

# Analysis



Aerial view of Gerald Richards Park (red outline) and Coventry Christian School (orange outline).



Aerial view of Sanatoga Park showing soccer and baseball fields that partially opened in the spring of 2010.

## Township Park and Recreation System

According to the Township's website, "Lower Pottsgrove Township continually seeks to provide comprehensive park and recreation services to its residents. Lower Pottsgrove Township's main priority is to acquire parcels of land that meet its priorities for open space acquisition: preserving environmentally sensitive areas, connecting open space and recreational areas, and providing areas for active and passive recreation that meet the needs of residents of all ages and interests. Lower Pottsgrove Township seeks to maximize its ability to acquire open space for the benefit of all residents through the use of donations and grant funding. The second priority for Lower Pottsgrove Township is the development of its parks to expand recreational opportunities for residents. As funding opportunities are available, Lower Pottsgrove Township plans for and develops recreational facilities such as ball fields, playgrounds, trails, and other facilities."

Lower Pottsgrove Township has more than 220 acres of parks dedicated to open space and recreational activities. More than half of Lower Pottsgrove's parks are preserved as open space and natural areas intended for passive recreation. However, Lower Pottsgrove also offers active recreation facilities in the form of baseball fields, soccer fields, basketball courts, playground areas, and a band shell. The Township's parks and recreation system is managed largely by the Township's assistant manager and public works staff with significant help from local sports organizations for field maintenance. The Township's Parks and Recreation Board is currently in the process of evaluating its facilities and services to handle the growing park system and recreational needs of Township residents.

An analysis of the Township's recreational facilities finds that

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approximately 110 acres (48%) of the Township’s recreational properties are developed or are planned to develop active recreation uses such as ball fields and courts. While passive activities such as trails may exist on these properties, they are often mixed with other more active uses such as sports fields. The Township also has approximately 33 acres (15%) of unimproved open space properties. About 86 acres (38%) of parklands exclusively contain passive uses.

The Township currently offers seven soccer fields, two baseball fields, two softball/little league fields (two each of the soccer and baseball fields are shared fields) and two basketball courts at its premier active recreation facility—the 30-acre Gerald Richards Park. The 54-acre Sanatoga Park includes a baseball field, soccer field, band shell, picnic pavilion and playground. The 38 Acre Ringing Rocks park offers 1 baseball field and is otherwise primarily a passive park. In addition to Sanatoga Park, Gerald Richards Park, and Ringing Rocks Park most of the 23 acre Pleasantview Park appears suitable for active recreation. The Township’s remaining parks are all passive parks, some with trails. These other parks are intended and suitable for passive recreation/conservation due to steep topography, woodlands, wetlands and other natural features found at these sites. See chart #1 for additional information on the Township’s Parks.

### Active vs. Passive Recreation:

**Active recreation** parks are classified as parks with athletic fields for organized sports or other organized recreation activities.

**Passive recreation** parks contain minimal facilities and are geared towards predominantly informal activity such as hiking trails, open field areas, and picnic areas.

In most cases there is a combination of active and passive recreation uses, however most parks have either active or passive recreation as a predominant use.

### KEY:

	EXISTING OR PLANNED ACTIVE RECREATION PARKS
	EXISTING OR PLANNED PASSIVE RECREATION PARKS

Name	Acres	Location	Facilities
Ringing Rocks Park	38.4	1880 North Keim Street (@ Yerger Road)	Unpaved trails, wooded areas, rock outcroppings, pond, stream, <b>baseball field</b>
<i>Shaners Grove</i> at Ringing Rocks Park	2.8	1900 North Keim Street (@ Yerger Road)	Future Parking for Ringing Rocks Park, wooded areas, rock outcroppings, pond, stream
Sprogels Run Park	22.2	75 1/2 Timberview Drive (off Kepler Road)	Unpaved trails -- Future boardwalk and nature trail
<b>Pleasantview Park</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>1903 Bleim Road (@ Pleasantview Road)</b>	<b>Open Space</b>
Prusshill Barn	0.8	2595 Prusshill Road	Barn & Open Space
Snell Park & Norton Park	32.1	1302 Snell Road 2840 Shire Drive	Open fields, undeveloped
<b>Gerald Richards Park</b>	<b>33.7</b>	<b>2130 Buchert Road (across from Twp Bldg)</b>	<b>4 Baseball fields, Soccer/Multi-purpose field, basketball court, paved fitness trail, parking; concession stand</b>
Keim Street Open Space	0.2	839 North Keim Street (near Mulberry Street)	Gazebo & Garden
Crimson Lane	0.7	910 Crimson Lane	Open field, undeveloped
Alfred B. Miles Park	8.9	545 Sunnybrook Road (by Kepler Road)	Picnic tables, unpaved trail
Liberty Hill Open Space	0.3	2525 Allison Drive	Open Space
Pottsgrove Historical Society	0.3	East High Street	Historic Building & Open Space
Sanatoga Park	54.0	223 South Sanatoga Road 200 South Park Road	Play equipment, band shell, <b>basketball hoops</b> , parking areas, lake, open fields, <b>soccer field, baseball field</b>
Schuylkill River Park	12.3	2116 Sanatoga Station Road (@ Porter Road)	Unpaved trails



