUNTY'S PARKS, TRAILS, AND GREENWAYS

The goal of the PA Greenways Program is to establish an interconnected network of greenways. The greenways network in Allegheny County incorporates a number of County and regional parks, regional trail systems and



conservation corridors. These systems are not well connected, however. A number of notable gaps in the County's trail system have been identified that, when connected, would enhance the overall greenways network. A specific list of gaps in trails can be found in the Implementation Matrix on Page 5-48.

LACK OF FUNDING TO MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE THE COUNTY PARK SYSTEM

During the development of *Allegheny Places*, residents spoke of the importance of the County Parks system. All nine of the Allegheny County parks were cited as 'Favorite Places' by County residents. Both North Park and South Park made the top five Favorite Places. This underscores the need to maintain and improve park facilities so they may continue to provide the opportunities and services that County residents value.

Allegheny County operates nine public parks that span 12,000 acres and offer a wide array of sporting, leisure, cultural and entertainment opportunities. The parks are a tremendous asset, but also a very large maintenance responsibility for the County. The sub-standard conditions found in some of the parks and recreation facilities in the County Park System are the result of two primary issues: lack of available resources and the aging of physical facilities and other infrastructure.

Many park facilities and features in the County Park system have been in place for decades. Deferred maintenance has taken its toll. Many are now beyond repair and must be replaced. Also, much of the playground equipment installed in County Parks does not meet current safety standards. It is estimated in the Parks Master Plan (2002) that over \$50 million is needed for repairs in the parks and an additional \$50 million is needed for proposed new facilities.

Raising maintenance standards and addressing deferred maintenance needs will require the investment of additional resources, as will any of the new initiatives recommended in the *Comprehensive Parks Master Plan* and *Allegheny Places*. The Allegheny County Parks Action Plan was developed in 2007 to make recommendations to address the financial issues of the County Park System as outlined in the January 2002 Park Comprehensive Master Plan and the October 2002 Parks Transition Committee Report. The 2007 Parks Action Plan establishes a strategy for addressing the financial

crisis "...by utilizing private sector assistance programs, updating the fee and charge schedule every 3 to 5 years, establishing a foundation, and pursuing private and public grant funding.

INEQUITIES BETWEEN MUNICIPAL PARKS AND THE NEED FOR MULTI-MUNICIPAL PLANNING

A significant number of municipal parks and playgrounds, particularly in older communities, have deferred maintenance issues. Some municipal playgrounds have old equipment that needs to be replaced with equipment that meets current playground safety standards. Other municipalities have in their inventory facilities that have become functionally obsolete, as recreational interests have evolved over the years. Many municipalities have been replacing their play equipment and rehabilitating their underutilized facilities, such as old tennis courts, by converting them to more currently popular facilities such as skate parks, hockey courts or multi-use courts. However, there remains a considerable inventory of facilities and equipment that need to be improved or replaced and the funding available to do so is often inadequate.

Before creating a new municipal park or recreation area, it should be determined that the municipality involved has the capacity to sustain the facility financially and has the work force necessary to provide routine maintenance. If not, the municipality should partner with a neighboring community.

Multi-municipal planning and cooperation is a viable way that municipalities can expand, refurbish, or build new parks. Multi-Municipal Cooperation for Recreation and Parks (2006) is a DCNR publication that cites three primary reasons for multi-municipal cooperation:

- Interdependence
- Effectiveness
- Economies of Scale

The publication provides step-by-step guidelines for creating multi-municipal (regional) recreation agencies.

In addition to the reasons for multi-municipal cooperation already mentioned, communities can share resources such as funding, and more options can be provided, especially in smaller communities.

LACK OF FUNDING TO EXPAND THE GREENWAYS NETWORK

Just as there is a lack of local funding to maintain existing park facilities, so too is there a lack of available capital to expand the County's greenway network. Acquiring land for trails and conservation can be especially difficult because of patterns of ownership, costs and the need to negotiate easements.

The completion of the Great Allegheny Passage is the top priority for expanding the greenways network. The remaining gaps in the trail are all within Allegheny County. Funding is available to enable the completion of the remaining portions by 2009. Completion of the other two Mega Greenways, the Erie to Pittsburgh Greenway and the Pittsburgh-to-Harrisburg Mainline Canal Greenway™, will require significant financial resources.

