The City of Coatesville
Parks 2021
An Action Plan for Lively Parks and Healthy People

August 2016

Toole Recreation Planning

References

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Project
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Introduction

The purpose of this project was to conduct a parks and recreation needs assessment for the City of Coatesville with the goal of identifying community interests and needs and to then provide an action plan for implementing improvements to the City’s parks, recreation opportunities, trails, and green spaces.

The function of any city with respect to parks and recreation is to provide the public with the resources and programs that are a vital element of a community’s quality of life and economy. To determine exactly what the needed resources are, it is essential to gather information from the public and subject that information to an analysis. The desired result is a consensus, which can direct the City of Coatesville toward efficient, effective, and equitable service delivery that meets the needs of residents of all ages and abilities.

The Coatesville Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment

The first step in understanding park and recreation needs is to listen to and understand the community, a process referred to as a “needs assessment.” The findings from the assessment define the extent of the parks, recreation, and open space needs that exist in the City of Coatesville and the assets available in the community, both in the public and private sectors, to address those needs.

While it is most obvious to focus on the physical aspects of parks and recreation such as land, parks, and other recreation facilities, addressing resident concerns and opportunities also requires an assessment of programs and services, level of public support and engagement, potential partnerships, financial resources, and alternative ways of delivering services.

Assessment Process

Natural Lands Trust and Toole Recreation Planning conducted the Needs Assessment with a planning team that included landscape architects, community and recreation planners, and cartographers with expertise in both planning and implementation. The work was guided by a Study Committee consisting of residents and community leaders. The sixth month process included:

- **Gauging Public Opinion** – A four-part public engagement strategy included a Study Committee, key person and focus group interviews, a public forum, and an online public opinion questionnaire.
• **Assessing Current Facilities** - Field reconnaissance and assessment of parks, recreation facilities, open space, trails, and additional open spaces such as schools.

• **Researching Community Assets Available to Support Parks, Recreation, and Open Space** - Assessment of the community and its resources for operating, managing, maintaining, and supporting public parks, recreation and open space.

The following questions guided the Coatesville Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment:

- **Needs.** What needs and interests do the citizens have? What are the characteristics of those who have identified needs? What do people want to do in local parks? What prevents them from taking advantage of existing parks and recreation opportunities?

- **City Government Role.** What does the community believe that the City of Coatesville should be doing in parks and recreation? What is the City’s relationship to community based organizations that are involved in park and recreation activities?

- **Support.** What is the level of public support for the parks and recreation system? Are there opportunities to build further support?

- **Partnership Potential.** What kinds of partnerships are currently providing services and facilities? How might such partnerships be strengthened and expanded?

- **Health and Equity.** How do we build active healthy lifestyles to create a culture of wellness? How do we provide equitable access to parks, programs, and nature?

- **Priorities.** What are the most important things that the City and its partners need to do to improve parks and recreation opportunities?

**Strategic Action Plan**

The planning team heard early on that the plethora of plans conducted for the City of Coatesville over the years had resulted in understandable civic skepticism towards planning efforts. The community has witnessed extensive planning with limited implementation of recommendations over the years. The Study Committee reiterated the urgent need to demonstrate short-term visible results stemming from this project. Consequently, the planning team developed a Strategic Action Plan focused on measures to improve parks and recreation that were most important to the community, and could be implemented, *as soon as possible.*
Cities where parks, recreation and trails play a vital role in the lives of their residents are vibrant places to live and have proven to be attractive to businesses and residents. In such communities, these public amenities are considered an essential service by residents and businesses alike.

In a disadvantaged urban community, public parks, recreation, and green spaces are particularly important. These resources offer opportunities for people of all incomes, abilities, and social circumstances to come together in a common space to experience nature, build strong family and community bonds, get fit, play, de-stress, and enjoy life. *Parks and recreation is an investment, not a cost.*
Do you know the power of your local parks and recreation? Yes, they provide beautiful green spaces and fun programs, but they do so much more and the benefits are immense. Learn more at www.nrpa.org/power-of-parks and watch the video.

**Parks Have Environmental Power**

1 ACRE OF TREES absorbs the carbon dioxide produced by DRIVING A CAR 11,000 MILES.

**Parks Have Health Power**

Increased access to places for physical activity leads to a 25% increase in people exercising 3 or more days a week.

**Parks Have Safety Power**

In Macon, GA, a revitalized park that included new programming and beautification efforts reduced incidents of crime and violence by 50%.

**Parks Have Community Power**

Parks strengthen community ties and bring diverse populations together.

Parks have the power to strengthen communities, transform lives, and protect the future.

Parks are the most powerful aspect of every community.

Sources:
Centers for Disease Control, Environmental Protection Agency, American Planning Association

#PowerOfParks
About the City of Coatesville and the Residents

Located forty-five miles west of Philadelphia, the City of Coatesville is Chester County’s only city. Once considered the “Pittsburgh of the East” due to its steel industry, the decline of that industry led to a long period of struggle with quality of life, economic, and fiscal concerns. Dramatic growth in Chester County has made it the wealthiest county in Pennsylvania, yet Coatesville has not shared in this prosperity.

However, this is a remarkable moment of opportunity for the community. A variety of projects and partnerships are now unfolding in the City with residents and community leaders actively working to transform Coatesville into a growing, vibrant place. The City’s diversity and relative youth are defining characteristics that stand to contribute to that revitalization. Many residents also demonstrate a common sense of energy and purpose and it is clear that parks and recreation have the potential to be a unifying focus of those energies.

The People of Coatesville

A small city of 1.8 square miles and a population of 13,148, the City of Coatesville is diverse by race, income, educational attainment, and interests. Coatesville’s population has steadily increased in recent years, growing from 10,838 in the 2000 Census to 13,148 in the 2015 American Community Survey. About 4,400 households yield an average household size of 2.95 persons. The most significant attributes of Coatesville’s population are its youth, its rich racial and cultural diversity, and the challenges of lower income and educational attainment levels. The American Community Survey’s annual report from 2010 through 2015 is the primary source of information on the City of Coatesville’s demographics.

Age

The city’s residents are young compared with those of Chester County and Pennsylvania. Whereas the greatest proportion of persons in the county and state are 45 to 54 years old, the largest age group in Coatesville is 25 to 34 years old. Coatesville has comparatively higher proportions of residents below the age of 35, and comparatively lower proportions of residents above the age of 35. In the 2010 U.S. Census, the median age in Coatesville was 29.8

compared with 39.3 in Chester County and 40.1 in Pennsylvania.

**Race**

In 2010, about 46 percent of the population was African American, 38 percent White, and 23 percent Hispanic. In about 16 percent of households, Spanish is the language spoken at home, a decrease of about five percent between 2010 and 2014.

![Population Comparison by Race 2010](https://pasdc.hbg.psu.edu/sdc/pasdc_files/census2010/Chester County/Coatesville city, Chester County.pdf)

**Physical Ability**

Twelve (12%) percent of Coatesville’s population has a disability. About 41% of citizens older than 65 has a disability.

**Employment and Commuting**

Coatesville’s unemployment rate is 10.7%. About 30.8% of those over the age of 16 are not in the work force (i.e. those who have no job and are not looking for one). Coatesville residents are about two and half times more likely to work in service occupations than other Chester County residents and twice as likely to work in production, transportation, and moving occupations.

While most commute to work via car, truck, or van, about 9% take public transit, 5% walk, and 4% use other means. Residents commuting to the region’s major employment centers could reduce their automobile dependence if the revitalized Amtrak station offers increased service via Amtrak and SEPTA regional rail. Ongoing trail expansion in the area may lead to new opportunities to cycle to work.
**Housing**

There are about 613 housing units in Coatesville. Renters occupy 63% of housing units while owners occupy 37%. About 77% of householders have moved into their housing unit since 2000. About 52% of the renter population spends more than 35% of their gross income on rent, up from 45% in 2010. The city is home to more than 40% of Chester County’s Federal housing choice program formerly known as Section 8 recipients. In 2014, the median house value of $127,000 in Coatesville was about 35% of the median house value in Chester County. More than one out of four households do not have a vehicle.

**Education**

Educational attainment is generally lower than elsewhere in Chester County. In 2010, 79.9% of City residents was a high school graduate or higher and about 14.7% had a bachelor’s degree or higher. In 2014, these numbers changed to 80.4% and 12.7% respectively for the City, versus 92.8% and 48.8% for the county as a whole.

**Income**

Coatesville’s residents earn comparatively low incomes and a greater proportion of them experience poverty. According to the 2015 American Community Survey 5-year estimate, the average household in Coatesville earns $35,601 which is approximately two-fifths of its counterpart of $86,093 in Chester County.

Focusing on average income, however, obscures the severe reality of economic hardship within Coatesville. Between 2010 and 2014, households earning less than $25,000 increased to 38% from 36% while households earning more than $75,000 decreased from 25% to 20%.

**Poverty**

By far the most pressing problem of the citizens in Coatesville is poverty. The poverty rate in the City of Coatesville (34%) is nearly five times that of Chester County overall (7%). Between 2000 and 2014, every age group experienced an increase in the rate of poverty. In 2000, only 9% of Coatesville’s population lived below the poverty line. By 2010 this figure increased to 25% and then to 30% in 2014.

Children are particularly affected by poverty in Coatesville.

- 46% of children under 18 live below the poverty level, up from 34% in 2010.
- 70% of children under five years of age living with a single female live below the poverty level, an increase of 11% from 59% in 2010. About 45% of family households in Coatesville have a female householder

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• About 40% of grandparents living with their grandchildren are responsible for them, significantly more than the 26% of grandparents who were responsible for their grandchildren in 2010.

• 38% of the citizens use food stamps or public assistance.

Public Opinion on Parks, Recreation, and Open Space

Public outreach was the foundation of the Needs Assessment. It included a Study Committee, a public forum, key person interviews, focus groups, and an online public opinion questionnaire.

Study Committee

The Study Committee served as the “eyes and ears” of the community, meeting three times to provide guidance about opportunities, concerns, issues, and the needs assessment process. The 20 members represented Coatesville City Council, City of Coatesville Management, Residents, City of Coatesville Police Department, Coatesville Area School District, Brandywine Health Foundation, Chester County Senior Center, Community Church of Coatesville, Judah Ministries Church of God in Christ, Coatesville Youth Initiative, Coatesville Area Partners for Progress, Lincoln University, Art Partners Studio, and the Brandywine YMCA.

Public Forum

The Study Committee played a crucial role in generating a turnout of 145 people for a Public Forum on February 18, 2016. Participants included City residents of varying ages and interests; elected and appointed officials from the city, county, and state; teachers from the Coatesville Area Schools; representatives of faith based institutions, sports leagues, community based organizations, and businesses; city employees including police and the City Manager; and residents of surrounding communities.

Discussions were lively and quite positive. While the participants identified many concerns, their desire to see improved parks and recreation was paired with a willingness to help make the positive changes that are necessary. The top priorities identified by the participants include the following:

1. Safe, clean and beautiful parks
2. A commitment to consistent, high quality maintenance
3. Activities for people of all ages, especially families
4. Continued opportunities for community involvement
5. Safe places to walk and bicycle
6. Repair of the two closed City pools
7. Year round recreation both indoors and outdoors at times when people want to recreate
8. More communication about programs and activities
**Interviews**

The planning team interviewed 38 key stakeholders including youth, parents, and other residents; elected and appointed officials; Coatesville Area School District officials; Study Committee members; representatives of the Iron & Steel Heritage Museum; faith leaders; business owners; a community & economic development specialist; sports league organizers; arts organization representatives; police; and, teachers.

Feedback from the interviewees was largely consistent with that from the public forum. Concerns raised included safety, facility conditions, a need for safe places to walk and bicycle, repair of the swimming pools, and need for more programs and activities. However, the expertise and level of involvement of these key stakeholders resulted in additional insights including the following:

1. A perception of Coatesville as a dangerous place prevents use of the parks and engagement in recreation programs by residents and non-residents alike. This perception can be reinforced by the existence of neglected park facilities. Thus, it was suggested that it may be better not to have facilities than to have ones that are decrepit. Creating safe places to walk and bicycle is a priority.

2. Revitalization of the City and its economy could be achieved in part through recreation and tourism. However, the City is not yet in a position to undertake such efforts.

3. While the public at large appears to want to have the pools revitalized in both Ash and Palmer Parks, those interviewed had widely varying views about the pools. Some think that the pools are too expensive to maintain and suggested that funds might be put to better use improving parks and providing programs.

4. More programs and activities are needed, especially for children.

5. Many residents have fond memories of the parks when they were in their heyday. Decades ago, the parks were safe, clean, beautiful and heavily used. The City employed park caretakers to ensure that there was a presence in the parks and that the parks were well taken care of.

6. Comparisons to other local park systems reinforced the ability of beautiful, functional parks with great customer service to generate revenue and inspire people to move to the communities.

