

***Lower Gwynedd Township,
Montgomery County
Parks & Recreation Strategic Plan***

SEPTEMBER 2022



PREPARED BY:



GILMORE & ASSOCIATES, INC.
ENGINEERING & CONSULTING SERVICES



LOWER GWYNEDD TOWNSHIP PARKS & RECREATION STRATEGIC PLAN

PREPARED FOR:

LOWER GWYNEDD TOWNSHIP, MONTGOMERY COUNTY, PA

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Chapter 1 - Introduction & Purpose of this Plan

Lower Gwynedd Township wishes to examine their park system in greater detail. In 2022, the Board of Supervisors and Township staff determined that this idea had enough potential to merit further study, in the form of a Strategic Plan. On Tuesday, March 8th, 2022, the project team met at Pen Ambler Park and visited the focus parks together while discussing challenges, opportunities, and future goals and wishes for the park.

This strategic plan focuses on an overall analysis of existing conditions and facilities in combination with identified needs and desires for the parks moving forward. It provides general recommendations to help Township officials identify parks and improvements that should be prioritized. Where appropriate, it features graphics highlighting locations and layouts of potential improvements but does not provide full conceptual plans. This strategic plan is designed to help identify the parks that merit further exploration with a masterplan. Furthermore, recommended improvements will be matched with potential funding sources to help make these changes a reality.

Project Team

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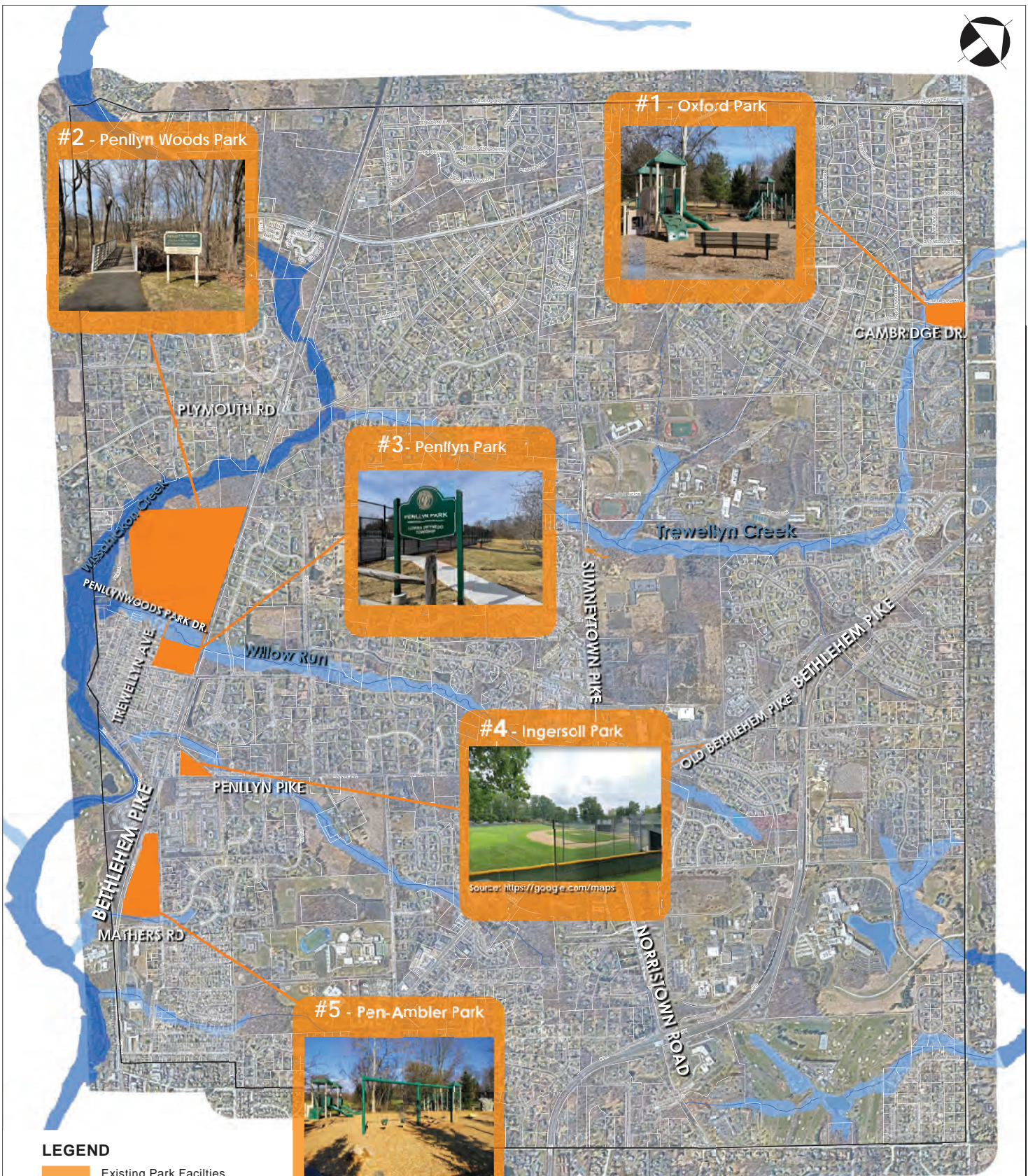
Focus Parks

