

Open Space, Conservation

INTRODUCTION

This Element provides the policy context for the Centre Region to achieve its vision for active recreational facilities such as sports fields, including facilities for organized sports such as baseball/softball, tennis, soccer, lacrosse, and basketball. This Element also provides policy guidance for conservation of open spaces used for passive recreation such as hiking, bird watching, and hunting. Open space resources may also include conservation of unique natural habitats that may or may not be used by people. Developed parks, active recreation areas, natural resource areas, and open spaces provide economic, health, and aesthetic benefits to residents and help preserve the unique character of the Centre Region. Goals, objectives, and policies in this Element are organized under the following headings:

- **Key Issues and Findings**
- **Goals, Objectives, and Policies**
 - **Open Space - Map M12**
 - **Conservation - Map M13**
 - **Parks and Recreation - Map M12**



n & Recreation

KEY ISSUES AND FINDINGS

The Centre Region's parks and open space facilities provide residents of the Centre Region with access to active and passive recreational opportunities while having positive impacts on the local environment and economy. As demand for sports fields and other recreation opportunities have increased, additional parklands have been dedicated to meet that demand. Examples of this are the recently approved Whitehall Road and Oak Hall Regional Parks as well as the purchase and improvements to the John Hess Softball Complex. The following issues and findings emerged as a result of the Inventory and Assessment portion of the Comprehensive Plan and act as a basis from which goals, objectives, and policies are identified. Key findings from the Inventory and Assessment portion of the Comprehensive Plan include:

1. Access to open spaces, conservation, and recreation activities that are highly valued by residents of the Centre Region.
2. Nearby state-owned facilities provide substantial opportunities for outdoor activities, including hiking, fishing, and hunting.
3. Pedestrian and bicycle connectivity, particularly between residential areas, schools, and neighborhood or community parks should be strengthened to promote alternative modes of transportation.
4. There is a shortage of play fields, which is currently being addressed by the construction of several regional park facilities.
5. Partnering opportunities with State College High School for use of diamond fields should continue to be explored.
6. Sustainability design criteria have been considered in the development of new regional parks.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

Open Space



The Haugh Family Preserve, located in Patton Township, is an open space resource that is available for use by the public. Its many uses include walking and hiking trails, sports fields and community gardens.

Providing adequate open space is essential to allowing residents of the Centre Region to continue enjoying a high quality of life. Open space provides various recreational opportunities that can help residents lead healthier lives, stabilize and improve property values, act as natural buffers between land uses, help reduce noise pollution, and strengthen the local economy. Open space includes undeveloped public or private property that may or may not be accessible to the public for active or passive recreation and other uses. Open space may also include undeveloped land that contains natural or environmental resources, greenways, and parks and recreation areas. Open space also serves a vital function in preserving the natural ecosystem, which in turn provides the Centre Region with cleaner air to breathe and water to drink. The goals, objectives, and policies of this Element of the Comprehensive Plan are focused on providing an interconnected open-space system to meet the needs of the Region and adequate access to open space.

GOAL 1 - The Centre Region has an interconnected open-space system based on existing open space, sensitive natural resources, and projected future development and open-space conservation plans.

Objective 1.1

Provide an interconnected open-space system throughout the Region that incorporates and preserve existing open space and natural resources.

Policy 1.1.1

Develop a Regional Open Space Plan that identifies open space and natural resources as well as potential methods to connect open space throughout the Region.

Policy 1.1.2

Incorporate elements from existing municipal and county recreation, open space, and greenway plans into a Regional Open Space Plan.

Policy 1.1.3

Maintain the existing inventory of open space and important natural features located throughout the Region. Identify potential methods that could be used to preserve significant open-space resources.

Policy 1.1.4

Identify open-space corridors on the Official Maps of Centre Region municipalities.

Policy 1.1.5

Identify strategies for developing greenways and other open-space connections among natural areas and developed park and open-space facilities.