7. Concern about the City’s finances and capacity to take care of the parks and recreation system was a common theme.

8. Various community based organizations and the City operate independently guided by their own missions. There is a perception that many programs and services are planned in isolation.
9. Information about parks and recreation opportunities is not readily available in a timely manner. There is no single “go to” source of information specifically for parks and recreation opportunities for city residents.

10. Many interviewees perceived that the former parks and recreation department did little in the way of delivering public recreation services or value to the community. This is unfortunate as cities with strong parks and recreation departments typically have very successful public parks and recreation systems that serve the community well and are perceived as an asset by the business community.

11. The business community does not regard parks and recreation as important, which is inconsistent with research findings that show parks and recreation to be an economic driver.

12. When community groups have an idea to improve a park, make a presentation to Council to get approval for their project. Such requests are invariably approved.

13. Some creative examples of successful projects are underway in the city, including a program which is credited with virtually eliminating graffiti. Other examples noted were the Coatesville Youth Initiative; faith based support groups; investment by the Brandywine Health Foundation; public art by the Art Partners Studio; volunteerism by Lincoln University; and others.

14. New initiatives are underway to revitalize Coatesville, including grant funding for an economic development director, improvements to the Iron & Steel Heritage Museum, and the development of the new Amtrak station.

Focus Groups

In order to reach out to additional neighborhood based groups, the planning team developed a “Community Forum Kit”. The Kit contained materials, supplies, and directions for people in the community to run their own focus groups. The Community Church of Coatesville ran several in conjunction with their discussion groups. The input received was consistent with that from the public forum and included the following:

1. The parks are not safe. A presence in the parks would encourage people to use them and help them to feel confident enough to send their children to them.
2. The pools were the major facility concern.
3. The parks need to be fixed and include things like pavilions.
4. More programs for children and families are needed.
Online Public Opinion Questionnaire

An online public opinion questionnaire generated 695 responses including 231 from City residents. While it might seem unusual for so many non-residents to respond, there is a sense of regional identity due to the coverage area of the Coatesville Areas School District and efforts to define the region as the “Greater Coatesville Community”. The findings of the responses from Coatesville residents follow.

Park Use and Ratings

Respondents reported that Ash Park, Gateway Park and Abdala Park are the most used parks. Seventy-eight (78%) percent of the respondents rate Coatesville’s parks and recreation facilities as poor to fair. Nearly seven out of ten respondents reported using parks outside of Coatesville. Frequently mentioned parks were Kerr Park, Hibernia Park, Kent Park, Layton Park, Lloyd Park, and Bell Tavern Park located in the Downingtown area.

Most Preferred Experiences Sought in the Parks

- Walking (73%)
- Enjoying nature (71%)
- Special events (movie nights, fairs, festivals, races, etc.) (68%)
- Socializing with family and friends (65%)
- Playing on a playground (59%)

Top Issues That Prevent Respondents from Using Parks and Recreation Opportunities

- Not safe (63%)
- Poor quality facilities (59%)
- Not enough programs (39%)
- Don’t know about them (32%)
- Parks and recreation facilities do not interest them (19%)

Most Important Parks and Recreation Opportunities to Provide in Coatesville

- Walking paths (98%)
- Playgrounds (97%)
- Comfort facilities such as restrooms and drinking fountains (95%)
- Nature play areas (93%) & Socializing with family and friends (93%)
- Nature areas for recreation (fishing, hiking, environmental education) (92%)

Ash and Palmer Parks’ Swimming Pools

More than 60% of the respondents indicated that it was very important to fix the pools in Ash and Palmer Parks. Another 23% reported that it was important to fix the pools. Few said it was not important to fix the pool in Ash Park (16%) or Palmer Park (18%). About 42% wanted to see features added to the pools such as slides, fountains etc. In summary, more than four out of five respondents said that fixing the pools is important or very important to them. When asked about
the type of repairs they prefer, the most preferred choices were to make basic repairs and add features such as slides.

**Highest Priorities of the Respondents for Parks, Recreation, Trails and Open Space in Coatesville**

- Safe places to walk (79%)
- Improvements to existing parks and recreation facilities (75%)
- Maintain existing parks and recreation facilities (69%)
- Safe places to bicycle (66%)
- Improved recreation programs and services (64%)

**Finding Out about Parks and Recreation Opportunities**

Word of mouth (64%) was the most important source of information about parks and recreation opportunities. Next in importance at 50% was social media such as Facebook. Councilperson Marie Lawson’s Facebook page was frequently mentioned as a source of information. City Hall, which usually is the prime source of information about public parks and recreation, rated low at 16% for the website and 1% by calling. Notably 30% said that they do not hear about parks and recreation opportunities. In the future, the respondents would prefer to get this information by social media (67%) such as Facebook, Twitter etc. and the City website (46%) or newsletter (39%).

**One Single Most Important Thing To Do To Improve Parks, Recreation and Open Space in the City of Coatesville**

Respondents were asked to identify the single most important thing that should be done to improve parks and recreation. Responses fell into the main themes of safety, cleanliness, maintenance, fixing the pools, and improved programs and services. Opportunities for kids were noted as especially important. The word cloud below depicts their most frequent answers.
Potential Volunteers

Fifty-three (53) respondents indicated that they would be willing to volunteer to help with parks and recreation. They are interested in a wide range of activities including marketing, advertising, fundraising, providing programs, performing maintenance tasks, planning, and “anything that would help”.

Summary

Coatesville is a small city of 1.8 square miles with a population of 13,148 that is growing, young, diverse, and family oriented. About 5,000 of the residents are children and youth. One in three people in Coatesville live below the poverty line and that number has been increasing for more than six years. The population earning middle class wages has been decreasing. Concerns of the community regarding parks, recreation, and open space revolve around safety, insufficient maintenance, park cleanliness, lack of programs, and broken and closed facilities.

Despite these significant challenges and deficient, unsafe parks, the people of Coatesville have demonstrated a strong commitment to helping to improve things wherever they can. In contrast to other communities nationwide where the average attendance at a public meeting is eight (8), 145 people attended the Coatesville Public Forum. Nearly 700 people responded to the online questionnaire about parks, recreation and open space including a mix of residents and non-residents. Another 70 people and numerous community based organizations came together in focus groups and interviews. Community based organizations emerged throughout this Needs Assessment that undertake park improvements and related projects. Making the case that parks, recreation and open space are critical factors in improving the quality of life in Coatesville, harnessing the collective potential of community based organizations to improve parks and recreation collectively, and tapping the ready supply of volunteers are three major opportunities that could serve the City and its people well.
Coatesville’s Parks, Recreation and Open Space System

The City of Coatesville maintains ten parks totaling 34.05 acres including:

- Victor Abdala, Sr. Park
- Chester Ash Memorial Park
- Friendship Garden Park
- Gateway Park
- Jeanne Treadwell James Memorial Park
- Paul Palmer Park
- Earl Q. Patton Park/West End Park
- Valley View Park
- Swing Park
- Unnamed – Smithbridge Dr. (Regency Park Apartments)

Amount of Parkland

By standard measures, Coatesville does not have sufficient parkland. According to the Trust for Public Land, the median amount of parkland per 1,000 residents in America’s 100 most populous cities was 13.1 with a range of 6.8 in the densest to 23.3 in the least dense. Medium dense cities, which would include Coatesville, have 9.7 acres per thousand\(^3\). For decades, the National Recreation and Park Association’s standard for parkland was 10.5 acres per 1,000 residents. This has become the default standard in Pennsylvania. Based upon these standards, the City of Coatesville should have from a minimum of 126 acres to as much as 170 acres of parkland.

According to the Trust for Public Land, the median percentage of city land dedicated to parks is 8.8 percent. The range is 7.3 percent to 12.5 percent. Parkland in the City of Coatesville occupies 2.9 percent of the land area. Applying the Trust for Public Land’s median figure of 8.8% to Coatesville would equate to 102 acres of parkland.

Using the population per thousand and percentage of city land standards for comparison, the City of Coatesville’s parkland deficit ranges from 68 to 92 acres.

One of the mitigating factors in parkland deficiency is the lack of schools in the City with grounds used for public recreation.

There are possibilities for adding to the City’s park system. The City owns a substantial amount of land, both within and outside of the city limits. In total, the City of Coatesville owns about 176.5 additional acres, of which the largest tracts are located near the northern boundary and, in some cases, beyond the City limits. In addition, the Coatesville Redevelopment Authority (RDA) owns about 80 acres. The RDA property consists of some vacant tracts downtown and a substantial portion located adjacent to Brandywine Creek north of downtown Coatesville. In general, much of the City-owned and RDA land is located on the outskirts of the City and is not suitable for active recreation. While not a substitute for needed additions to the park and recreation system near the population center, City-owned and RDA property could provide future opportunities for passive recreation if developed as such. For instance, the existing portion of the Brandywine Creek Trail from Lincoln Highway to Glencrest Road is located on RDA property and there may be opportunities to expand trail connections to the north using City land.

**Location of Parks and Recreation Facilities**

With 1.8 square miles, the City of Coatesville can be a very walkable community. The parks are well located with a service radius of generally less than a half mile or a ten-minute walk. Nearly every neighborhood has access to public parks. Two parks - Valley View Park at the southernmost city boundary, and a park, unnamed at this time, located in the northwest portion of the City - are difficult to access by foot or bicycle from downtown Coatesville; however, they serve their surrounding neighborhoods. One neighborhood north of the Amtrak station does not currently have easy access to municipal parkland. See Map 2 for a depiction of municipal parkland service areas in the City.

**Facilities**

The Park and Recreation Facilities Report (see Appendix) presents the inventory of recreation facilities in Coatesville’s parks. The types of facilities located in City parks are those traditionally found in urban parks: playgrounds, basketball courts, pavilions, benches and tables, ball diamonds, and swimming pools. The City has a Recreation Center but it is currently used only as a rental facility for community events. Facilities that are not available in City parks include flat fields for soccer and lacrosse, a dog park, and a skate park.

Many facilities are aging and deteriorating. While the City does what it can within its limited park maintenance budget, tasks are generally directed to mowing and litter pick up in order to keep the parks clean. Due to years of deferred maintenance, facilities are in need of revitalization. Each of the parks needs a master plan in order to improve them in accordance with public preferences, to ensure great public spaces, and to qualify for grant funding.
Despite challenges, there are bright spots including the recent renovation and reopening of the splash pad and the upcoming installation of a new playground in Patton/West End Park.

About the Pools

The facilities that have been the subject of the most interest in this Needs Assessment are the swimming pools in Ash and Palmer Parks. Both are inoperable and closed. Debate about the pools was wide ranging and suggestions for addressing them included repairing them to a functional level, improving them with water play features, eliminating the pool in Palmer Park and fixing the one in Ash Park, eliminating both pools, and converting one or both to splash pads. Discussions centered on the need for the public to have access to the pools but recognized that the City may not be able to afford to repair and operate them. A cost analysis would help City leaders decide whether investing in the pools is the best use of funds. The analysis should compare the costs of repairing, maintaining and operating the pools versus providing and maintaining new water features in one or both parks.

It should be noted that, across the country, communities struggle to finance pool maintenance and staffing. Municipal ownership and operation of pools is not the only solution. Partnerships with non-profits and school districts can reduce the financial burden on cities while providing critical safety skills and recreation opportunities. Thus, a pool analysis should also investigate whether facilities at the Coatesville Area High School, YMCA or other providers could meet the needs of Coatesville residents.

Individual and focus group interviews also revealed apparent low attendance and use of the pools. This is a highly unusual finding in urban communities, especially so with over 5,000 children and youth under the age of 19. Nearby Philadelphia with its 70 pools has a demand for swim time that exceeds supply resulting in lines to get in to the pools and tickets with time assignments for pool visitors. The pool analysis could include an assessment of past use and, if use is found to be lower than anticipated, identify factors that may have limited it.

Why are the pools important to Coatesville residents?

Public pools are important for many reasons. Learning how to swim is a life skill that is important for personal safety. Yet in cities with high poverty rates, residents may not be able to afford to join private swim clubs or pay for swimming lessons. Public swimming pools provide a more accessible way for community members – especially children – to learn to swim.

Public pools also bring people together in a way that few other recreation facilities do, enabling people of all ages to socialize, have fun, and engage in a healthy lifestyle.

Finally, the presence of well-maintained public pools can enhance the economic prosperity of a community by attracting new residents. They can also deter crime by preventing at-risk youth from engaging in undesirable behavior.
Access and Connections

Given the compact size of the City, safe places to walk and bicycle are achievable. About eight percent of the citizens take public transportation to work while five percent walk. Sidewalks exist along most city streets. Lincoln Highway (Route 30) features bike lanes in both directions between 1st Avenue and East Diamond Street, near the eastern City boundary. The quarter mile long Brandywine Trail offers a place to walk and enjoy the creek, with opportunities for future extensions to the north and south. The potential expansion of the Chester Valley Trail, east and west across Chester County, could also provide an amenity in the City of Coatesville. In most cases, the infrastructure for walking and bicycling is in place, but safety and a lack of attractive destinations may discourage people from walking or bicycling.