- Pen Ambler Park
- Penllyn Park
- Penllyn Woods
- Oxford Park
- Ingersoll Park







Plan Objectives

- Analyze existing conditions, needs and desires in order to develop prioritized recommendations for each focus park.
- Examine all focus parks to determine the ideal parks and locations for key amenities such as pickleball and restrooms.
- Identify and prioritize parks that are in need of playground repair or replacement.
- Ensure ADA accessibility for all parks and inclusivity, wherever feasible.
- Identify potential next steps for the McCormick House.



LEGEND

-  Existing Park Facilities
-  Creeks & Streams
-  Floodplains
-  Parcels

FOCUS PARKS MAPS

LOWER GWYNEDD PARKS AND RECREATION STRATEGIC PLAN
 LOWER GWYNEDD TOWNSHIP, MONTGOMERY COUNTY, PA

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APRIL 2022



Chapter 2 - Oxford Park



Oxford Park represents one of the Township's three neighborhood parks. In addition to more standard features such a playground, ballfield, and basketball court, the park includes sand volleyball and a gazebo which allows it to host the Township's popular Summer Concert series. The softball field is the only one in the Township and has typically previously been used by companies. Finally, the hill just beyond Welsh Road is a very popular sledding spot within the Township. The shaded picnic area is also a popular spot with playground users, walkers, and park patrons alike.

Existing Facilities & Conditions

| Facilities Inventory | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Softball Field | Basketball Court |
| Playground | Gazebo |
| Sand Volleyball Court | Shuffleboard Court |
| Walking Trail | Pergola |
| Picnic Tables | Swing Set |

With a few exceptions, Oxford Park's amenities appear to be generally in good condition. Those exceptions include the playground, pergola, and shuffleboard court.

- The existing playground equipment is currently in acceptable condition, however, due to its age parts are no longer available from the manufacturer and playground components can no longer be replaced or repaired. Despite its current condition, this fact makes the Oxford Park playground a high priority for future replacement.
- While the shuffleboard paved area is currently in acceptable shape, several of its edges drop off sharply and the slope is covered by large river rock. These drop-offs and rocks present potential safety and maintenance hazards and should be addressed.



Accessibility

The park generally appears to meet ADA standards regarding parking, walkways, the water fountain, and playground. A few key areas for improvement include the following:

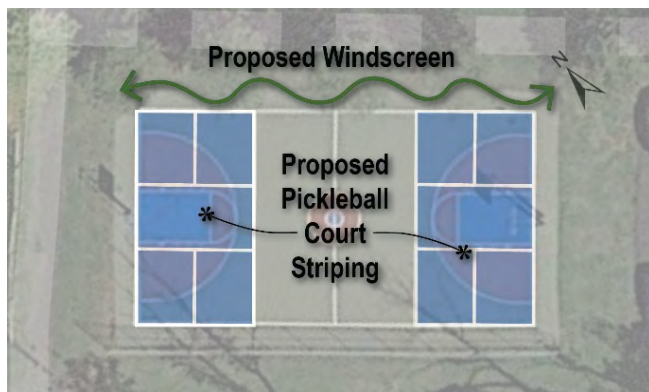
- The mulch on the playground meets ADA requirements for safety surfacing but is not inclusive. However, it only meets ADA if it is routinely maintained and replenished to meet the proper conditions.
- The playground equipment meets ADA but is not considered to be fully inclusive.