POTTSGROVE



The Township works with local sports organizations in an effort to fulfill needs for additional sports field capacity. The following organizations are currently utilizing in or have expressed an interest in utilizing Township park facilities:

- Pottsgrove Soccer Club
- Pottsgrove Little League
- Pottsgrove Baseball Organization
- Pottsgrove Softball
- Pottsgrove Vipers Lacrosse
- Pottstown Panthers semi-pro football
- Coventry Christian Schools
- St. Pius X Catholic Schools
- Pottsgrove School District

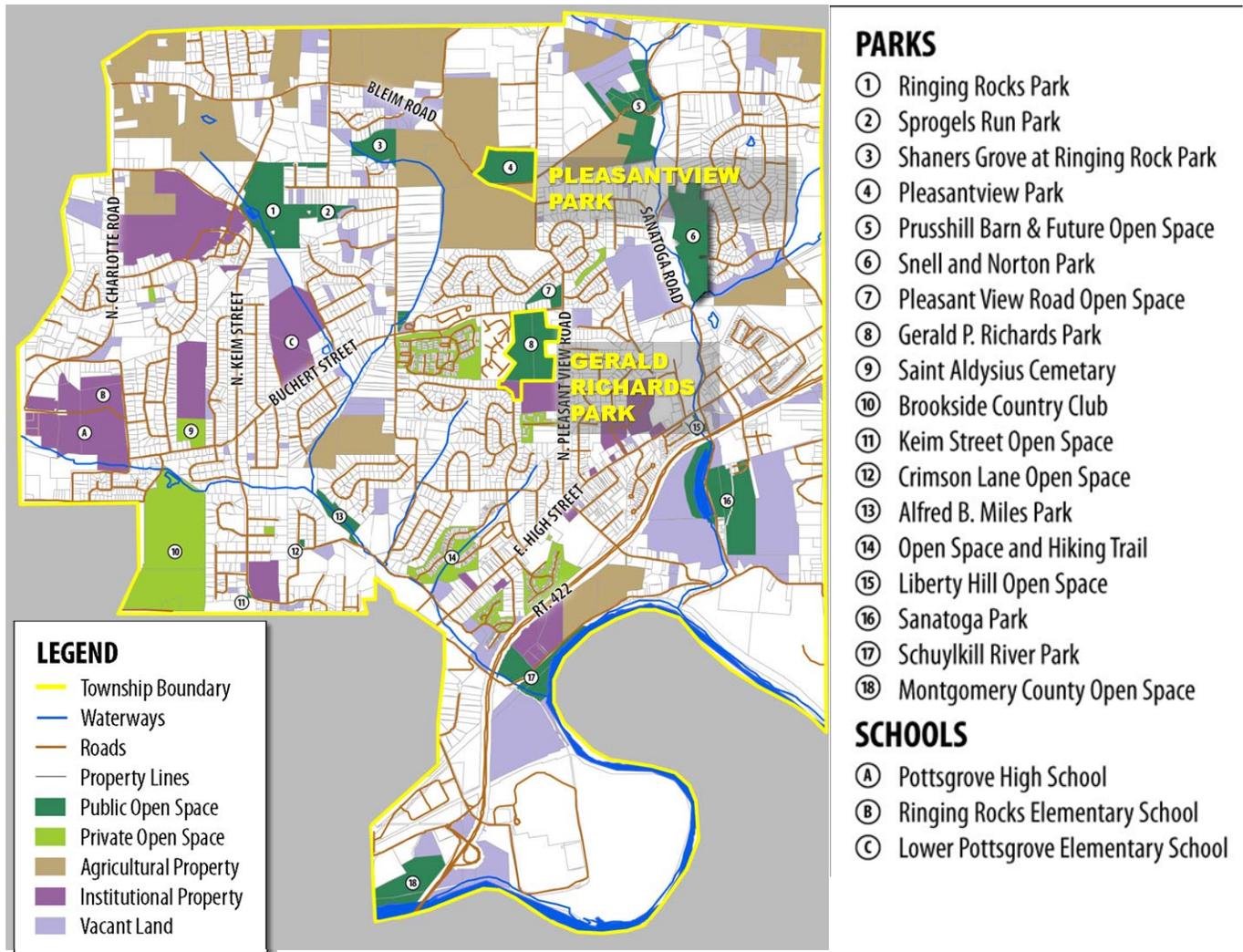
Due to space constraints and limited resources, the Township has not been able to accommodate some of these organizations' needs to date. The Township would like to plan for accommodating the needs of these organizations through this project; however, needs of Township residents who are interested in other pursuits will also be planned.