LACK OF PUBLIC ACCESS TO RIVERFRONTS

Allegheny County has approximately 185 linear miles of riverfront, encompassing 73 municipalities. A comprehensive, multi-municipal approach is needed to manage, protect, and provide for recreational opportunities along the County's riverfronts that are currently subject to 73 different municipalities and zoning ordinances.

The Allegheny County Riverfronts Project is one approach to implementing a series of plans for a regional collaborative project. It has established an ongoing partnership between Allegheny County, Friends of the Riverfront and the Pennsylvania Environmental Council.

RECOMMENDATIONS

GOAL OF THE PLAN

A green network that provides a range of recreational opportunities, conserves sensitive and unique natural features, and is connected through parks, greenways and trails.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PLAN

The objectives of the Parks, Open Space and Greenways Plan are to:

- A.** Implement a strategy to establish greenways that provide connections between people, recreational facilities, cultural facilities, and other significant public areas.
- B.** Implement a strategy to establish greenways that encourage protection of bio-diverse areas, floodplains, steep slopes, forested areas, landslide-prone areas, riparian corridors and wildlife corridors.
- C.** Expand the parks and trails system to serve future populations.
- D.** Facilitate public access to riverfronts.
- E.** Ensure that regionally significant parks and trails are ADA compliant and transit accessible.
- F.** Raise public awareness of the benefits of greenways and open space.

The following provides an understanding of the objectives.

A. Implement a Strategy to Establish Greenways that Provide Connections between People, Recreational Facilities, Cultural Facilities and other Significant Public Areas

The Greenways Network will support the preservation of significant natural, cultural and landscape features across the County as well as provide necessary connections between people and recreational facilities. To expand the Greenways Network the County is exploring the following:

■ Establishing a Countywide Greenways Committee

The County will create a Greenways Committee to work closely with the County Parks and Recreation Department, the Allegheny County Parks Foundation (discussed later in this section under Objective C) and the County Planning Staff. This committee will coordinate County policy – established by the Chief Executive and County Council – and have



responsibility for County programs related to the protection of and enhancement to the countywide Greenways Network. The Greenways Committee can also coordinate the development of a comprehensive list of conservation priorities.

The Chief Executive, with input from the Parks Director, will appoint the members of this committee as they will report directly to the Parks Director. This committee should also coordinate, whenever possible, with the numerous other groups undertaking parks, recreation, trails and greenway projects in the County. Once the Greenways Committee is established and underway, the County will explore funding options through DCNR to hire a Greenways Coordinator.

■ **Implementing the Greenways Network**

A primary responsibility of the Greenways Committee will be to oversee the implementation of the Greenways Network. Implementation of the network will mean follow-up work, including analyzing the existing and proposed trail network in the County, identifying additional areas for preservation, developing an open space network based upon these areas and making specific recommendations for preservation of areas, both by the County and by municipalities. Additionally, the Committee will work with County officials to obtain funding from County, State and federal sources to assist with implementation.

■ **Engaging in Partnerships**

The Greenways Committee will continue to work with the Pennsylvania DCNR in their efforts to collect information for their statewide network of greenways. The County will continue to engage local and regional partners involved in land preservation, conservation and acquisition, as well as those involved in the promotion of recreation and tourism. The Greenways Committee will work with adjacent counties and regional planning commissions in order to plan and promote efforts at developing a regional open space network.

In order to establish a connected Greenways network, the County and the Greenways Committee will work with nonprofit partners and adjacent municipalities to acquire land and/or easements. The following mega-greenway connections have been identified as priorities:

- Complete the Great Allegheny Passage, connecting Pittsburgh to Washington DC (highest priority)
- Complete the Pittsburgh to Erie Greenway
- Complete the Pittsburgh to Harrisburg Mainline Canal Greenway

A complete list of greenway connections is provided in the Implementation Matrix on Page 5-48.

The County supports efforts by public and private agencies to expand and enhance the Greenways Network. County support may include such actions as funding open space and greenway planning efforts, working with land trusts and other conservation associations to purchase conservation easements, and providing financial assistance to municipalities for local parks and open space development.

Multi-municipal planning and cooperation to establish greenways is strongly recommended. DCNR's 2006 *Multi-Municipal Cooperation for Recreation and Parks* (2006) can be used to implement cooperative greenways planning as well as municipal park planning.