| Needs | Desires |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| New Playground Equipment | Pickleball Courts |
| Parking for Concerts | Gaga Pit |
| Lighting for Concerts | Picnic Grove |
| | Sensory Garden |

Recommendations

The recommendations below examine potential improvements and next steps prioritized by numbers 1-3, with 1 being a higher priority and 3 being a lower one. Potential grant funding sources are also highlighted, which are explained in more detail in the appendices. Given the potential for layout changes within Oxford (the playground, potential pickleball courts, and a shift in concert venue back to Pen Ambler Park if the amphitheater lawn is improved) it may be a good candidate for a more detailed master plan.

| Recommendation | Priority Level | Potential Funding Source |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Replace playground equipment and expand play area to the northeastern side of the path for inclusive play and to include all ages. | 1 | DCNR C2P2, DCED GTRP |
| Turn the existing tot lot area into a picnic grove. | 2 | DCNR C2P2, DCED GTRP |
| Create a planting bed around the existing arbor and treat as a sculptural piece due to its remote location and plant with low-maintenance native plants. | 1 | Include in a DCNR or DCED Grant Project |
| Install a knee wall with steps, potentially using blocks recycled from the Pen-Ambler Amphitheater around the existing shuffleboard court. | 1 | Include in a DCNR or DCED Grant Project |
| Stripe basketball court for 2 pickleball courts and install a windscreen | 1 | Include in a DCNR or DCED Grant Project |
| Install a trail spur from Cambridge Drive to the internal park trail in order to facilitate safe pedestrian access to and from the adjacent neighborhood | 3 | |
| Consider painting the shuffleboard court with maps, games, community art, and other designs. | 3 | Include in a DCNR or DCED Grant Project |
| Consider developing a master plan for the park. | 1 | DCNR C2P2, DCED GTRP |



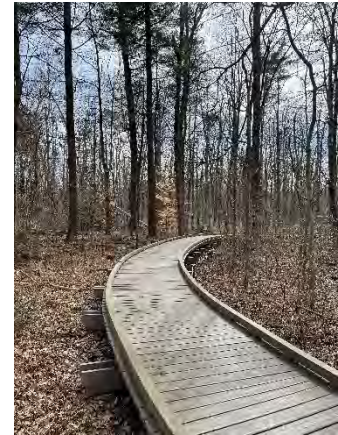
Potential Pickleball Court Striping on Existing Basketball Court



Potential Playground and Picnic Grove Layout

Chapter 3 – Penllyn Woods Park

Penllyn Woods is the Township’s largest park and the largest amount of open space and trails. While a large portion of the park is covered in woodlands, streams, and trails, the park also features a community building and several baseball and athletic fields. The vast majority of the park area is covered by a conservation easement. While this is critical for environmental and open space preservation purposes, it does limit the scope and type of improvements that can be made within the park. This park’s unique combination of passive and active recreation amenities, in addition to the community building make it a destination park beyond the immediate Township borders.



| Facilities Inventory | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Community Building | Multipurpose Field |
| 2 Little League Baseball Fields | Walking Trails (1/4 Mile) |
| 90’ Baseball Field | Pond and Boardwalk Trail |
| 2 Picnic Pavilions | Rain Garden |



As one of the newer parks in the system, Penllyn Wood’s facilities are generally in very good condition. The main concerns center around the age and functionality of the baseball field backstops. There have been incidents in the past of cars in adjacent parking lots getting hit and or damaged by fly balls from the fields. Several trees in the woodland surrounding the boardwalk trail have also died or come down in recent years. This is not only an ecological and aesthetic concern, but also a safety and damage concern for the boardwalk and boardwalk users. It should also be noted,

that the neighboring Willow Run and Wissahickon Creek have both been known to flood, which has prevented access to the park and community building during and after storm events in the past.