During the public participation process, sports organizations were asked to submit their field needs for incorporation into in the planning process. A copy of the sports organization needs received can be found in the appendix.

**Context of Gerald Richards and Pleasantview Parks within the Township's Park System**

Gerald Richards and Pleasantview parks are centrally located in the Township approximately a mile apart from each other. These parks could be linked to each other and other Township parks with improved trail and sidewalk connections. It is recommended that the

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Map showing Lower Pottsgrove Township park and open space and school parcels.

Township continue to acquire land and/or trail easements along Pleasantview Road, Sanatoga Road, and along a tributary to Sprogels Run to form a trail system linking both park properties to adjacent residential neighborhoods and nearby park and/or open space properties.

### Relevant Planning Documents

The improvements proposed for the Gerald Richards and Pleasantview Parks are consistent with regional, county, and local plans. The proposed Park improvements are a direct result of local planning initiatives which in summary recommend trail connections that provide regional and local connections to a network of parks and open space and additional park facilities to serve the needs of the community. These other planning initiatives include:



- **2008—Planning and Design Strategies for Healthy Living, Parks and Recreation in the Pottstown Area, Pottstown Area and Health & Wellness Foundation**
- **2007 – Lower Pottsgrove Parks and Recreation Satisfaction Survey**
- **May 2006 – Pottstown Metropolitan Region Parks and Recreation Peer Study**
- **2005 Update – Lower Pottsgrove Township Open Space, Recreation, & Environmental Resource Protection Plan;**
- **2005 – Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Comprehensive Plan;**
- **2005 – Shaping Our Future: A Comprehensive Plan for Montgomery County**
- **2003 – Montgomery County Green Fields/Green Towns Program Recommendations**
- **1988 – Lower Pottsgrove Township Bikeway and Trail Plan**



### **2008 - Planning and Design Strategies for Healthy Living, Parks and Recreation in the Pottstown Area**

This plan is a collaboration between Pennsylvania State University and the Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation to evaluate planning and design strategies for healthy living, parks and recreation in the Pottstown area. This is a regional study of the 14 municipalities surrounding Pottstown. This master plan is consistent with the Foundation's goal of improving the physical and social environment by encouraging physical activities in the region by improving the recreational infrastructure.

### **2007—Lower Pottsgrove Township Parks and Recreation Satisfaction Survey**

In an effort to quantify and understand the satisfaction level of the Township's park and recreation facilities, the Township's Parks and Recreation Board and Board of Commissioners solicited a

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satisfaction survey from Township residents. The results of this study found strong support for trails and safe playgrounds. Residents were also asked to provide input on their level of activity in the parks. It was found that over twice as many people use the parks for walking and jogging than any other activity. The park use activity breakdowns are as follows: 42% walking/jogging, 15% attended concerts and 13% for soccer. When polled about their preference for park improvements, the desire for trails was significantly higher than other categories. The breakdown of preferred park improvements are as follows: 38% wanted trail improvements; 19% wanted concerts and 18% wanted play structures. There were also many comments about needing more information about Township parks in the form of signs, maps, communications, etc. Better playground and sports facilities were frequently requested with write-in comments.

### **2006—Pottstown Metropolitan Region Parks and Recreation Peer Study**

This report prepared by peer consultant Susan E. Landis, summarizes all the regional recreational facilities that are currently available in the metropolitan region. A major theme of the study maintains that a regional perspective is needed to effectively fulfill the recreational needs of the area. Some tools to create a more regional approach are as follows:

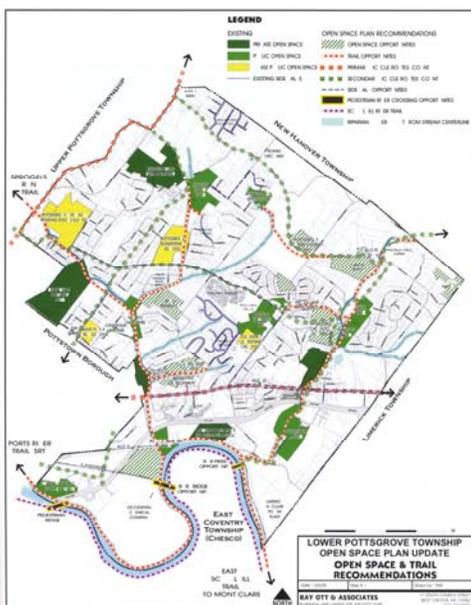
- Prepare a regional comprehensive recreation plan;
- Provide a parks and open space plan;
- Promote parks and recreation facilities regionally;
- Promote recreation program providers regionally;
- Provide shared recreation programming;
- Strengthen and expand the Pottsgrove recreational board;
- Develop shared park areas and recreational facilities;
- Hire shared parks, trails and open space director(s);