The bones of the City's parks system are good and the community's location along a revitalizing Amtrak/SEPTA rail line, the Brandywine Creek, and the potential expansions of the Chester Valley Trail and Brandywine Creek Greenway create myriad opportunities to create additional recreation facilities in the future. A network of parks and the underutilized recreation center could be rehabilitated, and partners enlisted, to provide programming in what could become a premier parks and recreation system enhancing the quality of life for residents and improving the local economy. This will take time, commitment and investment, but it is possible.

Programs and Services

Programs and services are of great importance to the community. Programs emerged as a top priority in all forms of public outreach. Findings related to programs include the following:

- Private, non-profit organizations are the main providers of programs currently. These include the Brandywine YMCA, Art Partners Studio, Chester County Department of Aging Services, and faith based institutions among others.

- The Coatesville Area School District provides after school programs and facilitates the community use of school facilities – including the pool - for programs such as the YMCA's summer camp.

- The Coatesville Youth Initiative provides a seasonal calendar of activities and services for the Greater Coatesville Area. The calendar includes a host of opportunities, including recreation.

- City Council members plan activities such as movie nights and concerts. The City Manager is planning the Coatesville Vintage Grand Prix slated for the fall of 2016.

- The City does not have a recreation department so there is no regular recreational programming for city residents.
Recreation programs are extremely important to the quality of life in a community. They help with youth development, deterrence of anti-social behavior, fighting obesity, and community safety. The RAND Corporation found that the single most important factor in increasing use of the parks is recreation programs and activities. Parks are used less in high-poverty areas compared to medium- and low-poverty area parks, even after accounting for differences in size, staffing, and programming. The strongest correlates of park use were the number of part time staff, the number of supervised and organized programs, and residents’ relationship with the park staff. Overall, the strongest predictors of increased park use were the presence of organized and supervised activities. Focusing resources on programming may be more fruitful than targeting perceived threats such as homelessness, park users under the influence and other undesirable or threatening behavior.

Programs for city residents are generally sporadic, not well known, and planned informally as best as volunteers can do. Since activities are often planned and scheduled close to the day offered, there is less chance for people to plan to be there. Consequently, many great events that volunteers invest their time and energy in are reported to result in sparse attendance. Citizens listed the lack of information as one of their chief barriers to participation.

### Maintenance and Operations

Maintenance is the single most expensive cost of parks. Over the lifetime of a park, 75 percent of its cost goes to maintenance and operations. Unfortunately, it is much easier to secure funding for parkland acquisition and the development of recreation facilities than it is to find the resources needed to take care of them once developed. Since the City of Coatesville does not have a parks and recreation department, the Public Works Department is responsible for park maintenance. The City Manager oversees parks and recreation and has assumed the responsibility for park planning and management.

City forces do a good job with limited staff and budget, but they are generally limited to surface level maintenance. Their work is augmented by frequent volunteer-run park clean-ups. However, preventive maintenance is very limited. Due to the age and condition of facilities, the public often confuses the deteriorating conditions as poor maintenance when in fact many facilities need replacement. Reports of drug paraphernalia, drinking, and sexual activity in the parks abound but it is important to give credit where credit is due to the maintenance staff and community volunteers for keeping the parks as clean as they are.

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Park Planning

Since there is no parks and recreation department and funding is very limited at present, park planning is also limited and done in reaction to emergency circumstances and community proposals. When major problems arise in parks and recreation, the City Manager handles them as best he can. Two such problems were mentioned often during the course of this Needs Assessment but have been in the making for some time: the closure of the swimming pool in Ash Park and the broken splash pad near the Brandywine Trail. The City recently repaired and reopened the splash pad and is exploring options for repair of the Ash Park pool.

The City is fortunate to have community based organizations helping to improve the parks. However, there are no park master plans and no process in place to review and decide upon projects proposed by groups outside city government. Consequently, community groups put together proposals and present them to City Council at a public meeting, but City Council has not had the advantage of having those proposals reviewed first by a party responsible for park planning. Thus, groups’ proposals – though well meaning - may not be consistent with the City’s long-range needs.

Master plans for each park would provide a context for such proposals to be vetted by a park and recreation planner and/or advisory committee before they reach City Council. Such a process would enable council members to make decisions that improve the parks over the long term, and bolster the City’s public image.

Financing

The City’s dire financial condition is reflected in the drastic budget cuts of the last two years. The City is in danger of becoming designated as a Financially Distressed Community, a state program known as Act 47, requiring a financial remediation plan. The City of Coatesville’s budget for parks and recreation in 2016 is $79,777. Since Ash Pool is currently closed, the $25,000 allocation for the pool may be available to be used for other parks and recreation purposes. Table 1 presents the 2016 and 2014 budgets with expenses and revenues and capital budget for parks and recreation.
### Coatesville Parks and Recreation Budget and City Budget

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>EXPENSES</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parks</td>
<td>$39,787</td>
<td>$153,620</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Center</td>
<td>14,990</td>
<td>28,449</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pools</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>69,000</td>
<td>-44,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recreation Camps</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$79,777</td>
<td>$251,069</td>
<td>-$171,292 (68%)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Revenues</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Center</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
<td>$7,155</td>
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<td>Swimming Pool</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recreation Fees</td>
<td>150</td>
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<td>+55</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$3,150</td>
<td>$10,269.00</td>
<td>-$7,119 (69%)</td>
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<td><strong>Capital Budget</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Electrical Contract</td>
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<td><strong>City of Coatesville</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Operating Budget</td>
<td>9,779,790</td>
<td>9,702,214</td>
<td>+$77,576</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Benchmarks

The City of Coatesville budgeted $6.07 per capita on parks and recreation in 2016. The figure decreases to $4.17 without the pool budget. The statewide average is $30. The ratio of the parks and recreation budget to the City budget is 0.8 percent or without the pool budget 0.5%. The statewide average is 3%. The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources recommends 5% percent.

The City spends about $1,434 per acre on park maintenance. This is less than the low end of $1,500 to $3,000 per acre spent in southeastern Pennsylvania generally. Urban park systems with high visitation and regard by the business sector spend upwards of $8,000 to $10,000 per acre.

### Financial Implications

The City’s difficult financial circumstances resulted in significant cuts (68%) to parks and recreation. No funds have been allocated for programs. Limited funding has been appropriated for park maintenance and capital money is appropriated for critical repairs only. The City’s operating budget increased slightly between 2014 and 2016, while the parks and recreation budget decreased. If investments in facilities are made, provisions for maintenance must be made. Making improvements without sufficient resources to take care of them is not a worthy investment of public or private funding.

The City of Coatesville cannot currently deliver all of the public parks and recreation services needed by the community. A mix of public and private partnerships is needed. That, in fact, is the way in which urban parks and recreation systems across the country work successfully. The key to successful public private partnerships and generating non-tax revenues is that someone
or some organization has to have the responsibility and expertise to lead this effort.

Summary

Coatesville’s parks, recreation and open space system is critical to the quality of life in this community. The community has been experiencing major socio-economic challenges that have resulted in increasing levels of poverty and a shrinking middle class. The City is facing severe financial challenges that caused major budget reductions in parks and recreation, resulting in the loss of the parks and recreation department, deferred maintenance, two swimming pools that are inoperable, and only a few recreation programs sponsored by volunteer council members and city management. Community based organizations are playing an important role in offering recreation programs, as well. While there is the perception that many recreation programs are available, exploration into this perception found that they are sporadic and that the community reports being largely unaware of these opportunities.

The parks and recreation system has parks that are well-located to serve the citizens and offer access via non-motorized means. The challenge of the park system is that it is undersized, aging, and worn out to the extent that some facilities are inoperable, such as the pools, or underutilized, such as the indoor recreation center. The system is filled with potential, but requires planning and investment, and an ongoing program of regular park maintenance to keep it up.

Public-private partnerships are a notable opportunity. Organizations such as the Brandywine Health Foundation, the Coatesville Area School District, the YMCA, the Community Church of Coatesville, Natural Lands Trust, and others are working to help improve the City through parks and recreation. Interviews revealed that youth athletic leagues, managed by dedicated parents, including RaiderStarz, Little League, and midget football, occur throughout the City. More than 800 people have provided input to this process indicating how important parks and recreation is to this community. Harnessing these resources and focusing them on working toward a common vision will be essential to restoring Coatesville’s public parks, recreation and open space system.
Findings and Recommendations

The public contributed critical information throughout this planning process about what is important to them regarding parks, recreation, and open space. Their ideas, combined with field work and research by the planning team, socio-economic considerations in the City, and national and state trends in parks and recreation provided the foundation for the following findings and recommendations.

Findings

The following key findings emerged from the Needs Assessment and research.

- **Safety First.** Safety in the parks is the major concern of the public. Fear is the chief barrier to the use of the parks by the public. Many residents are afraid to use the parks or send their children to the parks.

- **Improvement Priorities.** The most important parks and recreation improvements called for by citizens are: safe places to walk and bicycle; clean, regularly maintained parks; more programs and activities available to all people, especially children and families; and timely information about recreation opportunities that is easy to access.

- **Limited Parks and Recreation System.** The City has only ten parks with a total of about 34 acres of land. While nearly all residents are located within close proximity to a park, the overall size and scope of the system is limited. Typical park systems in comparable communities are larger, with 126 to 170 or more acres of park land. Since adding to the Coatesville system is impractical at this time, it is important that the City make the best use of all the parks. Facilities are aging, wearing out, and in need of capital improvements. Both of the public pools are closed because they are inoperable. Playgrounds need replacement.

- **Program Awareness Disparity.** While program providers and stakeholders have remarked that many programs and services are available, the community still perceives that there are few. Reasons for this disconnect may include the lack of programming coordination at the city level; programs and events being planned later than is optimal; lack of sufficient promotion via the communication channels that residents...
prefer; program and event planners/providers operating independently; and, fear about getting to and from facilities and about using the locations themselves.

- **Fiscal Austerity Challenges.** The City of Coatesville’s financial resources are extremely limited due to a declining tax base and increasing expenditures. The severity is so challenging that the City is working to avoid being declared an Act 47 community. This suggests that addressing the City’s park and recreation needs will require that priorities for improvements are established and followed; that capacity to maintain physical improvements and programs is considered before undertaking new initiatives; and that effective public/private partnerships are developed and managed.

- **Significant Community Support.** Despite, and perhaps because of, the City’s fiscal challenges, the level of community support for parks, recreation and open space is remarkable. More than 140 people participated in the public forum conducted as part of this Needs Assessment. The national average for attendance in a public meeting is only eight. Nearly 700 people answered an online public opinion questionnaire on this topic. Tapping this interested, engaged community can have tremendous benefits but will require time, expertise, and a strategy for community involvement.

- **Need for Action.** Throughout the Needs Assessment, concern about the large number of plans undertaken by and for the City emerged from many citizens and organizations. What people want most is to see actions carried out – not more planning.

### Recommendations

Based upon public opinion; research of existing conditions of facilities, programs, operations and financing; and, the findings of the planning process, the City of Coatesville established one goal for the **City of Coatesville Parks 2021 Plan.**

*Transform the public parks and recreation system into a community treasure where the citizens can play, socialize, get fit, and connect with nature and safety and businesses thrive because people want to live, work and visit here.*

The blueprint for achieving this singular goal is organized around three principal actions:

1. **Build capacity.** Build the City’s capacity to provide the safe and well-maintained park system that its citizens desire.

2. **Build community.** Channel the incredible volunteer interest into addressing the City’s highest priority programs and park improvements. Enlist non-profit partners to carry out programs and physical improvements that meet City needs and desires.
3. **Build facilities (and maintain them).** In accordance with this Needs Assessment and future priorities recommended to City Council by a Parks, Recreation and Conservation Advisory Committee (see below), seek funding for highest priority physical improvements to City parks and facilities.

**What would building capacity, community, and facilities look like in Coatesville? This report recommends that City Council pursue the following actions:**

**BUILD CAPACITY –**

- **Establish a Parks, Recreation and Conservation Advisory Committee (Advisory Committee) to support and inform the City.** Appoint an informal advisory group, perhaps inviting the current Needs Assessment Study Committee members, and adding City residents to the membership.

  The newly formed Advisory Committee would act as:
  - Advisory committee to City Council on parks, recreation facilities, trails, natural resource conservation, programs and events, increasing public awareness about parks and recreation.
  - Coordinator of programs and services provided by the City and community based organizations.
  - Promoter of parks, recreation, and nature based opportunities.

- **Peer professional.** Pursue a DCNR Peer grant that would provide part-time support from a recreation professional, for one year, to help the Advisory Committee define its role and processes, and to strengthen its organizational and planning skills. The recreational professional would assist the group in creating an annual work program featuring two to three projects that the Advisory Committee would advance.