Accessibility

While the park generally appears to meet ADA standards, there are some areas for improvement. Several of the parking lots and access drives are gravel and would benefit from being paved either with asphalt or pervious pavers. Similarly, not all sections of trail are paved or gravel that meets the width and standards of for ADA accessibility. Particularly some of the gravel paths connecting to the pavilion near Talus field appear to require some maintenance and improvements in order to be up to ADA standards.



| Needs | Desires |
|--------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Improved Backstops | Pickleball Courts |
| Re-vegetation near Boardwalk Trail | Sensory Garden |
| Maintenance and/or Upgrades to Some Trails | Paved Parking Areas |

Recommendations

Given the presence of a community building, as well as a wide variety of active and passive amenities, Penllyn Woods would be a good candidate for additional programming opportunities. The Community building provides infrastructure and indoor space, while the woodlands, ponds and creeks provide environmental education and restoration project opportunities. Furthermore, the athletic fields and pavilions round out opportunities for well-rounded programming for all ages within the park. The presence of an EAC-maintained rain garden in the park could also present an ideal opportunity to create a sensory garden, with the potential for maintenance assistance from EAC members.

| Recommendation | Priority Level | Potential Funding Source |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Consider designing and installing a sensory garden | 3 | Include in a DCNR or DCED Grant Project |
| Install native woodland restoration plantings including canopy trees, understory trees, and shrubs. | 1 | Include in a DCNR or DCED Grant Project |
| Widen, improve, or maintain trail sections in order to meet ADA standards and pave, where feasible. | 1 | Include in a DCNR or DCED Grant Project |
| Consider paving gravel parking areas. | 2 | Include in a DCNR or DCED Grant Project |
| Install upgraded backstops at all park ballfields | 1 | Include in a DCNR or DCED Grant Project |
| Consider using the community building for alternatives to youth athletics including theater, arts, and STEM programs | 2 | |
| Explore ways to use Penllyn Woods for environmental education and programming including signage, restoration projects, and youth camps and programs. | 3 | |



Northeast Georgia Speech Center – Sensory Garden

Erin O. Smith. 2015. <https://www.gainesvilletimes.com/life/life-top-stories/a-garden-for-all-of-the-senses/>



Woodland Re-Vegetation Example

Chapter 4 – Penllyn Park

Penllyn Park is in many ways, a typical neighborhood park and one of the few Township parks that is walkable for kids and families living nearby. This ease of access has made it one of the most heavily used parks by the community. It also connects via trail and bridge to the neighboring Penllyn Woods Park, making it an equally valuable resource for adults in the neighborhood to walk, run, jog, and dog-walk. It also contains the only Township-owned tennis court. All other tennis courts within the Township are on school district property and may not be consistently available for public use.

| Facilities Inventory | |
|------------------------------|------------------|
| Playground | Pavilion |
| Little League Baseball Field | Walking Trail |
| Tennis Court | Basketball Court |
| Swings | |

Comparatively speaking, the facilities in Penllyn are fairly new and in good condition. The playground equipment was installed in the early 2000's. However, replacement parts for the equipment are still available, so it's not in immediate need of replacement or upgrading. The baseball field backstop and fencing layout are not quite up to current standard and would benefit from redesign and replacement. Following the park's most recent renovation and its effects on existing mature trees, additional shade may be needed in the park for the summer months.



Accessibility

In general, the park's facilities appear to meet ADA standards. The playground surfacing and edging should be monitored and considered for future replacement. The curb edging of the play areas creates a drop-off that would not be ADA accessible without a playground ramp or maintaining a high enough mulch depth. Similarly, playground mulch requires consistent monitoring and maintenance to ensure accessibility. Therefore, this maintenance effort should be considered when potentially examining the long-range

expense of installing poured-in-place or other safety surfacing options which would also be more inclusive. The playground equipment is also accessible, but not inclusive. Inclusive play equipment or even individual elements should be considered for this park in the future.

| Needs | Desires |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| New Swings | New Playground Equipment |
| Baseball Backstop | Pickleball Court |
| Improved Dugout Fencing Alignment | Upgraded Playground Safety Surfacing |