- Firm-up opportunities to work together, exploring extending borough recreation programming to surrounding townships;
- Direct the 0.25, 0.5 and 1-acre parks in Pottstown Borough and West Pottsgrove Township to be “adopted” by the neighborhoods; and,
- Utilize the Tri-county Chamber’s Regional Planning Committee to promote awareness of parks and recreation opportunities.

**2005 Update—Lower Pottsgrove Township Open Space, Recreation, & Environmental Resource Protection Plan**

*Plan Recommendations – Land Acquisitions:*

- Explore right-of-way acquisition and opportunities for trail development along Sanatoga Creek and Sanatoga Road through Gerald Richards and Pleasantview Parks, the proposed Catholic School parcel, Pottstown Youth Center, and private properties along Hartenstein Creek;
- Work with private developers to construct trails and sidewalks within residential developments and other appropriate land developments; and,



Lower Pottsgrove Township Open Space Plan.

*Scenic Road:*

- Sanatoga Road

*Potential Links to Natural Areas:*

*Trails and open space through township approved land developments:*

- Spring Valley Farms: on Bleim Road; 75 acres of open space; 2 miles of paved trails; trail connects to Sprougels Run open space and will run east to Pleasant View Road.
- The Falls at Pruss Hills: on Pruss Hill Road; 57 acres open space; connects to trail at Spring Valley Farms and extends

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the length of the project along Pruss Hill Road

### *Potential Open Space Linkages:*

- Sanatoga Road and Bleim Road as a secondary bicycle route
- Trail Connections on the south side of Bleim Road connecting to Shaners Grove (part of adjacent Spring Valley Farms Development mentioned above)
- Trail connections on Sanatoga Road connecting Pleasantview Park to Prusshill Barn and Open Space
- Buchert Road as a secondary bicycle route

### *Evaluation of Potential Future Development:*

- Considerable amount of residential building of varying density is expected in the area to the west and south of the parks

## **2005—Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Comprehensive Plan**

### *Recommended Bike Routes:*

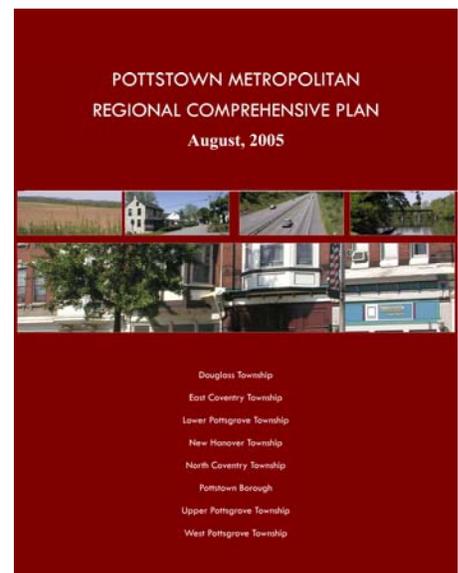
- Secondary bike route along Sanatoga Road

### *Future Land Use:*

Future land use for the area around Pleasantview Park is shown as Rural Resource Area. This designation is intended to protect the rural and agricultural qualities of this area. This designation allows for a maximum residential density of 1 housing unit per 2 acres—except within existing villages as identified in the plan. Other permitted uses are agriculture, institutional, recreational, and large lot industrial uses.

### *Open Space:*

The parks are publicly-owned open space. The land of Pleasantview Park was ranked a #3 priority acquisition for the Township, which means that open space will give maximum benefit to a future resident population in this area. Recommendations for open space seek to protect the vulnerable natural features of the land, protect agricultural and natural features, protect water resources, connect communities



with green infrastructure, expand the regional trail system by increasing linkages at the neighborhood scale, and provide recreational opportunities for the residents of the area.

### *Regional Survey:*

The comprehensive plan surveyed citizens for ideas on how tax monies should be spent to improve the community. The results of the survey found that hiking/walking paths were ranked number 1 (17%), followed by swimming pools (12%), biking trails (11%), passive open space (11%) and playing fields (8%).

### **2005—Shaping Our Future: A Comprehensive Plan for Montgomery County**

The Comprehensive Plan offers many broad recommendations for open space, natural features, and cultural resources for Montgomery County. No specific recommendations were found for Pleasantview or Gerald Richards Park.