- **Park Safety Ambassador.** Focus on park safety as the top priority by providing a City presence in the parks. Budget for 70 hours a week of coverage for 26 weeks (late April through October of each year) at an estimated annual payroll of $32,760, plus seed money for uniform shirts, supplies and training for a total of $45,000, annually. There is currently a part-time, seasonal staff person who reports to Public Works and reports on maintenance and safety issues. We recommend recasting this position to one or two workers, possibly Veterans or young adults, who would be in the parks on a rotating basis during hours of peak use. Consider advertising set hours for some of this time so that people know that a city staff person would be in designated parks at defined times and thus feel more confident to send their children to the parks. Consider housing this function within the Community Policing division of the Police Department.

- **City Staff.** Assign the new Assistant City Manager as a liaison to the
Advisory Committee and to provide oversight of the parks and recreation function. As few as four to six hours per week could suffice for the first several years. (An alternative approach would be to mirror that taken by some other cities in which a non-profit takes primary responsibility for the City’s parks and programs. An organization such as the newly formed Second Century Alliance might eventually fulfill such a role in Coatesville.)

In addition to these immediate capacity building initiatives, in the near term (years two to five) the City could:

- **Assist in aligning volunteers and providers with City priorities through the Advisory Committee.** For programs offered by community based organizations, require them to complete a program proposal application or the MIS shown on page 31. This could be submitted to both the City and the Advisory Committee to ensure proper coordination. Set forth a timeline for submission, review, and decision-making. Develop a fees and charges policy for the use of parks by organizations who charge for programs or events.

- **Hold a Safety Summit.** Involve the police department and speakers from other urban parks and recreation departments involved with safety success stories. Include an action planning agenda as part of the Summit.

- **Host a Recreation Program Summit.** Involve all community recreation providers in the Summit. The goal of the Summit should be to: 1) Identify all community recreation providers, what they offer and their schedule of services; 2) Identify gaps in service to identified client groups and formulate a plan to fill unmet recreation needs; and, 3) Identify how the various providers could work together in serving the community as a whole.

- **Leverage Stormwater Management Funding to restore parks and public streetscapes.** The City has obligations to reduce several stream pollutants (referred to as Total Maximum Daily Loads or TMDL) as required by the federal MS4 stormwater management program. Some of the pollutants, such as sediment, can be reduced with naturalized “Best Management Practices” such as street or park trees planted in stormwater trenches, rain gardens in parks, and underground infiltration systems. Working with the Chester County Water Resources Authority and Natural Lands Trust may reveal opportunities to leverage state and federal funding so that parks can be revegetated and the City can meet stormwater requirements.

**BUILD COMMUNITY –**

- **Leverage building of the new playground in Patton/West End Park to create ongoing volunteer engagement.** Use the volunteer-driven design and building process to establish a Friends of Patton/West End Park as a pilot project. As part of the project,
formulate an operations and maintenance plan for the playground and park, designating roles and responsibilities for the Friends group and the City.

Following the KABOOM playground installation, work with the Advisory Committee and Peer to:

- **Enhance Communications.** Increase public awareness about parks, recreation, and open space in the community with 1) a communications plan to coordinate promotion of parks and activities; and, 2) a reliable, easy to use web site that serves as the “Go-To” source of information about parks and offers timely announcements of upcoming activities, events and programs.

- **Programs and Events Coordination.** Formulate a program, event, and activity planning process. Determine the overall program philosophy for the City of Coatesville, which for now should be to produce a limited number of City-sponsored events each year; facilitate recreation programs provided by community based organizations; and, work to promote all of the activities taking place in City parks. The City needs to be in control of what happens in the parks even if those happenings are offered by others. Events have impacts on city forces and budget, such as traffic and security demands.

- **Assess Vacant Land.** The new Second Century Alliance and economic development director will focus revitalization efforts from First Avenue to 4th Street, between the rail line and Harmony Street. The City, Second Century Alliance and a consultant could partner to determine where vacant lots can be used as public gathering and programming spaces whether on a temporary “pop up” park basis for community gardens and events or as more permanent public spaces.

- **Support Expansion of the Chester Valley Trail (CVT).** Chester County, and the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission have stated that extending the Chester Valley Trail east-west across the County is a priority. The CVT is the primary trail corridor considered in the Route 30 Multimodal Transportation Study, completed in 2016. In 2018, the county anticipates a study of the trail route through Coatesville. While this Needs Assessment looked at extending the Brandywine Trail, north from its current terminus, we learned that the CVT is of higher priority for the County. The City should participate in the study as City residents rated trails and walking as high priorities in the questionnaire and at the public forum.

**FACILITIES –**

*Note: Any capital improvement project requires substantial funding for development and subsequent maintenance. We believe that addressing safety with the Park Ambassador Program and then having the Advisory Committee work with a Peer to identify the top two to three projects the City should undertake each year is the critical path to*
success in Coatesville. During the course of this study, several projects surfaced that could be priorities for the Advisory Committee. The Park Facilities Analysis in the Appendix offers a thorough inventory of City parks and starting point for their decision making.

- **Carry out the KABOOM! Playground project.** Work with the community and partners to complete construction of the playground in the fall of 2016.

- **Select Palmer Park as a Pilot project.** This small, neighborhood-scale park is one of the most frequented in the City and during all of our site visits over six months, was used by youth. We suggest looking at repurposing the long-closed pool to a splash pad. Given the small size of this park and the existing, state-of-the-art play equipment, this could be a manageable first park for master planning and renovation.

- **Pools.** As noted in Chapter 3, the Advisory Committee should work with the Peer to complete a cost comparison that looks at repairing, maintaining and operating the pools versus providing and maintaining new water features in one or both parks. The analysis should also investigate whether pools at the Coatesville Area High School, YMCA or other providers, could meet the needs of Coatesville residents.

- **What to do in the parks as soon as possible.** We recommend trying to undertake holistic improvements as much as possible. Try to avoid making a major park improvement that is in stark contrast to a decrepit facility right next to it. However, to the extent that funding becomes available or volunteer efforts can complete a task, consider:
  
  - Improving walkability within the parks. Install a simple walking path inside Ash Park to connect the different facilities and to provide a place for people to walk for exercise or enjoyment. Additional paths could also be installed in Patton/West End Park to connect the facilities to the parking area and surrounding sidewalks. Gateway Park should also feature paths for walking within and through the park.
  - Removing unnecessary fencing around Ash Park and at the community center.
  - Providing crosswalks at all intersections adjacent to parks, to improve safety and access.
  - Formally closing the entire block of Chestnut Street between 9th and 10th Avenues, to allow it to become a part of Patton/West End Park and provide a better connection with the community center. It is currently closed to vehicle traffic from 10th Avenue.

- **Align Efforts for Maximum Funding Opportunities by Completing Park Master Plans.** There is a wonderful level of enthusiasm among community members to get to work right away. It is vital, though, that improvements are made in the context of a larger
plan so that the City’s limited resources are put to best use and projects can be maintained in the long-term. Thus, over time, the community should create master plans for each park that guide decision-making. Until these are in place, the Parks, Recreation and Conservation Advisory Committee can use this plan as a guide for prioritizing implementation projects. Use the MIS (shown on page 31) as a tool to determine what improvements or programs will be undertaken and how they will be sustained. Creating master plans makes the City eligible for capital funding from the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.
CITY OF COATESVILLE
MANAGEMENT IMPACT STATEMENT

PURPOSE
1. To assess the impact of a proposed project or program in terms of capital and operating costs, including capital cost, human resources required for operations, maintenance costs including labor, equipment, materials, supplies and cyclic repair, and the effect of on other parks and recreation facilities and services.

2. To use this information to make an informed decision about moving ahead with the proposed project.

METHOD

Determine:
1. Capital cost of proposed project.
2. Operating costs for proposed project or program. Include:
   a. Number of staff hours required
   b. Cost of staff hours in salary, wages, benefits and payroll taxes.
   c. Cost of materials and supplies.
   d. Utility costs.
   e. Miscellaneous costs.
3. Impact on other facilities and programs should the proposed project be undertaken.
   a. Will the project/program require funds needed for other facilities or services?
   b. Will the project/program require staff time needed for other facilities or services?
   c. How will the project impact the quality of services that the City of Coatesville has set as a goal?
4. Revenue Sources from City and Other Means of Support
   a. City funds – additional appropriation
   b. City funds – within current budget
   c. Grants
   d. Gifts or donations
   e. Non-tax funds to be generated for the project/program through fees, charges, sponsorships, partnerships, and/or other means.
   f. Will the partner(s) make a commitment to support the project or program for a defined time period? Will they support the project over its life expectancy?

DECISION-MAKING
Based upon the above information, does the City of Coatesville have the resources from any source (public, private or combination of sources) to move ahead with this project or program?
While it is easy to assume that an action plan should be focused on fixing up the parks via physical improvements, the City’s financial challenges along with its socio-economic conditions underscore the importance of developing partnerships, citizen advocacy for parks, and capacity within the City and its partners to support parks and recreation. Although the parks need a great deal of work, physical improvements alone are not enough nor is it possible to sustain them without a foundation of community support, a mix of resources from public and private sources, and security to ensure that the parks are safe and perceived as such.

Consequently, the Action Plan is focused on partnership and capacity building, program development, and taking care of the parks. Given the circumstances in Coatesville, the most specified actions are defined in the first year of 2016 – 2017 (beginning in August). The next set of strategies were devised for short term implementation in years 2018 – 2021. Creating recommendations for actions five years out is most difficult given the funding and staffing difficulties faced by the City government. Therefore, the actions proposed in this later timeframe are bigger ideas poised for action should the right resources become available at the right time.

Every incremental success, no matter how small, will advance the City’s vision for the future. The intent of this Action Plan is to chart a course of action that is pragmatic and achievable and that also allows for larger scale projects should the opportunities emerge. Priorities and the party responsible for each recommended action provide guidance for the implementation of this plan.

An annual review of the Action Plan will enable the City to see its progress in the implementation of the plan, determine the actions to carry out in the next fiscal year, and seek financial resources from the public and private sectors.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BUILD</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Lead Party</th>
<th>Assistance</th>
<th>Potential partners/funding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capacity</td>
<td>Appoint Ad Hoc Parks, Recreation &amp; Conservation Advisory Committee</td>
<td>City Council</td>
<td>City Staff</td>
<td>Volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Obtain Peer professional to define Advisory Committee scope and mission, and to guide decision-making on programs and facilities.</td>
<td>City Manager</td>
<td>Advisory Committee</td>
<td>DCNR $10,000 grant Local match $1,000</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Implement Park Safety Ambassador Program, 26 weeks per year</td>
<td>City Manager, City Council</td>
<td>Coatesville Community Policing Department, Advisory Committee</td>
<td>Reallocate $15,000 in 2016 City budget Allocate $45,000 in 2017 City budget</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Seek dedicated hours from the new Assistant City Manager to support park and recreation initiatives</td>
<td>City Council</td>
<td>City Manager</td>
<td>4-6 hours per week</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Join the PA recreation &amp; Parks Society (PRPS) and the PA Urban Parks &amp; Recreation Alliance</td>
<td>City Council</td>
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<td>Community</td>
<td>Organize and enlist Community Build volunteers for KABOOM! Playground at Patton/West End Park</td>
<td>City Council</td>
<td>Natural Lands Trust Other community partners</td>
<td>Donation of NLT time.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facilities</td>
<td>Complete KABOOM! Playground installation at Patton/West End Park</td>
<td>City Council</td>
<td>Volunteers</td>
<td>Volunteers, KABOOM!, PECO, total funded cost approx. $90,000</td>
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</table>
# City of Coatesville Parks, Recreation and Open Space Action Plan