Recommendations

Given its heavy use and walkable location, Penllyn Park should be considered for routine upgrades and replacement of the existing equipment and particularly popular pieces like the playground and athletic equipment. While the playground equipment is not high on the Township-wide list for replacement, it should be examined in the future for the potential inclusion of poured-in-place safety surfacing and inclusive playground elements. Finally, its unique position and connection to the broader Penllyn Woods Park should be emphasized, so that users of each individual park are aware of the amenities that are a quick walk always for either park.



| Recommendation | Priority Level | Potential Funding Source |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Replace the swing set | 1 | Include in a DCNR or DCED Grant Project |
| Redesign the playground layout and install new equipment and surfacing | 3 | DCNR C2P2, DCED GTRP |
| Install new backstop and redesigned dugout fencing | 1 | DCNR C2P2, DCED GTRP |
| Consider planting shade trees, where space allows, near the park entrance to enhance shade in the summer. | 1 | PHS or Include in a DCNR or DCED Grant Project |
| Consider installing wayfinding signage to promote the connection to Penllyn Woods Park and trails. | 2 | Include in a DCNR or DCED Grant Project |



Dugout – Overlapping Fencing Layout Example

Troy, Montana. 2010.
<http://www.cityoftroymontana.com/gallery15.html>



Inclusive Swing Set Example

BCI Burke. 2022. <https://www.bciburke.com/our-products/product/freedom-swing-seat>

Chapter 5 - Ingersoll Park

Ingersoll is one of the Township’s smallest parks and primarily serves Little League Baseball users. The park is programmed and maintained through a partnership with the local little league. The league owns and operates the concession stand and a storage building onsite. The Township owns and maintains the fields, parking, and notably the recently purchased McCormick House and related structures located adjacent to the park. The fenced in area and garages adjacent to the McCormick House are also owned by the Township, and currently leased to a landscaping company.



Facilities Inventory

| | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 2 Little League Baseball Fields | Picnic Area |
| Concession Stand (Little League) | Storage Building (Little League) |
| McCormick House | Bullpen |

Ingersoll Park is often plagued by a variety of stormwater and drainage issues. Drainage issues tend to lead to muddy conditions behind dugouts as well as issues with drainage in the outfield. The septic and sewer issues with the recently acquired McCormick House, could warrant a full review and potential redesign or upgrades to utilities within the park. The lack of netting and tight layout of the park has also often led to balls flying out onto the road. Similarly, the outfield fencing, particularly on Mike O’Brien field, is aging and will need to be replaced, ideally with a taller fence in the near future.

Accessibility

Ingersoll Park could benefit from a few ADA accessible upgrades. The current ADA parking spaces are parallel and do not incorporate access aisle striping or a designated van accessible parking space. The pathways and gathering spaces outside of the parking lot are currently covered in crushed gravel. While this surface can be ADA accessible, it requires frequent monitoring and maintenance to ensure compliance. The McCormick house was previously a private residence, and as a result will require considerable modifications to meet ADA accessibility standards for public use. It is currently accessible only by stairs and existing restrooms are not large enough or laid out in an accessible manner.



Needs

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Taller Baseball Fencing | Restrooms |
| Improved Stormwater Management for Fields and Dugouts | Public Access for the McCormick House |
| Further Investigation of the McCormick House | Additional Parking |
| Netting to keep fly balls out of road | |