### **2003—Montgomery County Green Fields/Green Towns Program Recommendations**

This program is Phase 2 of Montgomery County Open Space Plan of 1993. It makes recommendations for the second ten year period, from 2003 to 2013. Most of the recommended goals are compatible with the proposed programming for Gerald Richards and Pleasantview Park. The plan's goals are:

- Providing recreation opportunities including trails;
- Conserving natural features;
- Preserving historic or cultural landscapes;
- Maintaining scenic quality;
- Protecting water resources;
- Stimulating the revitalization of developed communities with green infrastructure;
- Shaping the form of land use and development; and,

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- Preserving agricultural land.

### 1988 – Lower Pottsgrove Township Bikeway / Trail Plan

This plan builds on the 1982 Comprehensive plan update that is proposed to serve the recreation needs of present and future residents and visitors while providing critical trail connections to Township destinations via open space, sewer easements and stream corridors. A trail connection between Pebble Beach Lane and Hartenstine Creek through Gerald Richards Park is shown. No trail connections in the area of Pleasantview Park were detailed in this study.

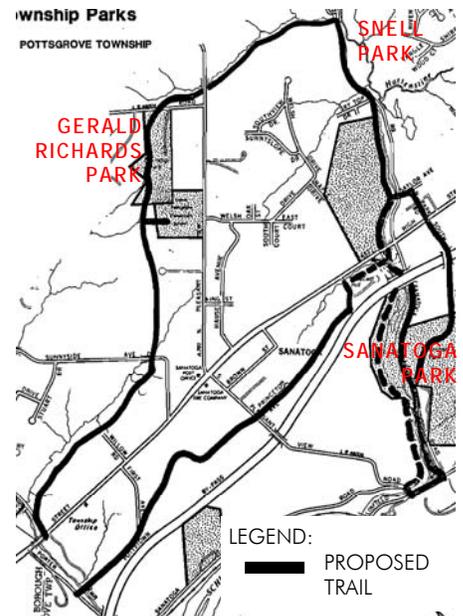
### Master Plan Process

As shown in the graphic below, the completion of the Master Plan is an early stage in the process of constructing new improvements for a park facility.

The Master Plan study seeks to develop a general consensus for improvements and facilities that should be constructed, and to establish an estimate of probable construction costs that can be used for developing an implementation and funding strategy.

The Master Plan forms the basis of the design and engineering phases of the project when detailed design decisions are later documented through the completion of construction drawings. Prior to commencing the design and engineering phase, it will be necessary to complete a topographic survey of both sites. Upon completion of the survey and design development drawings, construction documents will be completed and the project can then be bid and constructed. These projects will be built in phases over a period of several years with phased improvements at one park driving the other.

In July of 2010, Lower Pottsgrove Township selected Simone Collins Landscape Architecture (SC), to analyze the site, assess community



Gerald Richards Trail connections as shown in the Township's 1988 Bikeway and Trail Plan.



needs and develop a Master Plan for the Parks.

The scope of work for the master plan was developed by the Township together with SC to adhere to DCNR guidelines. The following list outlines the needs of the master plan:

#### **Scope of Work—Summary:**

- A. Community Background Information / Data;
- B. Site Information, Analysis and Design Considerations;
- C. Activities and Facilities Proposed For the Site;
- D. Development of Master Site Plan;
- E. Evaluation of Materials and Design Options;
- F. Security Analysis; And,
- G. Cost Estimates for Design, Construction, and Operation of the Park.

#### **Public Participation Process**

Below is a list of meetings held by the consultants during the development of the Master Plan:

<b>Event/Task</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>
<b>Steering Committee Meeting #1: Present Base Data - Programming Ideas</b>	<b>Tuesday, October 26, 2010</b>	<b>6:30 PM</b>
<b>Public Mtg. #1: Present Base Data - Programming Ideas</b>	<b>Wednesday, November 10, 2010</b>	<b>6:30 PM</b>
<b>Steering Committee / Public Mtg. #2: Complete Programming/Initial Con- cepts</b>	<b>Wednesday, December 15, 2010</b>	<b>6:30 PM</b>
<b>Steering Committee / Public Mtg. #3: Present Pre-DRAFT Plan</b>	<b>Tuesday, January 25, 2011</b>	<b>6:30 PM</b>
<b>Steering Committee / Public Mtg. #4: Present DRAFT Plan</b>	<b>Wednesday, March 23 , 2011</b>	<b>6:30 PM</b>
<b>Steering Committee / Public Mtg. #5: Final Plan Presentation</b>	<b>Tuesday, April 26, 2011</b>	<b>6:30 PM</b>

#### **Steering Committee / Public Meetings**

The project steering committee was comprised of adjacent landowners, interested stakeholders, Township Commissioners and representatives from local sports clubs. Steering Committee and public meetings were held jointly to allow for open dialogue between the Steering Committee and the public.