## Short-Term Actions Year 2018 - 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BUILD</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Lead Party</th>
<th>Assistance</th>
<th>Potential partners/funding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td><strong>Capacity</strong></td>
<td>Advisory Committee recommends two to three priority projects or programs to implement each year</td>
<td>City Council Advisory Committee</td>
<td>City staff, Peer or consulting staff</td>
<td>DCNR, private foundation grants, Non-profit program providers such as Art Partners, Coatesville Youth Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Advisory Committee reviews and recommends to City Council all programs and projects proposed in City parks.</td>
<td>City Council Advisory Committee</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cost of programs and projects will vary, use MIS form as a guide</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Plan and implement a Parks &amp; Recreation Safety Summit</td>
<td>Community Police Officer and City Manager or Assistant Manager</td>
<td>Parks, Recreation and Conservation Committee</td>
<td>Seek a RecTAP grant to obtain assistance in developing a plan for the Safety Summit, Seek sponsorships to hold the summit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Plan and implement a Recreation Program Summit</td>
<td>Parks, Recreation and Conservation Committee</td>
<td>Parks, Recreation and Conservation Committee</td>
<td>Seek a RecTAP grant to obtain assistance in developing a plan for the Recreation Program Summit, Seek sponsorships to hold the summit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work with City Engineer and Chester County Water Resources Authority (CCWRA) to determine how MS4 stormwater compliance measures can also revitalize parks</td>
<td>City Engineer</td>
<td>Natural Lands Trust, CCWRA</td>
<td>CCWRA has funding from National Fish &amp; Wildlife Foundation, DEP and EPA potential funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community</strong></td>
<td>Formalize the KABOOM playground volunteers as a Patton/West End Park “Friends” group. Seek volunteer training to create one additional Friends group per year.</td>
<td>City Council</td>
<td>Parks, Recreation and Conservation Committee</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop and Implement a Communications Plan</td>
<td>City Assistant Manager</td>
<td>Natural Lands Trust</td>
<td>Private foundations, Public grant programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUILD ...</td>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>Lead Party</td>
<td>Assistance</td>
<td>Potential partners/funding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Participate in Chester Valley Trail extension plan seeking opportunities for integrating trail and associated greening into Lincoln Highway and park revitalization plans</td>
<td>Chester County Planning Commission City Council 2nd Century Alliance</td>
<td>Natural Lands Trust with consulting engineer</td>
<td>DCNR, William Penn Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Work with the Economic Development Director to create public spaces in the town center using vacant lots. These can be a mix of permanent and pop-up parks.</td>
<td>City Manager or Assistant Manager 2nd Century Alliance</td>
<td>Economic Development Director</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities</td>
<td>Select one park per year for master planning and revitalization. Consider Palmer Park as a pilot project to undertake.</td>
<td>City Manager or Assistant Manager</td>
<td>Advisory Committee Park neighbors</td>
<td>Apply for a DCNR grant for planning followed by applications for park development to implement the park master plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Coatesville Parks, Recreation and Open Space Action Plan</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Long-Term Actions Year 2021+</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Continue to add parkland in the City Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Create an operations, programming and management plan for the Community Recreation Center to put this facility back into public recreational use.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Begin a system-wide park playground replacement program.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Create a master plan for each of the six remaining parks, starting with Ash Park.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consider systematic improvements to the park and recreation system as a whole to include a signage system and public art.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Formalize park maintenance and management. Include a natural resource management program.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Map 2:**

**Parks Level of Service**

CITY OF COATESVILLE

City of Coatesville Parks 2021:
An Action Plan for Lively Parks and Healthy People

Chester County, PA

- Municipal Boundaries
- Roadways
- Railroads
- Streams
- Municipal Parkland

**Parks Level of Service**

Lower

Higher

Note: Residents are considered to be served by the park system if within 0.1 mile of a neighborhood park and physical barriers to access it are absent.

Disclaimer: This map is not a survey. The information imparted with this map is meant to assist Natural Lands Trust, Inc. in the effort to improve park service, while recognizing the limitations of the data used. The map was established using the best available information, which may have included: surveys, tax maps, field mapping using G.P.S., and/or orthophotos. Natural Lands Trust, Inc., makes no representation as to the accuracy of said information. In no event shall Natural Lands Trust, Inc., be liable for any damages, direct, indirect, or consequential, whether arising by contract or otherwise, to anyone relying on or excluded from the accuracy of said information, and no liability is assumed by reason of reliance thereon. Use of this map for other than its intended purpose requires the written consent of Natural Lands Trust, Inc.

Natural Lands Trust
1031 Palmers Mill Road, Media, PA 19063
610-333-5587 ~ www.natlands.org

Compiled By: REW 8/2/16

- Boundaries from Chester County
- Railroads, Roadways and Waterways from PAMAP
- Municipal Boundaries
- Railroads
- Streams
- Municipal Parkland

Legend:

1. Boundaries from Chester County
2. Railroads, Roadways, and Waterways from PAMAP
3. Public-Preserved Lands from DVRPC and Chester County
4. Parks and Healthy People
5. Level of Service digitized by NLT

Note: Residents are considered to be served by the park system if within 0.1 mile of a neighborhood park and physical barriers to access it are absent.
Appendix I
Park and Recreation Facilities Analysis
City of Coatesville Park System

Snapshot

Quantity of Parks: Nine
Total Acreage: 26.73
Quantity of Trails: One
Total Length: 0.3 Miles

Summary of Existing Conditions

The ten existing parks provide Coatesville residents with a variety of facilities, from middle school level athletic fields to a community garden. The River Walk, a .3 mile riverside trail, offers residents a pleasant place to walk. The largest park, Chester Ash Park, provides athletic fields and courts, two pools, a community garden, and a playground. It draws residents from across the city. Gateway Park is largely vacant, but offers a great opportunity to create a true gateway to the city and two historic districts.

Patton and Palmer Parks serve the neighborhoods which surround them, with playgrounds and sports facilities. Friendship Garden Park and Swing Park are less formal, with limited access, serving the neighbors whose homes border the properties. Abdala Park primarily serves the needs of Scott Middle School. Two newer parks, James and Valley View, also provide sports facilities, pavilions and playgrounds. The nine existing parks provide a solid framework for a coordinated system of parks.

Summary of Facilities

| Pools: | 3* |
| Splash Pads: | 1* |
| Tennis Courts: | 4* |
| Basketball Courts: | 8* |
| Playgrounds: | 7* |
| Baseball Fields: | 1 |
| Soccer Fields: | 0 |
| Multi-Use Fields: | 2 |
| Pavilions: | 2 |
| Locker Rooms/ Fieldhouse: | 3 |
| Parking Areas: | 3 |
| Pergolas/ Gazebos: | 4 |
| Seating Areas: | 2 |
| Trails: | 1 |
| Community Center | 1 |

*Some or all are not functional

Strategies for Improvement

- **Further public input and design would benefit most of the parks.** Ash, Palmer and Patton parks would benefit from full master planning. A master plan would examine issues of access, circulation, uses, parking, stormwater management, landscaping and other matters. Master planning would involve significant public involvement and should be prepared by a landscape architect, planner or park and recreation planner. Master plans can cost between $50,000 and $75,000. The Department
of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) and the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) may offer funding to offset portions of this cost. A completed master plan will also make the City eligible to apply for funding to construct new or rehabilitate existing elements in the park.

- **Collect further public input** on how to improve the parks through less formal public meetings or half day brainstorming sessions. James and Valley View Parks are in good condition, are relatively new and need little additional improvement. The rest of the parks are aging, in poor condition and feature uses which may not be heavily used by the residents. Before spending any significant funds on improving these parks, they should be further analyzed and improved based on an ongoing process of collaboration with the public.

- **All of the parks should be** evaluated for compliance with the Consumer Product Safety Commission criteria and the Americans with Disabilities Act regulations, prepared and governed by the United States Department of Justice. It is typical for older parks to no longer meet modern regulations. This assessment has not reviewed all elements of the parks in detail in regard to these regulations.

- **Acquire parcels** adjacent or close to the existing parks. With only approximately 27 acres of parkland, Coatesville residents would benefit greatly from additional parks or expansion of the existing parks. The City may wish to create an official map, designating certain parcels as targets for acquisition for parklands. The official map would then grant the City the right of first negotiation should the properties come up for sale. The City already owns a great deal of land in the northern, less urban portion of the city. Numerous vacant lots exist within the city’s urban core. These could present opportunities for acquisition to expand the park system.

- **Park streets** could be created to connect the parks and provide beautiful, safe and peaceful places for residents to walk. These streets could be improved with street trees, sidewalk and other streetscape improvements, to serve as a de facto trail system. Programming in partnership with the City, Police Department and other organizations could be established to help improve safety on these routes. Programming may include a town watch or organized walks from one park to another, culminating with an event such as a dinner, festival, movie night or concert.

- **Road diets**, or the narrowing of streets, could benefit some parks. In many places, the streets surrounding the parks may be unnecessarily wide. Narrowing some streets could permit sidewalks to be widened. Additional opportunities for tree plantings could be created by establishing tree lawns or bumpouts where streets have been narrowed. These areas could also double as stormwater management facilities. Narrower streets, additional trees and bumpouts could also act as traffic calming measure, slowing traffic down and reducing potentially dangerous conflicts between park users and drivers.

- **Signage** should be coordinated across the entire park system. The parks currently use signs featuring different colors, materials and fonts. A coordinated signage system should be designed and
produced to serve the entire park system. Signs which match and are consistent can help clarify what properties are city parks, how and when they are to be used. They can also help direct visitors to elements within a park or to other parks within the system.

- **Friends Groups** could play a large role in keeping the parks safe and functional. It is important for residents to feel connected to their parks, and feel a sense of pride and ownership. When a group of residents begin to feel that the park is an important part of their neighborhood, they can help to protect and maintain it. The establishment of friends groups for each of the parks could provide an opportunity for more people to get involved with the city’s park system as a whole and with the individual parks. Friends groups could also help ease the City’s burden by helping to organize events such as cleanups and celebrations at the parks, which benefit the parks directly, but also strengthen the surrounding communities.
Chester Ash Memorial Park

Snapshot

Type: Community
Location: Bounded by 3rd & 4th Avenues, Kersey and Walnut Streets
Size: 9.3 Acres
Service Area: 3 miles
Uses: Active and Passive Uses

Facilities: Full sized and kids pools (Non-functional)
Lockers/ pool building
Basketball Courts (2)
Tennis Courts (2, non-functional)

Overview

Chester Ash Memorial Park is the flagship of the City’s park system. It features two pools, basketball courts, tennis courts, a baseball and soccer field, playground and pavilion. A community garden has recently been created as well. However, the park has seen better days, as many of the facilities are currently not functional and others are in need of additional maintenance. The ground is wet as a stream, Gibbons Run, named for a former landowner and member of the Lukens-Huston family, previously flowed overland through the site. It still exists, but in vaults well below the surface.

Summary of Issues

- Wet soil limits uses on portions of the site, due to the existence of the buried stream, Gibbons Run;
- The pools and tennis courts are in disrepair to the point of being non-functional;
- Neighbors believe there may not be enough basketball courts, leading to confrontations amongst youth from different neighborhoods or of different age groups;
- A multi-use soccer/baseball field dominates the center of the park. It is unclear whether there is a need for both fields;
- Neighbors have expressed concerns about a lack of visibility into the park, leading to unwanted loitering at night;
- The existing path system does not adequately connect or provide access to different parts of the park;
- Too much perimeter fencing clutters the views and damages the park’s character;
- Water collects in a small area northwest of the playground.
Short Term Strategies for Improvement

- **Establish an interior loop trail** connecting the elements of the park. This trail can be used for walking, running or pushing a stroller and should be constructed of a surface suited for those uses, such as asphalt, pervious paving or crushed stone fines. A measured loop trail using some existing paved areas could be established at a length of approximately 0.25 miles in length, allowing fitness walkers and runners to easily measure their distance without use of electronics. This path may also connect additional elements, such as the pavilion.

- **Remove the perimeter fence** where it is not necessary. In some places where the sidewalk is adjacent to a steep slope, the fence may be necessary. However, as there are many openings without gates, the fence appears to serve little purpose. Trees, shrubs and swales can replace the fence as a barrier to keep vehicles from entering the park.

- **Plant wet tolerant trees and shrubs** in the wet area northwest of the playground. New plantings will help to soak up standing water and can also provide an opportunity to educate on topics including the water cycle, wetland plant and animal species and Gibbons Run.

- **Create rain gardens** where water runs off of slopes. Rain gardens could help manage stormwater below the tennis courts, beyond the right field fence (baseball) and in the grassy area below Walnut Street.

- **Plant additional perimeter trees**, with an emphasis on the use of high canopied species such as ‘Liberty’ or ‘Princeton’ elms, to preserve views in and out of the park. The trees would help manage stormwater and trap sediment, beautify the park and surrounding neighborhood and potentially slow down traffic.
Earl Q. Patton/ West End Park

Snapshot

Type: Neighborhood
Location: Between Charles and Madison Streets, at Ridge Avenue
Size: 3.12 Acres +/-
Service Area: ½ mile
Uses: Active & Passive
Facilities: Parking
Paved Pad
Playground
Little League Baseball/softball
Tennis (Non-functional)

Overview

Earl Q. Patton Park serves the West End neighborhood of Coatesville. The neighborhood features single family homes, churches, a restaurant and the West End Fire Company # 3. The parking lot may also serve the local churches. The tennis courts, baseball field, playground and basketball court are all in need of repair or reconstruction. The park has great potential as a social center for the neighborhood if it can be revitalized.

Summary of Existing Conditions

- The park is laid out well, has good structure and grade separation;
- The tennis courts, basketball court and playground are currently not functional;
- Negotiations are currently underway to replace the playground through partnership with a non-profit called Kaboom;
- The fencing surrounding the baseball field does not meet current standards for play;
- The parking area does not manage stormwater, may be oversized and is laid out poorly;
- There is no path system to adequately connect or provide access to different parts of the park;
- The park is underplanted and would benefit from additional tree planting.