Desires

Recommendations

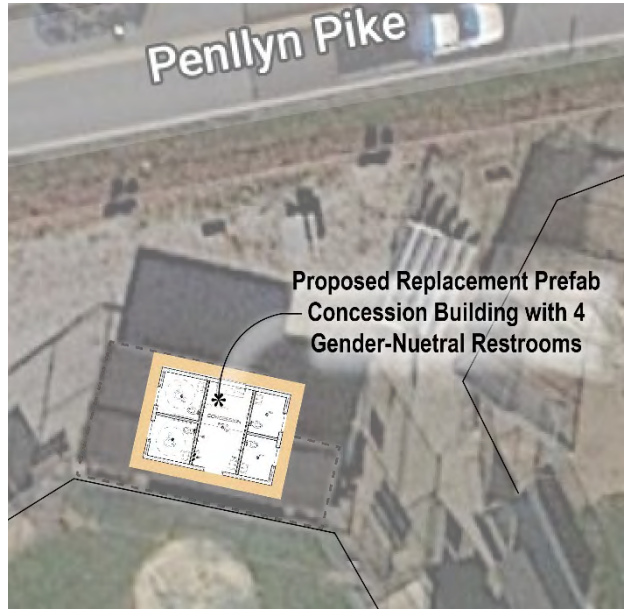
Ingersoll's existing use by the local Little League is a unique opportunity for the Township to strengthen their partnership with a local organization. By nurturing this relationship, the Township may be able to share the maintenance and improvement responsibilities and provide enhanced programming and facilities for the public. This, in combination with the Township's recent purchase of the McCormick House, presents additional opportunities to provide a more well-rounded programming experience through indoor classes, events, and camps within Ingersoll Park. This opportunity would also fit well with a broader trend in the decline of organized youth sports in favor of well-rounded extra-curricular experiences. While the McCormick house is not examined in detail as part of the study, a flow-chart of potential next steps for the building can be found on page 12.



| Recommendation | Priority Level | Potential Funding Source |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Replace and install taller fencing along the baseball fields. | 1 | Include in a DCNR or DCED Grant Project |
| Explore the option of either installing a restroom or using the McCormick House for public restrooms. | 2 | RACP |
| Consider having underground utilities surveyed to understand and design a stormwater management system for long-term function. | 1 | Include in a DCNR or DCED Grant Project |
| Install removable netting to catch fly balls before they reach the road or invest in netting that is more weather-proof. | 2 | Include in a DCNR or DCED Grant Project |
| Engage a historic preservation expert to determine the historic status of the McCormick House and strategize on next steps for the house. | 1 | RACP, Heritage Conservancy |
| Create an agreement with Little League leaders to clearly define Township and Little League responsibilities. | 1 | |
| Explore options to use and program the McCormick house for indoor programming and alternatives to youth sports. | 3 | |
| Consider replacing gravel paths and picnic areas with pervious pavers for easier maintenance and accessibility. | 3 | Include in a DCNR or DCED Grant Project |
| Explore the possibility of a partnership with Little League to upgrade the concession stand, connection to public sewer, and incorporate restrooms in or nearby. | 2 | DCNR C2P2, DCED GTRP |



Option A – New Prefab Restroom Building



Option B – Replace Existing Concession Stand with Prefab Concession Stand and Restroom Building