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Five committee / public meetings were held during the course of the Master Plan development process. In the first meeting, the consultants presented base mapping data, site photographs and site analysis plans for both parks. Following the presentation the consultants asked the committee members for their ideas on goals, facts, concepts, and partners for each park. The second meeting provided the residents with three initial concept plans for both parks derived from the ideas produced at the first meeting. The third public meeting presented one revised concept plan for each park reflecting consensus prior to the development of the DRAFT plan. For the fourth meeting the consultants presented a draft master plan narrative document and comments on the draft Master Plan and narrative document were discussed. In the final meeting, residents were presented with the final plan including the final master plan report.

The consultants also conducted a meeting and site walk to discuss Coventry Christian School recreational plans and needs to determine compatibility with uses proposed for Gerald Richards Park.

### Data Collection and Methodology

Base map information was compiled using the best available information. This information included Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping data, tax maps, aerial photography, and information gathered in previous and ongoing planning efforts. This information was supplemented by information gathered by the consultants from several site visits over the course of the master planning process.

### Acreage

**Gerald Richards Park:** Lower Pottsgrove's primer active recreation park and is comprised of multiple parcels totaling 33.7 acres. Adjacent to Gerald Richards Park, the 13.2 acre Coventry Christian School parcel was also examined for compatible recreation uses as a part of the Gerald Richards Park Master Plan .

**Pleasantview Park:** is an undeveloped 23 acre open space property comprised of primarily fallow agricultural fields.



Gerald Richards Base Map.



Pleasantview Base Map.



Manmade steep slopes adjacent to the Gerald Richards game field.



Gerald Richards athletic fields located on manmade “terraces” at various elevations.



Existing baseball field at Gerald Richards Park.

### Topographic Features

**Gerald Richards Park:** The topography of Gerald Richards Park has organically been shaped over recent years to serve the immediate needs of the local sports organizations. This piecemeal approach to park design resulted in a collection of manmade “terraces” situated at various elevations to accommodate athletic fields present today. These terraces and their placement on the site, lead to a number of issues that will need to be addressed with this plan: steep side slopes limit athletic field clear area and inhibit ADA accessibility; terraces cut off the natural flow of stormwater causing ponding or soggy field conditions; often the terraces were built up with subpar fill material causing fields that either do not drain properly, or fields that drain faster than water can be absorbed by the vegetation causing the fields to dry out. Due to these conditions, it is likely that entire areas of the site will need to be re-graded to correct these problems.

The high point for Gerald Richards Park is elevation 280’ located at the southern corner of the site near the property boundary of the Coventry Christian School. Two low points exist at elevation 250’. These low points are located at opposite ends of the property—one low point is situated in the northeast corner of the site near Buchert Road, while another is located in the triangular shaped parcel just off Pebble Beach Lane.

**Pleasantview Park:** Presently used for cultivation, this site contains gentle grades conducive to athletic field development. As illustrated on the Pleasantview base map, the northeastern boundary of the project area contains the high point at elevation 340’. From the high point, slopes generally range from 2% to 6% down to the low point near Bleim Road at elevation 315’.

### Land Use

**Gerald Richards Park:** This park contains both recreation and municipal uses. A majority of the property is dedicated to active recreation uses such as soccer, baseball, softball, and basketball. A field house with restrooms, snack bar, and field storage is provided to support of recreational activities.

The sole municipal use on the property is the Township’s Municipal

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Works garage which is located in an approximate 1 acre fenced area fronting on Pleasantview Road. The Township intends to keep the municipal garage at this location for the foreseeable future. Proposed plans for Gerald Richards Park will assume a reasonable expansion to the garage structure and vehicular circulation to accommodate future needs of the Township's municipal works.

The lands surrounding Gerald Richards Park are primarily developed with residential uses. The park is bordered to the west by Rolling Hills Apartments, and single family homes to the southwest, east and northeast.

The 13 acre Coventry Christian School parcel is an institutional use abutting the park's southern boundary. During the public participation process, representatives from the school expressed a desire to work with the Township to plan recreational facilities on their property as a part of the master plan for Gerald Richards Park. This was a logical partnership since Coventry Christian School is currently planning recreational uses on their property. Due to the close proximity of the properties, this partnership could allow for improvements such as grading and stormwater management to be planned and constructed jointly. This partnership could also benefit both parties when applying for grant applications that place an added value on public / private partnerships. In any event, a formal use agreement should be executed to confirm the assumptions of both parties about shared use of facilities.