Photo credit: McCormick Taylor

B. Implement a Strategy to Establish Greenways that Encourage Protection of Bio-diverse Areas, Floodplains, Steep Slopes, Forested Areas, Landslide-Prone Areas, Riparian Corridors and Wildlife Corridors

Acquisition of Land and Conservation Easements

The most effective way to preserve open space is through acquisition. According to *A Guide to Pennsylvania's New Conservation and Preservation Easements*, fee simple land acquisition is sometimes the best alternative, but conservation and preservation easements pursuant to the state's Conservation and Preservation Easement Act, Act 20 of 2001, are less costly and easier to acquire. Conservation easements are agreements between a landowner and a governmental body or a land trust. A landowner voluntarily agrees to refrain from exercising certain property rights and to bind all future owners by the negotiated restrictions. The easements can be either donated or sold. The holder of the easement agrees to enforce the restrictions in court if necessary.

While county and local governments can use land or easement acquisition, they may not have the funds or expertise. Entities such as land trusts are set up to do this.

Land trusts play an important role in protecting natural areas. Land trusts are nonprofit, charitable organizations that have as one of their core activities the acquisition of land or interests in land (like conservation easements) for the purpose of conservation. Land trusts acquire land or conservation easements through donation by the landowner, through land being willed to them, or by purchasing the land or easement.

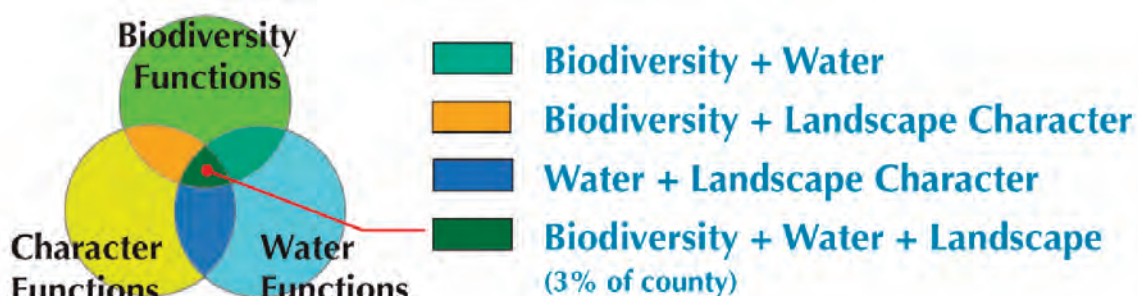
Land trusts hold the lands or conservation easements in trust for future generations. Most land trusts focus on conserving the biological values of land, but they are also established to protect scenic, historical, agricultural and recreational lands.

Allegheny County has eight land trusts operating within its boundaries:

- Allegheny Land Trust
 - Bradford Woods Conservancy (This is not an incorporated entity. They operate under the umbrella of the Allegheny Land Trust)
- Chartiers Nature Conservancy
- Fox Chapel Area Land Trust
- Hollow Oak Land Trust
- Pine Creek Land Conservation Trust
- Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy
- The Scott Conservancy
- Western PA Conservancy

The eight land trusts manage over 125 separate parcels in the County, totaling approximately 2,700 acres.

In 2007, Allegheny Land Trust (ALT) developed the **GREENPRINT** of Allegheny County with the intent to "...promote strategic land conservation by identifying highly functional landscapes that harbor biological diversity, manage water resources, and maintain the region's scenic landscape character." Figure 4E.3 shows the datasets used to identify lands worthy of



This Venn Diagram illustrates the concept and strategy of the ALT **GREENPRINT**

Figure 4E.3 – Allegheny Land Trust GREENPRINT – Concept and Strategy



conservation. The areas of overlap have the highest capacity to perform all three conservation functions.

The **GREENPRINT** map representing the lands that meet all three criteria has been incorporated into the County's Greenway Network.

The **GREENPRINT** recommends the following:

- Conserve large tracts of woodlands in the upper reaches of watersheds to intercept rain water before it becomes stormwater.
- Conserve large tracts of woodlands on steep slopes along the rivers to maintain their ecological services and maintain the County's unique visual appeal.
- Landbank developable lands in watersheds that suffer from frequent flooding and sewer overflows until degraded infrastructure is repaired or upgraded to prevent sewage overflow problems from worsening.
- Dedicate more public resources toward flood prevention.
- Measure and document the economic benefits of ecological services to supplement the science behind the **GREENPRINT**.