Example Pre-Fab Restroom Building

Romtec. <https://romtec.com/blog-categories/a-new-green-restroom-building/>

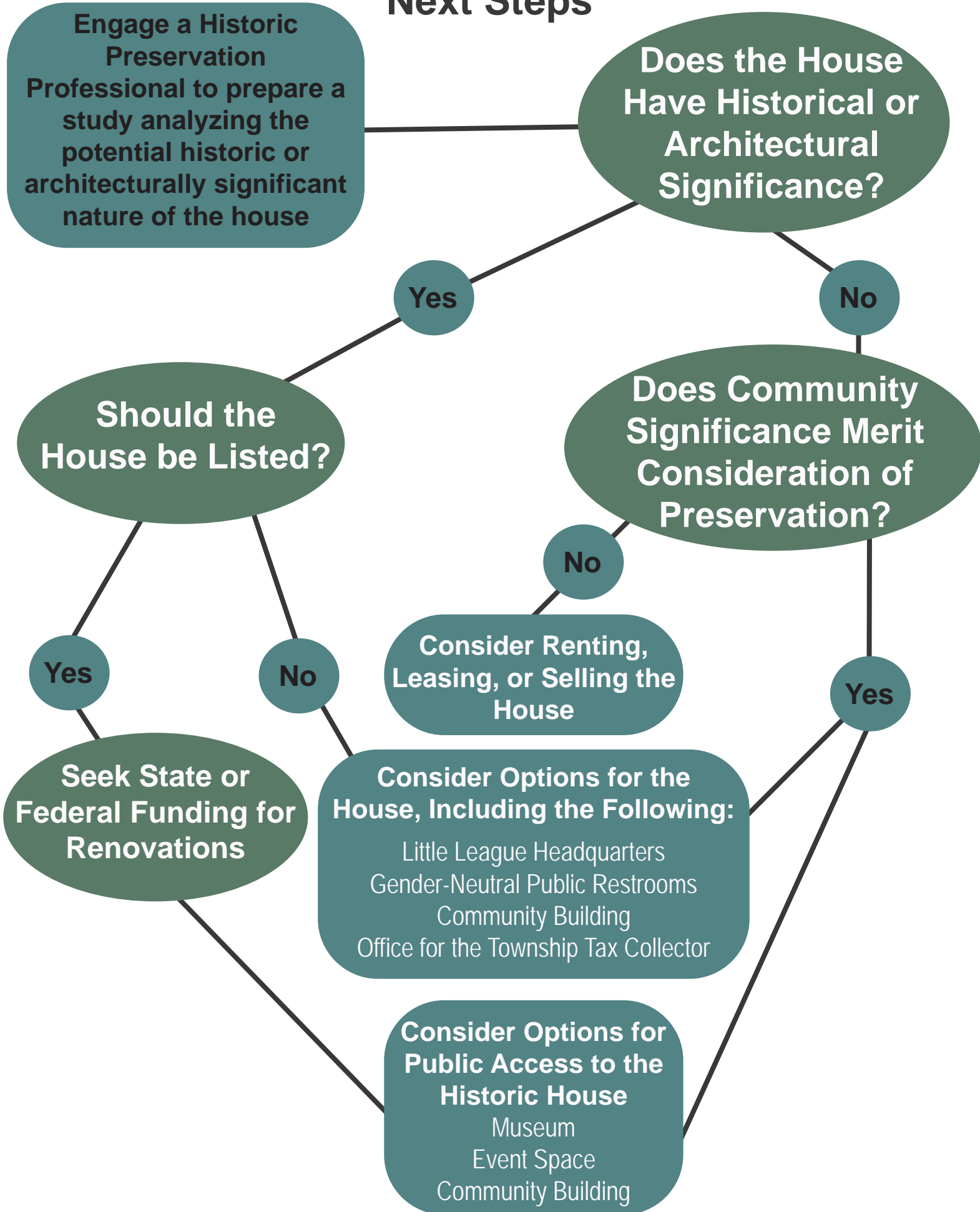


**Existing Concession Stand Building
(Owned by the Local Little League)**



Option C – Consider Renovating the McCormick House to Include Public, Accessible Restrooms

McCormick House: Next Steps



Chapter 6 – Pen Ambler Park

Pen Ambler Park is a walkable community park with more expansive recreational amenities than a traditional neighborhood park. It features an amphitheater and a plaza area along the trail as well as a sizable playground. Its multiple user groups and all-day use status have led to some requests for restrooms in the park. However, the Township does currently provide portable restrooms in the parking lot during the warmer months.



| Facilities Inventory | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| Walking/Jogging Path (3/4 Mile) | Basketball Courts |
| Baseball Field | Plaza |
| Amphitheater | Playground |
| Swings | |



While the park's facilities generally appear to be in good condition, some changes have left features in a less usable condition. The seating/retaining walls have been removed from the amphitheater and a water fountain feature has been removed from the plaza area along the trail. Each of these areas are in need of replacement or repair following the removal, which opens up the possibilities of new park features. Additionally, there are a few sections of trail that are still in need of previously planned paving upgrades from their current gravel condition.