**Pleasantview Park:** This park is an undeveloped open space parcel presently leased to a local farmer for agricultural cultivation.

The majority of uses surrounding the park are single family residential. To the east, existing single family residential uses are found across Pleasantview Road. An undeveloped agricultural field abuts the park to the north.

To the south and west, 179 single family housing units are planned as a part of the Spring Valley Farms land development. This plan calls for a cluster residential development arrangement with public open space, a perimeter loop trail system, and relocating the intersection of the Bleim Road and Pleasantview Road to align with the intersection



Side view of the Township Municipal Works garage looking north from the Park.

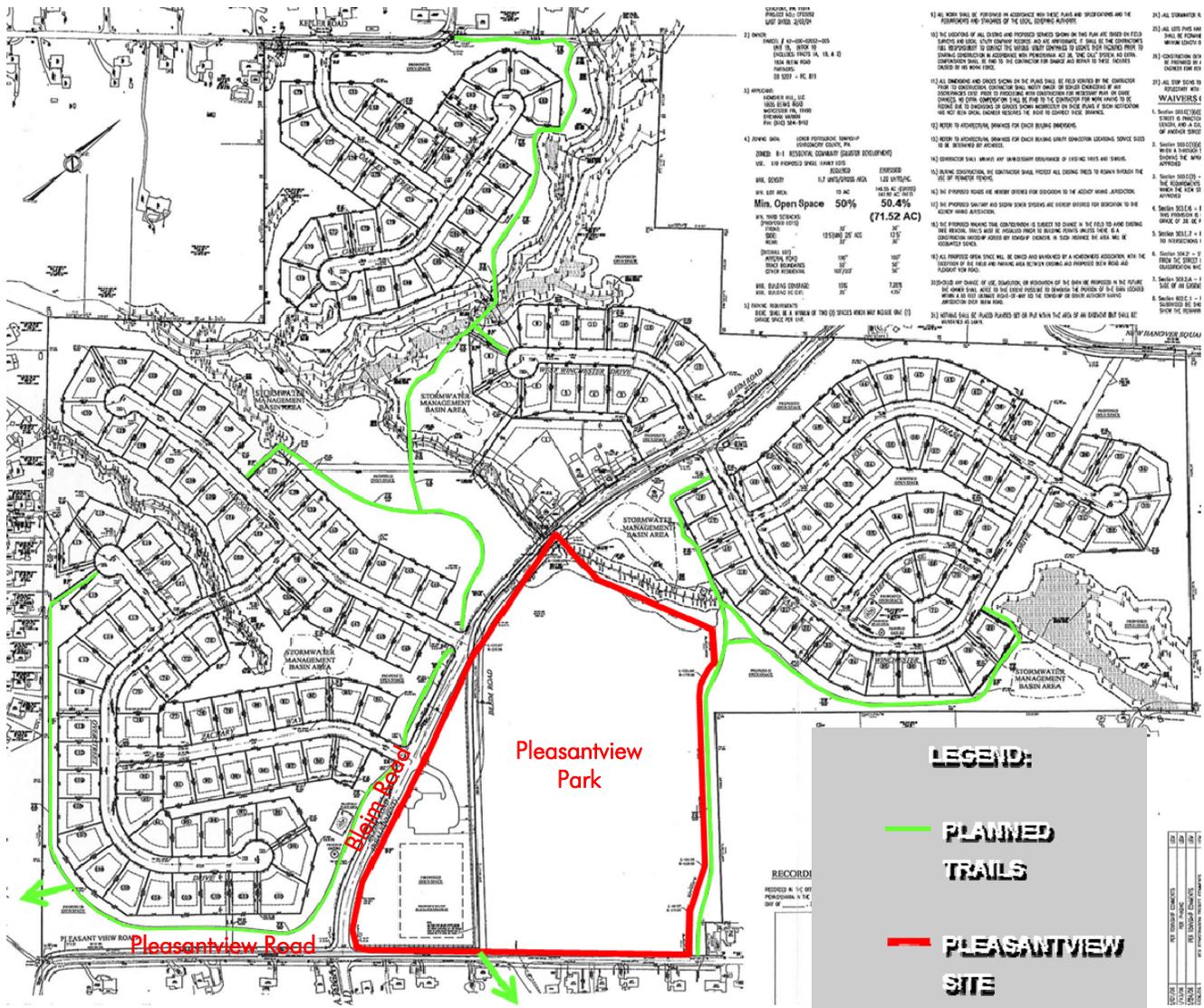


Residential uses along Buchert Road across from Gerald Richards Park.



The open area behind Coventry Christian School appears to be suitable for athletic field use.