Figure 4E.4 illustrates the potential role various public and private entities can play to conserve the lands that provide the greatest public benefit.

Private Conservation Techniques

There are many ways for individual property owners to conserve identified environmentally-sensitive lands or desired open space. These are some of the most commonly used conservation techniques that property owners are encouraged to consider:




- **Outright Donation of Land and Endowment** – Full title and ownership are transferred to a nonprofit conservation organization or qualified government agency.

- **Donation with Life Estate** – Allows the property owner to retain the right to live on the property for the rest of their life.
- **Bequest** – A donation of land through will or living trust allows the property owner to maintain complete control of the land while alive.
- **Conservation Easement** – Places permanent restrictions on the development of land while the property owner retains ownership. The easement binds all present and future owners of the eased land.
- **Bargain Sale** – Protects land by selling it to a conservation group for less than market value. The difference between the bargain sale price and fair market value is considered a charitable donation.
- **Limited Development and Conservation Subdivision** – An alternative to traditional development where a portion of land is developed while the rest remains open space. This technique balances the need for higher financial gain with the desire to preserve land. Careful planning ensures that the most critical ecological features are preserved.
- **Donation of an Asset Property** – A property owner contributes land or home to allow the organization to sell it and use the funds to support conservation.
- **Purchase of the property** – A fair market appraisal is done and a purchase offer is made to the landowner.

Planning and Regulatory Techniques

The County will publish advisory guidelines to promote general consistency with the objective of conserving identified open space. The County will also provide guidelines to promote uniformity with respect to common types of municipal land use regulations. There are a number of regulatory techniques that can be used including zoning, subdivision and land development and an official map to implement the objective of conserving identified open space. The

Figure 4E.4 – Allegheny Land Trust GREENPRINT Implementation Matrix

	Scale	Benefits	Protection Strategy	Implementation Partners	Funding Sources
 BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY	Parcel	Protection of the region's unique biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct conservation of land & easements • PA Natural Diversity Inventory 	Land trusts DCNR DEP	DCNR Private foundation, corporate and individual sources
 WATER MANAGEMENT	Watershed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stormwater & Flood controls • Water quality improvements • Property value enhancement • Managed growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County Comprehensive Plan • Municipal land planning, ordinances, and code enforcement • Landbanking 	Municipalities Municipal authorities Watershed organizations Land trusts 3 Rivers Wet Weather County, DCED, PaDEP, USACOE, EPA, FEMA	Municipalities County, state and federal agencies Bonds Private Sources
 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER	Landscape	Protection of region's scenic character and air quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County Comprehensive Plan • Municipal planning, ordinances, code enforcement 	Municipalities County Land trusts	DCNR PennDOT via (Enhancement Funding) Private Sources

DCED=Pa. Dept. of Community and Economic Development; PaDEP=Pa. Dept. of Environmental Protection; PennDOT=Pa. Dept. of Transportation; USACOE=U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; EPA=US Environmental Protection Agency; FEMA=Federal Emergency Management Agency

KEY ROLES

LAND TRUSTS	Direct conservation of land; planning assistance; site assessment; policy development and advocacy; education; research; land banking; and ongoing land stewardship
MUNICIPALITIES	Planning and land use management; integrate GREENPRINT into Comprehensive Plans; adopt and enforce conservation-oriented zoning and land development codes; create Transfer Development Rights programs
COUNTY GOVERNMENT	Integrate GREENPRINT into Comprehensive Plan to advocate conservation of highly functional green infrastructure; create incentives for conserving GREENPRINT areas; promote awareness and share GREENPRINT mapping; funding
STATE AGENCIES	Restrict new sources of stormwater and sewage inputs into failing systems; regulate geologically hazardous areas; funding
FEDERAL AGENCIES	Promote and fund flood prevention strategies; evaluate performance of outdated flood control facilities

following are regulatory techniques that should be applied by municipalities where appropriate:

- **Zoning and Subdivision and Land Development: Conservation Subdivision** – Provisions in a zoning ordinance to encourage or require a variety of density options that protect identified natural features from development and reward increased conservation area with increased net density on the remaining land, and provisions in

a subdivision and land development ordinance for designing conservation subdivisions using a four-step process where conservation areas are identified first and development is designed around it. Open space may be either dedicated to the public or owned and maintained privately. Source: *Growing Greener, A Conservation Planning Workbook for Municipal Officials in Pennsylvania* (model ordinances included).