Long Term Strategies for Improvement

- Prepare a landscape plan which proposes landscaping to beautify the park, provide shade, manage stormwater and provide buffering and separation between uses within the park and from the residences and churches surrounding the park.
• **Study the parking needs** and assess the existing parking lot and street parking. The existing parking lot is approximately 11,000 square feet in area, with no islands or striping. The size and shape of the parking area infringes on a large area of the park. It may not be the most efficient layout or location. It appears likely that the parking area serves one or both of the nearby churches on Sundays. Parking could be relocated to the existing tennis courts to better serve the churches. Pending a parking study, the lot could be redesigned to incorporate stormwater infiltration, planting islands, trees and a more efficient layout.

**Short Term Strategies for Improvement**

• **Choose an official name for the park.** Signs within the park identify it both as Patton Park and West End Park. This can cause confusion amongst visitors and make it more difficult to establish an identity for the park.

• **Provide sidewalk along Ridge Avenue and internal paths throughout the park** to connect the parking area to the different facilities within the park. Visitors who need to drive to the park would likely benefit from paved paths to help them get from the parking area to different parts of the park.

• **Reestablish the basketball court** near the corner of Charles Street and Ridge Avenue. Consider adding a second court next to the existing pad. Additional amenities such as buffer plantings, benches and a water fountain should also be considered.

• **Create rain gardens** and other green stormwater infrastructure. The park has no stormwater management features, but does have much paving and compacted soil, which keeps water from infiltrating. Areas below slopes and unused grass areas could be converted to rain gardens to capture stormwater and beautify the park.

• **Negotiations are underway to replace the existing playground structure** as it is outdated and in poor condition. A path should be provided to connect the new playground to the parking area and other elements within the park.

• **Replace the fencing at the baseball field** as it is in poor condition and does not meet current standards for play. The backstop may not effectively stop foul balls from entering Madison Street. Playing conditions could be improved through the creation of a batter’s eye, with plantings beyond the center field fence.

• **Consider installation of a pervious, multi-use sport court** in place of the non-functional tennis court. A multi-use court could potentially accommodate soccer, basketball, tennis, volleyball, and hockey on an as needed basis. The use of pervious surfaces could manage stormwater, keeping it from flowing off the court and onto the baseball field or surrounding streets.
Friendship Garden Park

Snapshot

Type:   Mini Park
Location:  Lumber Street between 1st and 2nd Avenues
Size:   1.7 Acres
Service Area:  ¼ mile
Uses:   Passive Recreation
Facilities:  Pergola on RR Supports
Tables w/ Seats
Sycamore Trees

Overview

Friendship Garden Park is modeled after many successful, urban, pocket parks. The space feels comfortable as the maturing sycamores shade tables and chairs, and the hillside and pergola provide a sense of enclosure. At the east end, it is open to the surrounding neighborhood. It is bounded by the railroad to the north and by a mix of residential, warehouse and parking lots to the south. The park is built on fill, which continues to subside, causing the park elements to shift out of place.

Summary of Existing Conditions

• The park is built on fill soil and ash, which is subsiding;
• Approximately 15 maturing sycamore trees provide shade to the park;
• The tables and chairs are in poor condition, as they are broken and out of level and plumb;
• The ground is a mix of pavers, grass, fill soil and ash.

Strategies for Improvement

• **Establish turf grass** as the ground surface. Compost or other nutrients should be mixed in with the top few inches of ash and sand in order to nourish grass. In order not to damage the tree roots, the compost should be mixed in with hand tools such as broadforks, spades and pitchforks. Shade tolerant species such as fescue should be used beneath the trees.

• **Remove the existing tables** and replace them with freestanding tables and chairs. As the ash subsides, the existing tables are also shifting, causing them to be out of level and plumb. Free standing furniture would not be affected by subsiding ash. Heavy furniture, made of concrete or similar materials would discourage theft.

• **Remove the wooden edging around the trees.** Sycamores can live for over one hundred years and grow to many feet in diameter. Eventually, the trees will outgrow the edged pits. As the trees grow and the ash shifts, the wooden edging will likely heave, becoming tripping hazards.

Appendix I
• **Provide supports and plant native vines** at the base of the pergola. The bright orange flowers of trumpet creeper would provide beauty but would require a support trellis or wiring. Virginia Creeper would climb the existing concrete supports and would provide beautiful crimson fall color as well as a food source for native birds.
Gateway Park

Snapshot

Type: Neighborhood  
Location: Lincoln Highway (Rt. 30) and South 1st Avenue (Rt. 82)  
Size: 1.1 Acres  
Service Area: ½ mile  
Uses: None  
Facilities: Electricity, Memorial

Overview

In November 2000, Bethlehem Steel Corporation conveyed Gateway Park to the City of Coatesville. Located at the intersection of First Avenue and Lincoln Highway, the park serves as a gateway to both the City and the Lukens National Historic District. Gateway Park is currently vacant, save for border sidewalks, some recently planted trees and the memorial to veterans. A rail line which serves the steel mill borders the park to the west. Gateway Park features scenic views to the National Register-listed 1904 Coatesville High Bridge, originally commissioned by Rebecca Lukens. Over the past hundred years, the site has been home to privately owned buildings, a train depot and steel mill facilities.

Summary of Existing Conditions

- The park is noisy, due to the busy streets and railroad which surround it;
- The southern portion of the site is contaminated with oil leaked from previously removed tanks and may not be disturbed;
- The park deed imposes restrictions that the property shall be used “only as an open-space park for recreation, it being the intent that no improvements shall be constructed on the property other than such improvements as may be incidental to the foregoing use....”
- The park is isolated by the railroad tracks, busy streets, the steel mill compound and a lack of connections to any city neighborhoods;
- There is currently no obvious constituency or user groups;
- The trees on the site include American hollies, crabapples, red maples, and a spruce, some of which may be detrimental to views in and out of the site.
Long Term Strategies for Improvement

- **Pursue remediation funding** for cleanup, planning and redevelopment of the park. The contamination may qualify the site for brownfield funding, from sources such as the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection and the Environmental Protection Agency. Some of these funds may be applied to planning, design and capital improvements.

- **Plan the site with a flexible space in mind.** Due to its location, the high noise level and the lack of nearby users, Gateway Park will likely require events to draw people in. Its grade and location are well suited to host a variety of pop up events and uses, including farmers markets, music festivals, and gaming competitions. Temporary structures such as roller or ice skating rinks and large format play structures could be erected as well. Food and drinks can be provided on as needed basis by food trucks, carts and mobile kitchens. The park can host events on weekends, while serving the needs of residents during the rest of the week. Permanent improvements including walking paths, lighting, benches, and simple yet attractive landscaping could be provided. Even small improvements could provide a place for local workers to eat lunch while beautifying the intersection.

- **Use the Lukens Executive Office Building** as a point of organization for the park design. The park is currently a blank slate, with no clear entrances or other points of orientation. The building can provide a basis for establishing an axis, park entrances or organization of features. Additionally, a partnership could be pursued, to allow public use of the restrooms during certain events.

- **Claim East Harmony Street** as part of the park during events. This block of the street could accommodate food trucks, tents, port a potties and other facilities. The street could be rebuilt using pervious paving to manage stormwater. It could be raised to the level of the existing curbs, so that the street is seamlessly integrated into the surrounding park. The paving could also be colored and/or stamped asphalt.

- **Create a landscape plan** to connect the park to the existing Lukens Executive Office Building and to the Lincoln Highway business district. Landscape the park with trees and shrubs that define spaces, and beautify the park. The landscape plan should also be coordinated with other street tree planting projects to create visual connections to the surrounding landscape. Additionally, some existing trees should be removed and replaced with native species, such as Liberty Elms, which will provide shade, habitat, and beauty, without disrupting views in and out of the park.

- **Improve circulation** by moving the existing sidewalks in from the roadways, providing buffers between pedestrians and vehicles. New walkways could be made wider to accommodate foot and bicycle traffic to and from the nearby Brandywine Trail. Internal paths can better connect the park to the Lukens Executive Office building and other sites south of the park. Additional paths could be provided throughout the park. The landscape strip between the path and the road could be used for stormwater management.
• **Relocate the memorial** to a prominent space within the park. It should be moved to a quieter, more peaceful space in the park, away from the busy roadside.

• **Short term strategies** can also be implemented. The following items should be addressed and planned for long term sustainability, but some steps may be taken prior to the completion of a master plan:
  
  o **Use East Harmony Street** to accommodate food trucks, carts or other structures during events. While paving and utility improvements are desirable for the long term, the street is suitable for use now during events.

  o **Provide crosswalks** at Harmony Street and Lincoln Highway to connect the park to nearby amenities such as parks, the Brandywine Trail, sidewalks and community buildings including Graystone Mansion.

  o **Replace the existing fence** with fencing more appropriate for a park. The fence could be replaced with security fencing featuring no greater than 2” openings. The razor wire should be removed. Some landscaping could be placed along the fence to further screen it and discourage climbing.
Jeanne Treadwell James Memorial Park

**Snapshot**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Neighborhood Park</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Coates &amp; Boundary Streets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size</td>
<td>0.68 Acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Area</td>
<td>1/4 mile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses</td>
<td>Active &amp; Passive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facilities</td>
<td>Full sized basketball court</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Playground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gazebo</td>
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</tbody>
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**Overview**

Jeanne Treadwell James Park, named for a former Coatesville City Council Member, serves the neighborhood north of the railroad tracks where no other parks exist. The park was constructed around 2004, and is in relatively good condition. No major improvements appear necessary, as long as routine maintenance is carried out on a regular basis.

**Summary of Existing Conditions**

- The park is surrounded by a residential neighborhood and exists at the city’s northeast boundary;
- Established in 2004, the park is good condition;
- Two off street handicapped parking spaces are provided;
- There appears to be an unnecessary amount of paving;
- It is unclear if enough shade is provided.

**Strategies for Improvement**

- **Remove some asphalt** south of the basketball court and convert this area to stormwater management, planting beds or lawn. Removal of asphalt will help stormwater infiltration and reduce the heat island effect.
- **Provide additional trees** on the south side of the park to provide more shade for the playground, gazebo and basketball courts. The street trees and other existing trees have grown in well, but most are north of the park facilities, and provide little shade during the hottest parts of the day.
Paul Palmer Park & Coatesville Memorial Community Center

Snapshot

Type: Neighborhood
Location: Entire block between 9th & 10th Ave and Lumber & Chestnut Sts.
Size: 1.06 Acres
Service Area: ½ mile
Uses: Active & Passive Recreation
Facilities: Pool (Inoperable)
         Playground
         Small Pavilion
         Grill
         Basketball Court
         Parking (8 Spaces)
         Expansive lawn

Overview

Paul Palmer Park is surrounded by residential neighborhoods to the north and west and commercial and industrial uses to the south and east. Townhouses front on the park along Lumber Street and 9th Avenue. Palmer Park and the Coatesville Memorial Community Center are separated by Chestnut Street, which is closed at its intersection with 10th Avenue. The park and community center appear to be well used, as they offer a variety of opportunities for active and passive recreation. The park is well organized and features compatible elements.

Summary of Existing Conditions

- The pool is inoperable, and surrounded by a tall chain link fence topped with barbed wire;
- The playground features high quality equipment and a synthetic surface;
- Chestnut Street is closed at 10th Avenue with a chain, permitting access to the Community Center’s parking, but not to through traffic;
- Mature Sycamores lining 9th Avenue and Chestnut Street provide needed shade to parts of the park;
- The mural on the Community Center is well maintained and features community leaders in education and recreation;
- The surface of basketball court at the community center has deteriorated.
Long Term Strategies for Improvement

- **Close Chestnut Street permanently**, in order to expand the park and connect the park to the community center. The street could be redesigned in a number of ways to better serve the park, the community center and the neighborhood, while also providing stormwater management. The street, or parts of it, could be replaced with lawn permanently and reestablished as an allee, lined with additional trees and plantings. It could also be made into a flex space, repaved with grass pavers, stamped or colored pervious paving. The street could then be used to accommodate temporary structures such as food trucks, tents, stalls, carts or large format games. The street would also still permit vehicles to access the adjacent buildings. Should the entire street be annexed by the park and community center, the existing parking could be relocated to 9th Street. In this scenario, the mural on the side of the Coatesville Memorial Community Center would become more central to the park.

- **Consider replacing the existing pool with a splash pad.** Splash pads typically require less maintenance and less staffing than a swimming pool. The City should consider whether it needs two swimming pools. Examples of pool to splash pad conversions in Philadelphia also incorporate stormwater management, plantings, benches, tables, and shade structures. Should a splash pad be installed, the high fence could also be removed, opening up the sight lines and circulation within the park.