## 2. Analysis



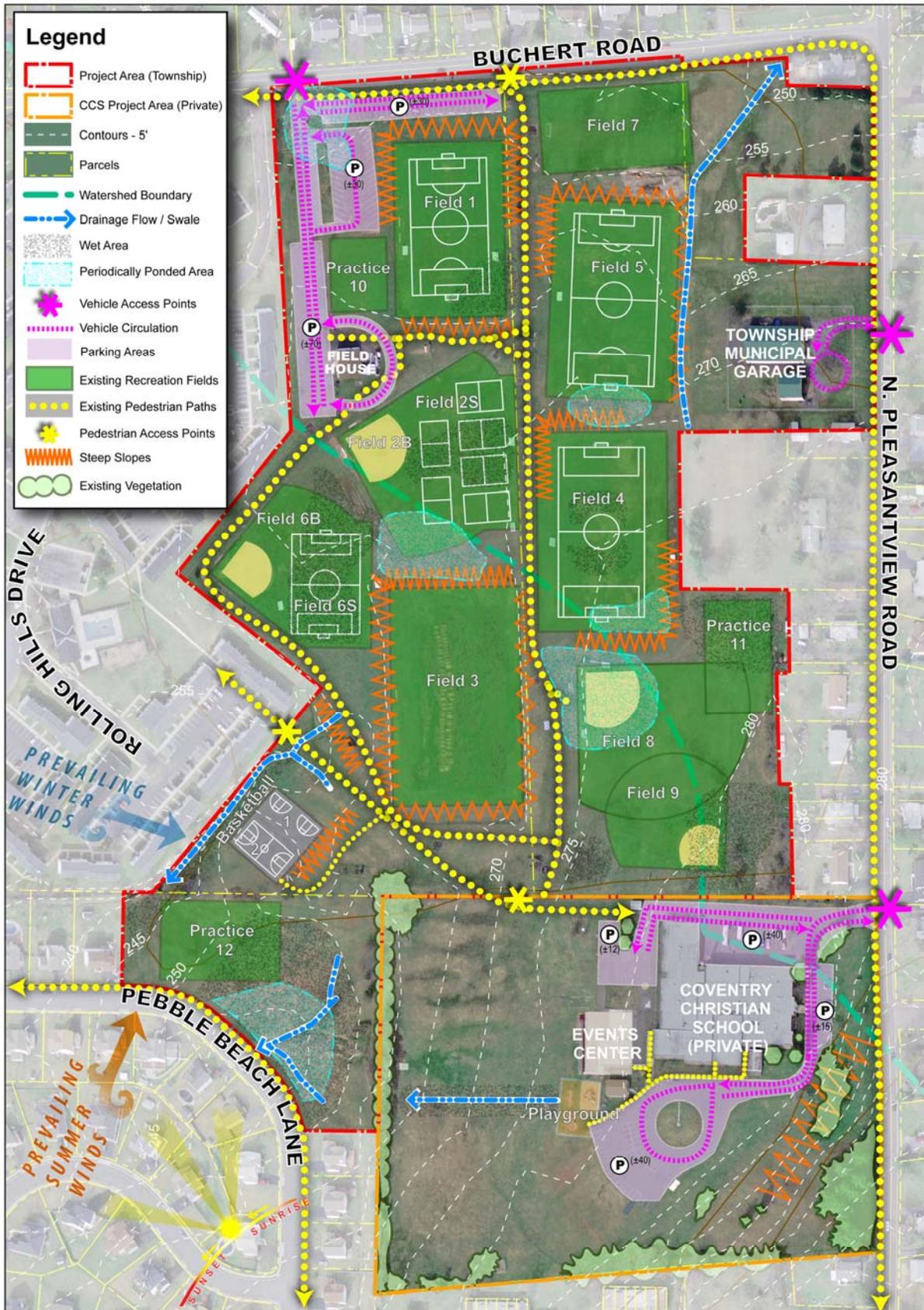
179 single family homes are proposed as a part of the Spring Valley Farms Development adjacent to Pleasantview Park



Photo showing the existing agricultural fields at Pleasantview Park

of Sanotoga Road. Areas of this development abutting Pleasantview Park are designated as public open space and contain proposed trail routes. As a part of the approval process the southern portion of Pleasantview Park (south of existing Bleim Road) was dedicated to the Township as open space. The layout of facilities shown in this open space area do not represent the final design. It should be noted that although this land development was approved by the Township, construction remains on hold. Under current economic conditions, it could be some time before this development moves forward.

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**SIMONE COLLINS** Site Analysis  
 Gerald Richards Park  
 Lower Pottsgrove Township, PA  
 Simone Collins - Landscape Architecture  
 January 2011  
 SC# - 09111.10