■ **Zoning: Planned Residential Development** – Provisions in a zoning ordinance to provide for “the conservation and more efficient use of open space ancillary to ...dwellings and uses so that greater opportunities for better housing and recreation may extend to all ...” (MPC §701)

■ **Zoning: Overlay Districts** – A second layer zoning district superimposed over underlying or base zoning districts intended to protect resources or special interests such as floodplains and riparian areas, steep slopes, landslide-prone areas, subsidence areas, scenic corridors or riverfront corridors.

■ **Zoning: Site Capacity Analysis** – Provisions to establish the density of residential development or the intensity of nonresidential development based on an analysis of the site where protected areas are subtracted out before calculating the maximum number of dwelling units or square feet of non-residential space permitted. This can reduce the density or intensity of development, rather than holding density or intensity constant and shifting development within a site to protect identified areas.

■ **Subdivision and Land Development: Mandatory Dedication** – Provisions requiring the public dedication of land suitable for park, greenway, trails and recreation purposes as a condition precedent to final plan approval, or – if the developer agrees – the construction of recreational facilities, the payment of fees in lieu thereof, the private reservation of the land or a combination. The governing body must have formally adopted a recreation plan. There should be standards for open space and recreation area that meet the objectives of the plan.

In growing communities, the preservation and protection of green space as development takes place is critical. The passing of a Subdivision and Land Development ordinance requiring the public dedication of land for recreation before a development plan is approved is one way a municipality can control the preservation of land and limit overdevelopment.

■ **Reservation of Land on an Official Map** – A map adopted by a governing body pursuant to Article IV of the MPC by which proposed public

parks, playgrounds, greenways, trails and open space identified in an adopted comprehensive plan are reserved from development for future acquisition for public use.

More information on these regulatory techniques and others with model regulations can be found in *Improving Local Development Regulations: A Handbook for Municipal Officials*.

C. Expand the Parks and Trails System to Serve Future Populations

County Parks

Allegheny County adopted a *Comprehensive Parks Master Plan* in 2002. The master plan made 297 park-specific recommendations for the nine County Parks and 42 system-wide recommendations. Over the past four years, the County, through its Public Works and the Parks Department, has made significant progress in addressing the numerous recommendations made in this study. Of all the plan’s recommendations, 13% are completed, 11% are underway, 24% are being addressed through ongoing efforts and 19% are in the discussion/planning stages.



Photo credit: Allegheny County

Allegheny County will continue to complete the recommendations of the *Comprehensive Parks Master Plan*, particularly the following projects that are fundamental to other implementation strategies:

- Develop and formally adopt a fees and charges policy
- Develop and implement a marketing plan for County parks and recreation
- Expand the County Parks system by purchasing properties adjacent to the existing parks

In January 2007, County Council passed an ordinance to finalize the creation of an entity with tax-exempt [501(c)(3)] status “with a mission to secure and administer financial resources to support and enhance objectives of the Department of Parks, as well as to assist the County in meeting the planning goals for parks and to administer any funds voluntarily contributed by the public for assisting in the improvement and/or maintenance of the County's parks”.

The American Institute for Leisure Resources conducted a study of the Allegheny County Park System in the summer of 2007. The result of their study defines system-wide revenue recommendations as well as individual park recommendations for each of the nine regional parks. The *Allegheny County Parks Action Plan* will transform and enhance recreational opportunities at the County's nine regional parks, the County riverfront trail system and other greenway initiatives.

In the fall of 2007, Allegheny County Chief Executive Dan Onorato announced the establishment of the Allegheny County Parks Foundation. The new Board will raise private funds to help maintain the County's nine parks and will explore new revenue sources, such as the creation of public-private partnerships to operate some of the parks' major attractions. With an initial funding of \$1 million, the Chief Executive vowed to match dollar for dollar any private funds raised, up to \$10 million. This pledge indicates the County's commitment to raising the funds necessary to continue to maintain one of its most valuable assets, the County Park system.