Policy 1.1.6

Review and update municipal ordinances, official maps, and open space plans to ensure consistency with Regional and County Open Space and Greenway plans.

Objective 1.2

Provide a network of bicycle and pedestrian facilities that link public and private open space, parks, and recreation facilities.

Policy 1.2.1

Coordinate the planning of bicycle and pedestrian networks with public and private open space conservation.

Policy 1.2.2

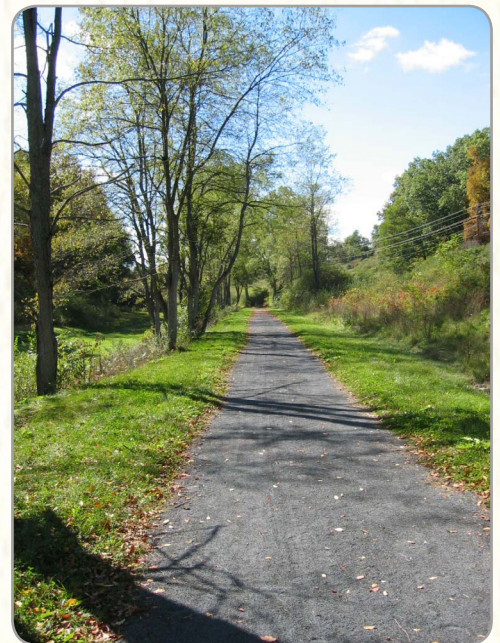
Provide safe bicycle and pedestrian facilities from neighborhoods to open space areas and schools.

Policy 1.2.3

Create bicycle and pedestrian connections to existing trails when new residential neighborhoods are developed.

Policy 1.2.4

Provide necessary infrastructure in open space areas and parks to support alternative modes of transportation (for example, bicycle racks, signage, and trails).



The Bellefonte Central Rail Trail is one of many trails in the Centre Region connecting parks, open space and neighborhoods.



Millbrook Marsh Nature Center is a 62-acre site consisting of a 12-acre farmstead area plus an adjacent 50-acre wetland area. The 50-acre wetland area also hosts a Conservation Easement between Penn State and ClearWater Conservancy of Central PA.

Conservation

Identification and conservation of the Centre Region's significant natural and open-space resources ensures that such resources will be available for future generations. Conserving open-space resources helps ensure that growth in the Region takes place in a more orderly manner and protects resources that could not be recovered once developed. By conserving open-space resources, open and natural areas continue to benefit Centre Region residents and visitors. The Centre Region, its municipalities, and other organizations have been preserving open space in the Region primarily through the establishment of conservation easements. The goals of this Element of the Comprehensive Plan are focused on continuing existing conservation efforts by identifying significant resources and establishing methods of conserving them.

GOAL 2 - Significant natural and open spaces resources are conserved and preserved to provide continued benefits to the Region.

Objective 2.1

Encourage the establishment of conservation easements and the application of conservation zoning districts on significant natural and open-space resources.

Policy 2.1.1

Coordinate activities with property owners, municipalities, and environmental organizations in establishing conservation easements.

Policy 2.1.2

Consider the creation of conservation zoning districts in municipalities in order to protect natural and open space resources.

Objective 2.2

Provide ongoing information on the benefits of conserving open space and natural habitats.

Policy 2.2.1

Continue to utilize the Millbrook Marsh Nature Center and any future educational facilities at the Kissinger Meadow wetlands as a means to educate and demonstrate the value and benefits of conserving unique environmental habitats and open space.

Policy 2.2.2

Support the creation of materials and programs to educate Centre Region residents on the importance of preserving open space that contains wooded areas, steep slopes, streams, and other natural features.

Parks & Recreation

Parks and recreation facilities give residents and visitors of the Centre Region a variety of recreational opportunities. Parks also provide residents with a place to relax and participate in community gatherings and events. Adequate parklands are essential to maintaining a high quality of life for residents. The Centre Region currently has an extensive supply of parklands and public open-space areas for a variety of recreational opportunities with more parks under construction. The goals of this Element of the Comprehensive Plan are focused on ensuring that residents of the Centre Region are provided with an adequate number of easily accessible parks, recreation facilities, and programs to meet their needs.