- **Provide a youth basketball court** near the corner of 9th Avenue & Lumber Street. Despite the existence of a nearby, relatively well maintained basketball court at the community center, children were seen playing on a makeshift court on Lumber Street, with an adjustable basket and a Little Tykes basket. It appears that the children preferred their homemade court as it allowed them to play on baskets sized to them. A youth basketball court with 6-8’ high nets could be provided to meet their needs. If the court could be surfaced with pervious paving, it could also be made to manage stormwater.

- **Reinvigorate the playground**, by replacing the worn ground surface, possibly with a soft, pervious surface, to manage stormwater. The playground could also be expanded or relocated further into the shade of the Sycamores and placed in closer proximity to benches, tables or activities which would serve parents or other caregivers. The wooden edging should be replaced or adjusted to permit universal accessibility. Some playground equipment is currently broken and should be fixed, without additional planning.

Short Term Strategies for Improvement

- **Remove some asphalt** under the sycamore trees near the pool building. Replacing the asphalt with pervious playground surface or grass could make the area more comfortable and would better accommodate stormwater.
• **Provide a gaming area**, with chess and checker tables, outdoor ping pong or other tables. These amenities would provide entertainment for all ages.

• **Separate the playground from the surrounding roads** with more trees and shrubs. The playground is dangerously close to the roads. Some additional buffering would improve this situation while potentially managing stormwater.

• **Plant more trees** along Lumber Street and 10th Avenue. The existing mature Sycamores add character to the park and provide much needed shade, but overall, the park is under planted. Additional trees would further shade the park and nearby homes and could potentially provide traffic calming and educational opportunities.

• **Remove the high fence** and barbed wire along 9th Avenue at the edge of the basketball court. The area behind the community center is not fenced, so the existing fence appears to serve little purpose.
Swing Park

Snapshot

Type: Mini Park  
Location: Bounded by Mary Street, White  
Alley, Pearl Alley and Jayne  
Street (Paper)  
Size: 0.45 Acres  
Service Area: ¼ miles  
Uses: Active  
Facilities: Swings  
Small basketball court

Overview

Swing Park exists between a series of alleys, in the center of a large block, surrounded by back yards on all sides. It appears that the land on which the park sits may never have been developed with houses or other buildings. The park slopes downward from the north to the south, and features swings and a small basketball court, each of which is in poor condition. The rest of the lot is vacant, with patchy grass.

Summary of Existing Conditions

- The site is surrounded by backyards and alleys;  
- The site faces serious crime issues;  
- The facilities are in poor condition and do not meet current safety standards;  
- The site is underdeveloped.

Strategies for Improvement

- Public input must be an integral part of any decision making process around Swing Park. This site is completely surrounded by homes, backyards and garages. Any changes at Swing Park will affect the surrounding residents’ daily lives. These residents will need to take ownership of the park and support it in the future if it is ever to become a successful park. A significant public input process should accompany master planning of the site. The residents and city should also address whether this site should be maintained as a park.

- Reprogram the park to accommodate more uses, including some aimed at different age groups. It is important for more neighbors to use the park and be involved. Therefore, a variety of uses is necessary to draw a variety of users. New playground equipment should be provided, but could potentially be augmented with additional play courts, tables, benches, plantings and gardens. Improving the park significantly could also inspire the residents to care about the park and take ownership of it.

- Install safety equipment such as cameras and lighting, alongside other park improvements to discourage criminal activity.

Appendix I
Valley View Park

Snapshot

Type: Neighborhood Park
Location: Between Cityview Avenue, Baxter Street and Garnett Drive
Size: 6.6 Acres
Service Area: 3 miles
Uses: Active & Passive
Facilities: 2 Basketball Courts
Pavilion
Benches & Tables
Playground

Overview

Valley View Park sits at the top of a ridge, offering views of the steel mill, the high bridge, Coatesville and South Coatesville Borough. The park is surrounded by housing on all sides, but is somewhat separated from most of the neighborhood due to its location at the top of the hill. Valley View Park is relatively new, constructed circa 2004. The facilities at the park are well maintained and appear to function well. The park is co-owned by the City of Coatesville and South Coatesville Borough.

Summary of Existing Conditions

- The site offers panoramic views of the steel mill, the high bridge, and the City of Coatesville;
- Overhead electric lines limit some potential planting and reforestation;
- The park is surrounded by homes and well used by the residents.

Strategies for Improvement

The park is well maintained, laid out well and offers a good variety of facilities which serve the surrounding neighborhood well. Some areas which are currently being mown could be allowed to grow wild or replaced with a meadow, which would save maintenance costs and time. Otherwise the park appears to function well and is well loved by the community.
Victor Abdala Sr. Park

Snapshot

Type: Sports Facility
Location: Mid-block between 9th and 10th Avenues, Lincoln Highway and Olive Street
Size: 3.1 Acres
Service Area: Scott Middle School Students and ¼ mile radius for playground
Uses: Active Recreation
Facilities: Multi-Use baseball/football
        Playground
        Field House

Overview

Victor Abdala Sr. Park fronts on Lincoln Highway, the main thoroughfare through Coatesville. It is surrounded by Scott Middle School, businesses and homes. It is a public park which appears to primarily serve Scott Middle School’s needs for sports facilities. The multi-use field accommodates baseball and softball in the spring and summer and midget football in the fall. A playground in the southeast corner serves the neighborhood.

Summary of Existing Conditions

• The park functions as a lighted, multi-use sports facility, serving Scott Middle School;
• Light poles stand throughout the park, but it is unclear whether they are properly sited;
• The playground is in need of updates to meet current ADA and safety standards;
• Two small fence openings offer the only access from Lincoln Highway;
• No internal paths connect the elements of the park;
• The baseball/softball field lacks warm up areas, bullpens, and on deck circles. It includes an undersized backstop. The field is too close to the sidewalk, without enough room for spectators.

Strategies for Improvement

• Partner with the Coatesville Area School District to prepare a master plan for the site. While the site can continue to serve the school, it could also be redesigned to better serve the surrounding community as well.

• Use the park as streetscape improvement catalyst, by planting street trees, relocating sidewalks and providing benches and other amenities which will serve the park and the street.
- **Improve access to the park** by replacing the fence openings with gates, columns, bollards or other features, which draw attention to the park from Lincoln Highway. Paths could also be provided to connect parts of the park to the surrounding sidewalks.

- **Upgrade the playground** and its surroundings to meet current safety and ADA requirements. The mulch and raised wooden edges could be replaced with pervious pads or other materials. The edges, or sections, should be removed to provide universal access. Amenities such as benches and additional trees should also be provided for the comfort of caretakers accompanying children to the playground.

- **Provide crosswalks and curb cuts** to make it safer for students to cross Olive Street to and from the school.
Brandywine Trail Feasibility Study

Summary

The Brandywine Creek Trail provides residents of the City of Coatesville and Valley Township with a quiet and peaceful place to walk, along the banks of the Brandywine Creek. The existing trail connects residents to the river, offering beautiful views of the waterfront and the High Bridge. Two gazebos, benches, and shade trees offer comfortable places to rest or gather along the trail. A pedestrian bridge is also connected to the trail, allowing visitors to walk out over the river. The trail follows a wide cleared swath, planted with grass, which lends a sense of openness to the corridor.

The existing trail begins at Lincoln Highway, west of Gateway Park, the railroad tracks and the intersection with First Avenue. It is approximately 0.3 miles long and terminates at Glencrest Road, just west of its intersection with Wagontown Road. It is paved and is appropriate for uses including walking, running, biking and dog walking. However, these uses are limited by its short length.

There are many opportunities for extending the trail further north. Hibernia County Park lies approximately 2 miles to the north, as the crow flies. Many public agencies own land between the trail and the park, including former railroad rights-of-way. It is assumed that these agencies, including Chester County, the City of Coatesville, Valley Township, Coatesville Redevelopment Authority and Valley Township Authority, would be willing partners in development of a trail connecting Coatesville to Hibernia County Park.
A number of obstacles also exist between Coatesville and Hibernia County Park. These include railroad tracks, highways, the Brandywine Creek itself, steep slopes and privately owned properties. The existing rail lines are especially problematic for extension of the existing trail. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is extremely unlikely to permit new trails to cross the rail lines at grade. The existing trail is sandwiched between two intersecting rail lines. In order to extend the trail north, it must cross a railroad track. It is extremely likely that grade separated crossings such as bridges or tunnels would be required by the FRA. While construction of bridges and tunnels is possible, they would be very costly.

Many properties between the trail and the park are privately owned. It is likely that easements would need to be acquired over land owned by private corporations and private citizens. Some acquisition in fee could also be considered as an option. A trail extension would also likely run through existing neighborhoods. The cooperation and support of the residents will be vital to success in establishing a trail extension. The following residents, agencies, corporations and governments should all be considered as potential partners in a proposed trail extension:

**Potential Partners:**

- Chester County
- City of Coatesville
- City of Coatesville Redevelopment Authority
- Valley Township
- Valley Township Authority
- Pennsylvania Department of Transportation
- Pennsylvania Lines LLC
- Norfolk Southern Railway Co.
- ISG Railways Inc.
- ISG Plate, Inc.
- Arcelor Mittal Plate, LLC
- Tarlecky Enterprises Corporation
- 255 South Mount Airy Road Partners LP
- A. Duie Pyle, Inc.
- Private Citizen Landowners:
  - Osbeck
  - Saha

This study examines possible routes for extending the existing trail from Glencrest Road to Route 340. Spurs to connect surrounding neighborhoods and businesses to the main trail are also considered. The proposed main stem corridor is broken down into five segments, each of which is bounded by existing roads. Each segment is different and is offered different opportunities and faced with different challenges, both natural and man-made. Many of the structures proposed below would require significant engineering as well as permitting from state and federal agencies. Improvements proposed beyond the basics of trail implementation are shown in bold type.
Segment One: Glencrest Road to Wagontown Road and Williams Way

a. The existing trail hits a dead end at Glencrest Road;

b. An angled **mid-block crossing** would be necessary at Glencrest Road, potentially including a crosswalk, signage, lighting and colored or textured paving. Stop signs would need to be placed on the trail as well to alert users that they the trail intersects a road. Vegetation would need to be removed from the north side Glencrest Road to improve visibility around the curve to the north and west of the proposed crosswalk;

c. After crossing Glencrest Road, the trail would follow the existing dirt road for approximately 150-200 linear feet;
d. The trail would then head down the slope towards the riverbank;

e. **Significant engineering** could enable the trail to run beneath the existing railroad bridge. It appears that enough land exists beneath the northernmost passage to establish a trail with a **riverwall**. Some excavation is likely necessary to allow for enough headroom above the trail.

f. After exiting the tunnel beneath the bridge, the trail should follow the west bank of the creek north to a point where the creek may narrow and be most appropriate for crossing;

g. A **bridge** would carry the trail to the east bank of the river;
h. The trail would then follow the east bank north to the next railroad bridge;

i. Another riverwall would permit the trail to run through the northernmost passage under this train bridge;
j. Another **bridge** would be necessary to bring the trail back across the creek to its west bank;

k. The trail would then follow an existing dirt road, connecting to the dead end of Williams Way;

l. Sharrows, colored or textured paving on Williams Way would designate it as a shared space, accommodating bicycles, pedestrians and vehicles within this short stretch to Wagontown Road.
Segment Two: Wagontown Road to Mt. Airy Road

a. The intersection of Wagontown and Mt. Airy Roads, Irish Lane and Williams Way is managed by stop signs. The intersection is very wide and includes no pedestrian amenities. This intersection could be improved with crosswalks and other amenities for pedestrians. The traffic could also be managed with a roundabout. These improvements would help facilitate the extension of the trail across this intersection.

b. The trail would then follow Mt. Airy Road to the northeast towards the business park. Mt. Airy Road would become a shared space, accommodating vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians. Streetscape improvements such as paving, sidewalks, curbs and sharrows could be installed to better serve the residents and trail users.
c. A new **pedestrian bridge** or expansion of the existing vehicle bridge would be necessary to carry trail users across a stream tributary and into the business park lot.

Segment Three: Mt. Airy Road to Valley Station Road

a. The trail would then continue through the Mt. Airy Road LLC property. The property owners would need to agree to grant a trail **easement**;
b. The trail would need to be cut into a relatively steep side slope through the Mt. Airy Road LLC property and the city owned parcel to the north.

c. A private landowner would need to agree to grant an easement to permit the trail to extend to Valley Station Road.

d. A mid-block crossing should be established at Valley Station Road, potentially including a crosswalk, signage, lighting and colored or textured paving.
Segment Four: Valley Station Road to Route 30

a. After crossing Valley Station Road, the trail would run through city owned land parallel to the active section of the railroad tracks;

b. Active use of the railroad tracks ends approximately 875’ east of Valley Station Rd. Slightly further down the line, the tracks become unusable and end. At this point the trail could follow the rail bed, as it is relatively wide and level;
c. The trail could then continue along the existing rail bed north, past the rear of the hotel development area and through the city owned property which holds the substation.

d. The rail bed would then carry the trail to the railroad tunnel beneath Route 30.
Segment Five: Route 30 to Route 340

a. Chester County owns the former rail bed from Route 30 to Route 340. The trail would follow this bed through this area.
b. At Route 340, it appears that the bed rises and once would have supported a bridge over the road. The bridge no longer exists. This area could very likely be retrofitted with a prefabricated bridge to serve trail users.
c. There is no space within the County owned land to establish a trailhead, parking or other amenities.