Park Planning and Implementation Prototypes

Park planning and implementation prototypes were developed to assist local municipalities of various types in making decisions about the types of park facilities

that will be needed in the future. These prototypes were designed for the different types of communities found in the County today and for the types of Places that have been designated in the Future Land Use Plan. These prototypes should not be confused with the park standards discussed at the beginning of this element. The park standards describe types of parks in Allegheny County today. The prototypes discussed here describe types of recreation facilities that could be needed in the future, and how to implement them.

The County's Councils of Government (COGs) will receive training to use the Park Prototypes developed for *Allegheny Places* to help educate their member municipalities about parks and recreation standards. The COGs should also help municipalities to identify and obtain funding to create and maintain these park assets, such as the funding available from DCNR.

The prototypes can be applied by the County and local municipalities to guide the development or redevelopment of parks and recreation facilities in the kinds of locales described below:

- **Multi-Municipal Community Prototype:** older, not-growing, population small (5,000 residents); one square mile in size. This prototype could share services with other older, small communities or with one of the mature or growing communities as well. This would depend on location and willingness to work together.
 - Priority 1: Identify and address repair needs of existing community's facilities.
 - Priority 2: Establish or participate in an existing multi-municipal Recreation and Park Agency.
 - Priority 3: Complete a multi-municipal Comprehensive Recreation, Park and Open Space Plan.
 - Priority 4: Initiate programs and services to address community needs.
 - Priority 5: Develop a funding strategy and development timeline.
- **Mature Suburban Community Prototype:** stable community, population medium (30,000 residents); nine square miles in size.



- Priority 1: Complete a Comprehensive Recreation, Park and Open Space Plan for the municipality and a Master Site Improvement Plan for each municipal park.
- Priority 2: Complete design development phase for each municipal park.
- Priority 3: Develop a funding strategy and development timeline.
- Priority 4: Initiate phased construction of identified park improvements.

■ **Rapidly Growing (Edge) Community Prototype:** many young families, population low to medium (10,000 residents); 21 square miles in size.

- Priority 1: Complete a Comprehensive Land Use Plan and Comprehensive Recreation, Park and Open Space Plan.
- Priority 2: Enact a mandatory dedication (recreation impact) amendment to the subdivision and land development ordinance.
- Priority 3: Enact an official map to reserve land from development.
- Priority 4: Enact zoning and subdivision and land development provisions for conservation of identified open space.
- Priority 5: Develop a funding strategy and development timeline.
- Priority 6: Initiate acquisition and phased construction of parks.

■ **Urban Community Prototype:** often financially distressed, population medium to large (20,000+ residents); four square miles or more in size.

- Priority 1: Complete a Comprehensive Recreation, Park and Open Space Plan.
- Priority 2: Develop a funding strategy and development timeline.
- Priority 3: Seek additional funding sources.
- Priority 4: Initiate phased park and trail construction.

■ **Riverfront Community Linear Greenway Prototype:** municipality that borders any of the four rivers in Allegheny County.

- Priority 1: Establish a partnership with Friends of the Riverfront, PEC, and Allegheny County to coordinate with the Allegheny County Riverfronts Project.
- Priority 2: Adopt the County Comprehensive Plan as to Riverfront recommendations as part of a multi-municipal or municipal comprehensive plan.
- Priority 3: Adopt the County's Riverfront Overlay District into the municipal zoning ordinance. (The Riverfront Overlay District is in *Improving Local Development Regulations: A Handbook for Municipal Officials*, which is available in the eLibrary at www.alleghenyplaces.com).
- Priority 4: Adopt an Official Map to reserve land for Riverfront Park.
- Priority 5: Develop a funding strategy and development timeline.
- Priority 6: Seek additional funding.
- Priority 7: Initiate linear park and trail construction.

This approach for prototype communities can be applied across the County. However, there will be some locations – particularly the Airport Corridor that will primarily have industrial or office uses – where the prototypes will be less applicable. For these areas, a separate model is suggested: **Park Nodes** or **Micro Parks**. These small park-like settings will provide visual relief from the surrounding hardscape and contribute to the 'greening' and overall attractiveness of the area.

Park Nodes should have landscaping, public art, and/or pedestrian seating and can vary greatly in size. Some may be intensively developed. Basketball courts, softball fields, or open lawn areas, while requiring significantly more space, could provide employees at these locations the opportunity for physical exercise, healthy competition and a chance to further develop friendships or teamwork.