GOAL 3 - An adequate supply of parks, open space, and recreation facilities are provided to meet the needs of the Region.

Objective 3.1

Maintain up-to-date information on the supply, demand, and use of public parks and open space.

Policy 3.1.1

Identify the types and locations of parks and recreational facilities needed to serve current and future residents.

Policy 3.1.2

Proceed with the development of regional parks and their accompanying master plans. Document the use of these facilities once completed.



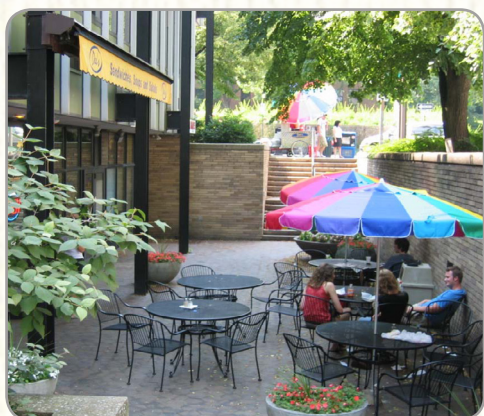
There are over 1,000 acres of parkland within the Centre Region, including neighborhood, community, and regional parks..



The Hess Softball Field Complex in Harris Township is an example of parklands resulting from regional collaboration.



Park Forest pool in Patton Township is one of two pools operated by Centre Region Parks & Recreation department.



A small courtyard outside local businesses on College Avenue in downtown State College.

Objective 3.2

Encourage sharing facilities and costs, when possible, among municipalities, Penn State University, the State College Area School District, and private recreation and sports organizations.

Policy 3.2.1

Support a business plan for the use, operation, and management of regional parks and recreation facilities.

Policy 3.2.2

Expand and maintain cooperative partnerships with the State College Area School District for the use of athletic fields and facilities for recreational purposes.

Objective 3.3

Provide information to the public about the availability of parks, recreational facilities, open space, and recreation programs.

Policy 3.3.1

Maintain a Regional Parks Map that shows the proximity of residential neighborhoods to parks, recreational facilities, and public open space locations.

Objective 3.4

Provide adequate parks and recreational facilities to meet community needs while ensuring the long-term vitality and quality of parks and open space.

Policy 3.4.1

Provide connections from passive recreation and open spaces to community and regional parks.

Policy 3.4.2

Continue municipal and State College Area School District support for recreational programs as a vital means for improving health and well being of children and adults.

Policy 3.4.3

Revise municipal regulations to incorporate requirements for small, public open spaces, such as plazas, courtyards, community greens, and playgrounds into subdivision and land development regulations to serve the recreational needs of the community as described in municipal parks plans.

GOAL 4 - Well-designed and -maintained park facilities and infrastructure support the recreational functions of the Region’s park systems.

Objective 4.1

Develop new facilities and manage existing facilities in a manner that promotes responsible environmental practices while providing benefits to all residents in the Region.

Policy 4.1.1

Implement best management practices and policies in parklands. Best practices can include but are not limited to reducing impervious surfaces with porous concrete/asphalt, harvesting rain water, minimizing skyglow light pollution through the use of flat-lens light fixtures, providing parking for carpools and park-and-ride programs, bicycle parking, and ensuring accessibility.

Policy 4.1.2

Encourage parkland designs that minimize impacts to private property adjacent to parklands and do not create adverse environmental impacts.

Policy 4.1.3

Ensure that existing facilities comply with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Municipality or Agency	Acres of Parkland
College Township	180
Ferguson Township	189
Halfmoon Township	19
Harris Township	68
Patton Township	172
State College Borough	115
Recreation Authority/Regional	267
	Total 1,010

Source: Centre Regional Planning Agency

2012 Parkland by Municipality in the Centre Region