Accessibility

Generally speaking, Pen Ambler Park appears to be in good shape from an accessibility standpoint. The playground and amphitheater, however, do deserve some additional accessibility consideration in light of potential future improvements. Regardless of the design solution that is decided upon for the amphitheater lawn or seating area, an accessible seating area for wheelchairs should be considered to allow for comfortable access and viewing during performances. While the current playground equipment and mulch safety surfacing appear to currently meet ADA requirements, it's worth noting that accessibility is contingent upon the routine monitoring, maintenance, and replenishing of the playground mulch. For this reason, it would be worth considering a poured-in-place safety surfacing from a long-term cost and maintenance perspective. It's also worth considering the addition of inclusive playground equipment or elements, during any future replacements to ensure that users of all abilities can use the equipment together.



| Needs | Desires |
|----------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Amphitheater Renovations | Pickleball |
| Improved Plaza and Fountain Area | Pavilion |
| Improved Upper Athletic Field Drainage | New Playground Equipment |
| Improved Playground Drainage | Restrooms |

Recommendations

Long-term, it is recommended that Pen Ambler be examined and improved as an all-day park for users of a variety of ages and abilities. Pen Ambler is in a unique position to host athletic events, engage children on the playground and basketball courts, and host concerts, performances, and events in its amphitheater. For this reason, comfort improvements such as a pavilion, picnic areas, or restrooms could be well-suited for the park. Aesthetic improvements, such as a pergola for the amphitheater, and new centerpiece for the plaza would help to round out Pen Ambler as a destination within the Township.

| Recommendation | Priority Level | Potential Funding Source |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Grade out amphitheater seating area, re-seed with grass, install a paved ADA Accessible seating area, and clean and reset the pavers in stage area. | 1 | Include in a DCNR or DCED Grant Project |
| Install a sculpture or flagpole and planting area at the site of the fountain. | 1 | Include in a DCNR or DCED Grant Project |
| Pave the remaining section of trail through the wooded area. | 1 | Include in a DCNR or DCED Grant Project |
| Replace swing set, potentially with inclusive equipment. | 1 | Include in a DCNR or DCED Grant Project |
| Address drainage issues around the playground. | 1 | Include in a DCNR or DCED Grant Project |
| Address Drainage Issues for the upper athletic field. | 1 | Include in a DCNR or DCED Grant Project |
| Consider partnering with the local rotary organization on park improvements. | 3 | |
| Install a pergola for the amphitheater. | 2 | Include in a DCNR or DCED Grant Project |
| Consider locating and installing a pavilion. | 2 | DCNR C2P2, DCED GTRP |
| Consider the possibility of installing a prefabricated restroom building. | 3 | DCNR C2P2, DCED GTRP |
| Establish a partnership with neighboring Ambler Yards to share their path and parking during concerts and other large events. | 3 | |



Removed Fountain Area in Plaza, to be Replaced with Another Amenity



Whites Road Park, Amphitheater and Sloped Lawn

<https://www.lansdale.org/Facilities/Facility/Details/White-Road-Park-7>



Proposed Pergola

Cedar Forest Products. 2022



Remaining Trail Section to Be Paved

Chapter 7 – Overall Recommendations

While the majority of this report’s recommendations are park specific, there were a few overall themes that emerged from examining the park system holistically.

Recommendations

Select native species wherever plantings are needed or desired.

Consider developing invasive species management plans for woodlands, or other areas that may require them.

Develop and prioritize sidewalk and trail connections to and from parks to increase walking and biking and decrease the need for additional parking.

Consider stormwater management solutions that encourage infiltration including rain gardens and bioswales.

Consider options to use recycled materials (such as the stone from the old amphitheater walls) when designing and installing improvements.

Recommended Park Master Planning Priorities

It is recommended that formal master plans be created for most of the parks before major improvements are implemented. The master planning process will help ensure that improvements serve long-term goals for the park regarding use, programming, and sustainability. Given the level of improvements or upgrades presently being considered, it is recommended that Oxford Park be prioritized for a master plan, followed by Pen Ambler. While the remaining parks could certainly benefit from master planning, at the present time, they have been upgraded and are serving their purpose to the public at a level that does not merit a redesign. Funding for master plans can be obtained through several grant sources, although DCNR C2P2 grants are commonly used. It should be noted that DCNR grants require a considerable amount of public engagement and background and contextual information, that, while often helpful, may not be necessary or warranted for all parks.

| Recommendation | Priority Level |
|-----------------|----------------|
| Oxford Park | 1 |
| Pen Ambler Park | 2 |
| Ingersoll | 3 |
| Penllyn Park | 4 |
| Penllyn Woods | 5 |