Recommendations by Type of Place

Each of the Places, along with the Park Prototype that would be most appropriate, are listed in Table 4E.3.

CDBG Priority Projects

Allegheny County uses Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding to assist municipalities with areas of low/moderate-income persons. A portion of that funding is used exclusively for parks, recreation, open space and greenways:

- Rehabilitation of existing facilities
- Replacement of substandard play equipment
- Adaptive reuse of functionally obsolete facilities
- Expansion of green space in developed municipalities
- Protection of green space in growing municipalities

Multi-municipal Cooperation

In Allegheny County, it is not possible to provide every type of recreational opportunity within each municipality due to the small size of many municipalities, the physical limitations posed by the type of terrain that exists, and fiscal constraints. In some cases, the sharing of facilities across municipal boundaries can be a viable solution. This has already been accomplished in some locations that already have a common bond such as belonging to the same school district. Some communities have been sharing facilities that require a significant amount of level land, such as community ball fields. In another example, several adjacent municipalities avoided a costly duplication

of services by sharing the expenses of one multi-municipal community pool.

Allegheny Places encourages intergovernmental cooperation and multi-municipal planning efforts (as discussed in the prototypes above). In addition to the cost benefits, the use of proper planning tools affords the opportunity to improve quality of life issues as communities evolve. For example, former commercial and industrial sites often extend across several municipal boundaries. As these sites are redeveloped, the reclamation of green space as part of the redevelopment effort benefits all the municipalities involved. In addition to making a more attractive visual environment, providing adequate green space helps mitigate water, air and noise pollution and – in some cases – helps control flooding.

D. Facilitate Public Access to Riverfronts

The Allegheny County Riverfronts Project

Allegheny County has made a significant commitment to reclaiming, rejuvenating and conserving its riverfronts. The County is teaming together with the Friends of the Riverfront and the Pennsylvania Environmental Council to implement a strategic plan for the Allegheny County Riverfronts Project. Working with a variety of other partners, including local

TABLE 4E.3 – Appropriate Park Prototypes for Places

PLACES	MULTI-MUNICIPAL	MATURE SUBURBAN	RAPIDLY GROWING	URBAN COMMUNITY	RIVERFRONT COMMUNITY	PARK NODE/MICRO PARK
Airport						X
Core				X	X	X
Corridor		X	X		X	
Urban Neighborhood				X	X	
Community Downtown	X			X	X	X
Village	X					
Rural	X					



governments and other nonprofits, this partnership will accomplish the specific tasks that will lead to the acquisition, restoration and development of riverfront areas.

A number of riverfront plans are being used to implement the Allegheny County Riverfronts Project, such as:

- Three Rivers Heritage Trail Plan
 - Three Rivers Second Nature Reports
 - Three Rivers River Conservation Plan
 - Monongahela River Conservation Plan
 - Middle Allegheny River Conservation Plan
 - Allegheny County Riverfront Plan
 - Three Rivers Park Plan
 - Riverlife Task Force Landscaping Guidelines
 - Report of the Riverlife Task Force Quality and Corridors Committee

Development of the linear greenway with trails, picnic areas and non-motorized boat launches will make the County's riverfronts more attractive and accessible. Once completed, the riverfront is expected to become a draw for tourists and business and will enhance the quality of life in Allegheny County.

The goals of the Project are to:

- Provide continuous access along the four rivers in Allegheny County (the Youghiogheny, the Monongahela, the Allegheny and the Ohio)
- Conserve biologically, environmentally and scenically important lands and islands along and in the rivers
- Help municipalities maintain and/or improve the quality of riverfront development and consider impacts on water quality
- Restore certain lands to a more environmentally sustainable state
- Provide for a positive non-motorized recreational experience on and along the rivers

Overarching all of these goals is the understanding that each community has its own character and will need to be approached with that character in mind. There will also be instances where achieving the vision is complicated or currently impossible due to current conditions (e.g. railroads, industrial facilities, highways). In these situations, the Project will work to seek alternatives to achieving the vision and be

vigilant as to changes in use that may later allow full implementation.

For more information on this project, go to <http://www.friendsoftheriverfront.org/>.