Additional Spurs

a. **Connection to hotel development area** - a bridge could connect the trail to this area, allowing trail users to use the parking as a trailhead. The trail could be a featured amenity for hotel guests to use.

b. **North of Route 30** the majority of land bounded by Routes 30, 82 and 340 and the county owned right of way, is owned by the City of Coatesville Redevelopment Authority. A. Duie Pyle owns a strip of land adjacent to the trail corridor to the east. A Turkey Hill exists at the intersection of Routes 340 and 82. Should A. Duie Pyle grant an easement, a spur trail could travel through the RDA land toward the Turkey Hill from the south. A trailhead could be established on RDA land adjacent to the Turkey Hill. This would be a mutually beneficial situation for trail users and for the Turkey Hill. An additional spur could be established **along the south side of Rt. 340**, connecting the main trail to the Turkey Hill site from the west. This trail could be created using a combination of an streetscape improvements within the PennDOT controlled right of way, an easement through the A. Duie Pyle site, and an off road trail through the RDA parcel. These two spurs could make a northern loop which could be used as a standalone trail and then as a catalyst for further trail development and extension south.
c. The City of Coatesville owns numerous parcels within Valley Township. Some of these parcels, adjacent to Route 30, just north of Mt. Airy and Wagontown Roads, could be used to provide an additional spur. This trail would connect the residents of the Wagontown Road neighborhood of Valley Township to the main stem of the trail. A mid-block crossing would be necessary to cross Mt. Airy Road and the trail would need to traverse slopes as steep as 20% in some areas. The slopes could likely be mitigated through the use of climbing turns or switchbacks. A power substation and electrical lines travel along these properties, precluding trees from being planted, but the sites could be replanted in meadow grasses, to reduce the cost of maintenance, provide habitat and beauty.
Conclusion

The existing trail offers residents of Coatesville the opportunity to connect to nature, by getting close to the Brandywine River. It gives them a place to walk, a place to sit and enjoy nature and a place to disconnect from their urban surroundings. The only downside to the trail is that it is too short. It can be extended further, but it will take much hard work, including outreach to the public, partnership with corporate owners of large parcels and engineering design.

Trails have become more widely accepted over the past 10 years, but some questions and concerns may exist amongst the public. Public interaction will be an important step in extending this trail. Different communities would be connected by the trail and some private residents would be asked to grant easements to permit the trail to cross their property. The public meeting held as part of this study revealed that the citizens want more places to walk, but further public input will be necessary to garner support for extending the trail.

Physical constraints also must be addressed. The river, steep slopes and the web of railroad tracks complicate the trail route. It will be necessary for the trail to weave around, over and under the physical obstacles. Bridges and tunnels will add expense, but will also add interest and beauty.

The City of Coatesville will also need to form partnerships, internally and externally, in order to extend the trail through lands owned by different city departments, neighboring municipalities, the County of Chester and corporate offshoots and remnants of Lukens Steel. State agencies such as PennDOT may also be valuable partners as spurs and alternative routes are explored.

Considering the obstacles, opportunities and geography, it appears best to begin by implementing the northernmost trail segments and spurs. This appears to be the low hanging fruit, as the fewest obstacles exist there. Much of the land in the area is owned by the city or city agencies. Creation of a loop north of Route 30 with a segment extending to the hotel area, and a new trailhead parking area, could act as a standalone recreational trail to begin with. Creation of this portion of the trail system could create momentum and support for extending the trail south, funding the expensive but necessary improvements, and finally connecting to the existing Riverwalk.
1. Existing Trails and Aerial (2015) from DVRPC.
2. Boundaries and Parcels from Chester County.
3. Waterways, Roads, and Railroads from PAMAP.

Disclaimer: This map is not a survey. The information imparted with this map is meant to assist Natural Lands Trust, Inc., describe the placement of certain retained, reserved, or excluded rights and to calculate acreage figures. Property boundaries, while approximate, were established using the best available information, which may have included: surveys, tax maps, field mapping using GPS, and/or orthophotos. Natural Lands Trust, Inc., makes no representation as to the accuracy of said property lines (or any other lines), and no liability is assumed by reason of reliance thereon. Use of this map for other than its intended purpose requires the written consent of Natural Lands Trust, Inc.

Brandywine Trail Corridor - Feasibility
Coatesville City
POTENTIAL ROUTE FROM LINCOLN HWY TO ROUTE 340

Appendix I
City of Coatesville
Online Public Commenting Findings

The City of Coatesville conducted an online public opinion poll about parks and recreation in 2016. Nearly 700 people responded including 231 from Coatesville.

Purpose
The purpose of the online public commenting was to determine the opinions, ideas and concerns of the residents to serve as a foundation for decision-making regarding parks, recreation, and open space in the City. By understanding the citizens’ needs and interests, the City will be able to direct resources towards the highest priorities for the benefit of the community.

Process
The City posted the online questionnaire via Survey Monkey in March through July of 2016. Key stakeholders involved in the planning process for the Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment helped to promote the online questionnaire. Facebook was a critical tool in reaching people and urging them to complete the online questionnaire.

Results
Those responding included 231 people from Coatesville. The following findings convey the ideas, concerns and level of support that the 231 online commenters from the City of Coatesville presented.

1. **Most preferred recreational experiences.** Top experiences that people are looking for in the parks:
   a. Walking (74%)
   b. Enjoying Nature (72%)
   c. Special Events (68%)
   d. Socializing with Family and Friends (68%)
   e. Fitness and Wellness (55%)

2. **Park Use.** The most used parks are Ash Park and Gateway Park in the City. More than half the respondents reported going to parks in other municipalities such as those in Downingtown, county parks, and regional trails.

3. **Non-use of parks.** Reasons that the respondents don’t use the parks are primarily that the parks aren’t safe (53%) or that the facilities are of poor quality (60%) or that there are not enough programs in them (34%).

4. **Park conditions.** About 80% of the respondents rated the condition of the parks and recreation facilities as fair to poor. Beauty, safety and cleanliness prevailed in garnering the lowest ratings of poor. More than half the respondents viewed the location of parks as good.

5. **Recreational Opportunities.** When respondents were asked which were the most important types of recreational opportunities that the City should provide in the parks, a large majority responded that all those listed were important to provide. Walking paths (98%), Nature Play Areas (93%), Organized Recreation Programs (92%), Service Activities (92%), Special Events (88%), and Bicycling (86%) emerged as their top favorites.
6. **Swimming Pools.** About 84% of the respondents stated that was important to very important to repair Ash Park Pool while 82% stated that it was important to repair the Palmer Park Pool.

7. **Swimming Pool Revitalization.** The preferred and most preferred rehabilitation included fixing the pools and adding play features (72%), fixing them as they are now (71%). The least preferred rehabilitation included putting in spray pads instead of pools (52%).

8. **Priorities.** The most important priorities for parks, recreation and open space in the City of Coatesville over the next five to ten years included:
   
   a. Safe places to walk (80%)
   b. Improvements to existing parks and recreation facilities (75%)
   c. Safe places to bicycle (67%)
   d. Safe places to walk (66%)
   e. Maintaining existing facilities (66%)

9. **Information about parks and recreation.** Most people (64%) find out about parks and recreation opportunities via word of mouth. About 50% find out through social media. In the future, most people would like to find out about parks and recreation via social media.

10. **Most Important thing to do or address.** The following word cloud depicts the most important aspects of parks and recreation that the respondents would like addressed.

   Facilities  River  Security  Cleanup
   Cleanliness  Volunteer  Walking
   Trails  Fountain  Clean  Basketball
   Safe  Events  Parks  Safer
   Safety  Proper  Kids  Awareness
   Pools  Guns  Play  Swings  Recreation
The Park Safety Ambassadors program would be a program to establish a city presence in public parks during peak visitation hours. The purpose of the program is to provide a safe, enjoyable, and quality park-user experience to our citizens and visitors. The goal of the program is to improve the quality of park users’ experience, improve the conduct of park users, reduce and deter vandalism, and create greater public appreciation of our parks’ value. The mission of the Coatesville Park Safety Ambassadors is to:

1. Provide highest quality services to park users, including security, emergency services and information.
2. Implement park rules and regulations through education and enforcement.
3. Provide ambassadorship services to all park visitors.

Background

The purpose of city government is to provide for the health, safety and general welfare of the residents. During the process of the Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment for the City of Coatesville, the citizens identified safety as the chief issue and top priority in improving the parks and recreation system. 63% of city residents responding to the online questionnaire about city parks and recreation reported that they do not use the parks because they are not safe. 74% rated safety as poor to fair in city parks. Most of the suggestions regarding the single most important thing to do to improve city parks and recreation related to improving safety.

Program Description

The City would hire two Park Safety Ambassadors to rotate through city parks April (starting in summer 2016) through October, Monday through Friday from 3:00 P.M. to 10:00 P.M and Saturdays and Sundays from 8:00 A.M. to 10:00 P.M. They’d work 30 to 40 hours per week at a rate of $12-15/hour. The two people would be responsible for scheduling coverage of the parks during these hours. The City would provide a marked municipal vehicle with safety lighting to identify the Ambassadors. Their duties, functions and operations could be based upon urban ranger programs in place in other cities and tailored to Coatesville. Ideally, the City would hire two military veterans with qualifications, knowledge skills and aptitude to be a good fit for this important position. Within the organizational structure of the City of Coatesville, the best fit for the Park Safety Ambassadors would be under the purview of Sgt. Ollis who is an advocate of community policing, education and outreach, parks and recreation as he operates with a philosophy that recreation is crime prevention.

Budget and Funding

The City of Coatesville adopted the 2016 budget with a $52,000-line item to operate Ash Pool. Since the pool is not operating and safety is a major public issue, re-allocating this line item to park safety would be an appropriate and desirable response to address public concern and the most pressing parks and recreation issue. For July through October, wages and payroll taxes would be in the range of $20,000. Additional funds would be allocated for vehicle use, uniforms (park type apparel), and limited materials and supplies.
Analysis of the Park Safety Ambassadors Concept

**Strengths**

- Addresses the number one safety issue in the parks. People have stated in interviews, online commenting, public forum and focus groups that they will not go to the parks nor send their children there because the parks are not safe.
- It is a relatively low cost program given it would be in place in 2016 for April through October.
- Readily available information is available about how other urban range type programs work in other cities.
- Hiring Veterans for these positions would be held in high regard by the public.

**Weaknesses**

- Opposition to the Park Safety Ambassadors is expected to be based upon city finances, timing and organizational capacity to carry out the advertising, hiring and supervision of the Ambassadors.
- The program would need immediate attention and start-up.

**Opportunities**

- The Park Safety Ambassadors program has the potential to make a highly visible, immediate, and relatively low cost investment in making the city a better place to live and work by creating parks that are safe and perceived as safe simply because the City is establishing a presence in the parks during peak use times.
- The Park Safety Ambassadors can bring immediate positive public relations and publicity through an innovative program that addresses public need and also helps our City’s Veterans.

**Threats**

- It would be very easy to dismiss this idea. It will take some visionary leadership and discussion to make this happen. Since it is mid-June and the City is facing severe financial challenges, it is possible that the City Manager will say that the $52,000-line item in the adopted 2016 budget has already been spent for other purposes. However, since the pool is not going to be open, it is important to use this funding to address other pressing parks and recreation needs in the community. Since the residents have already lost a major recreation opportunity, it is important to provide for public recreation services in another way, especially since it is the duty of Cities of the Third Class “to provide for the health, safety and general welfare of its residents”. I would argue that the approximate $30,000 cost for the program in 2016 is an essential public service related to safety and health.
- It would be essential for City Council to get behind this Program and not accept that the pool budget has been re-allocated. Council, as elected officials vested in setting policy, could authorize securing the funding required for the Park Safety Ambassadors.
- The easy answer here is “No” because it is June, the Ash Pool budget has been spent on other things, and there is no time to pull this off. The right answer is to provide a presence in the parks now due to public concerns and current limited use of the parks.

**Recommendation**

Discuss the Park Safety Ambassadors program within the Needs Assessment team and establish a strategy for how to present this idea to key stakeholders such as Linda, Marie, Mike, Frances, Sgt. Ollis, Sonny, the Committee and others. Set forth the week of June 13 to move this discussion forward with a goal of having Ambassadors in place by mid-July or sooner.