Photo credit: McCormick Taylor

Riverfront Redevelopment

Access to riverfronts can be provided through redevelopment of the large number of brownfields located along the Three Rivers. Local governments can contribute to the success of riverfront redevelopment by mandating such items as development setbacks from the river. The County has a model Riverfront Overlay District, which municipalities with riverfront land are encouraged to adopt into their zoning ordinances. With much of the riverfront lying under former steel mills and other industrial uses, these actions are urgent and must be taken before sites are redeveloped and the opportunity is lost.

The County recently purchased the Carrie Furnace Site, a 137-acre brownfield that spans portions of Braddock, Munhall, Rankin, Swissvale and Whitaker boroughs. The plan to redevelop this site into a mixed-use development will provide the public with access to the river.

The Pittsburgh Riverfront

The City of Pittsburgh published its *Riverfront Development Plan* in 1998. The plan for recreation, access and tourism along the rivers called for

municipalities to work together, to establish the riverfronts as one entity (not separate parcels), to spark tourism and to implement proper zoning. It stresses the importance of a Riverfront Overlay District, which is “to maintain an open space area with the potential for public access along the banks and to impose additional requirements on structures or uses within the district.” The City intends to acquire all of the 35 miles of riverfront property within its borders. For more information, go to <http://www.riverlifetaskforce.org/>.

E. Ensure that Regionally Significant Parks are ADA Compliant and Transit Accessible

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) guarantee equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities. The County will conform to ADA and ABA Guidelines on all new construction and all rehabilitation projects for recreational facilities. These guidelines cover many outdoor recreation facilities and related access items, such as parking and pathways. Trails, however, cannot always be built to ADA standards and there are allowances for this in the guidelines.

Recommendations from the 2002 *Parks and Recreation Master Plan* for bringing existing park facilities up to ADA standards will be used as a guideline to establish priorities.

Transit access to County Parks is limited. This hinders the ability of residents who do not own a car or do not drive to enjoy an important County amenity. In response to this, one of the system-wide recommendations in the County’s *Comprehensive Parks Master Plan* was to work with the Port Authority to improve public transit service to the County Parks. Currently, transit funding is limited and the Port Authority has been forced to eliminate routes throughout the County. However, *Allegheny Places* is a plan for the next 20 years and beyond. The County Park staff will continue to work with the Port Authority on ways to increase transit access to the parks. By continuing the coordination, the County will be able to take advantage of funding and resources as they become available in the future. One interim solution is for the county and city websites to list the bus routes to the parks and provide a link to Port Authority’s website.

F. Raise Public Awareness of the Benefits of Greenways and Open Space

Implementation of this plan will require a solid base of community support that understands the benefits of trails and greenways. Local officials and citizens will need to know the details of what is being proposed. Tours of proposed routes, maps published in local papers, displays at local events, local speaking engagements and local school activities are all ways which can be used to communicate the value of a trail system and gain support for acquisition and development.

Pilot projects are an effective public awareness tool. Specific projects to enhance the usability of a greenway, such as trailhead parking or a commercial establishment selling refreshments or fishing bait, will help to generate public interest. Obtaining land use agreements for private lands within the system can also be newsworthy to attract attention to the growing greenways network.

In June of 2001, the Commonwealth of *Pennsylvania released Pennsylvania Greenways: An Action Plan for Creating Connections* to provide a coordinated and strategic approach to creating connections through the establishment of greenways in the State. Chapter 11, Greenways Promotional Campaign, identifies four action steps leading to the development of promotional materials and increasing public awareness of the benefits of greenways. One action calls for the development of appropriate promotional materials on greenways for targeted groups; the materials should be produced in many formats, including hard copy and digital.

The greenways message will be incorporated into all of the County’s existing marketing outlets to raise awareness of greenway opportunities among residents and into national media to reach potential out-of-state visitors.

The County and its greenway planning partners encourage the long-term involvement and participation of citizens in the planning, design, implementation and management of the greenway system. The County, through the Greenways Committee, will use the resources developed by DCNR and DCED to promote greenways. Pennsylvania’s existing marketing outlets include the website www.experiencePA.com, interactive kiosks, media kits, event guides, visitor guides and



special events. The County will work with media outlets and local tourism agencies to make them aware of the benefits of promoting local greenways to tourists.

In addition, the Greenways map will be on the [Allegheny Places](http://www.alleghenyplaces.com) website and will be a tool for the public as well as for municipal officials to coordinate with their own parks, recreation and open space plans.



Photo credit: McCormick Taylor