



## **Rapidly Growing (Edge) Community Prototype: Township of Newville**

### **The Community:**

Plenty of space, planned neighborhoods, and a community with vision describe the rapidly growing Township of Newville. This former farming community was established as a Township at the turn of the nineteenth century. Located north of Pittsburgh, PA, Newville has a total area of 21 square miles.

The township's 10,000 residents are represented in 3,700 households and 2,700 families, with a population density of almost 500 per square mile. Newville's population grew a remarkable 59% during the last census period, making it one of Allegheny County's fastest growing communities. Of the total households, 30% have children under 18 years of age, and nine percent of the township's population are residents 65 years of age or older. Median household income in Newville is \$69,000 and median family income is \$76,000.

### **Recreation and Park Facilities:**

The Township of Newville has two parks totaling 130 acres of parkland, 40 acres of which is developable. Park facilities include five multi-use playing fields, two lighted basketball courts, two playgrounds, two picnic pavilions, one tennis court, one sand volleyball court, and several walking trails. In addition to these municipal parks, a county park lies partially within this community. The Township is very proud of Newville Community Park, which has been in development for the past 14 years. Newville is currently in the planning stages for the phased construction of a community center at that park. All Township-owned park facilities are maintained by the Public Works Department.

The Parks and Recreation Department has a staff of one full-time professional. The department offers a limited number of recreational programs for adults and seniors, with a six-week summer program for children. Township residents can also enroll in other recreational programs shared jointly with other municipalities and athletic organizations such as soccer, baseball, football, basketball, hockey, and wrestling. Special events are either offered by the department or in concert with Volunteer Fire Company or Parks and Recreation Commission.

### **Defining and Meeting the Needs:**

Four major challenges lie before the Township of Newville related to Parks and Recreation. The first, and most fundamental, is the acquisition of enough land to meet the

future park and open space needs of the community. A Comprehensive Recreation, Park and Open Space Plan should be completed to guide the Township in the number of acres, suggested locations, and the types of facilities that will be needed in Newville's future park system. A Mandatory Dedication Ordinance should be enacted to help secure land, or fees in-lieu-of, from developers to help meet the identified need of parkland and facilities in the Comprehensive Plan. The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code enables such local legislation; however, a Comprehensive Recreation, Park and Open Space Plan must be in place to make that requirement of developers.

The Comprehensive Recreation, Park and Open Space Plan would also address the second major need of the Township of Newville, assessing the recreational programming needs of the community. The Study Team of the Comprehensive Plan would analyze currently offered programming in the community from all sources and make recommendations to meet the needs of the residents in this area.

Once, the Study Team has determined the future park, recreational facility, and recreational programming needs, they can then move on to the third major challenge: determining staffing levels, agency organizational structure, and related costs. Finally, funding strategies and sources would be identified within the Comprehensive Plan, addressing the fourth, and perhaps largest, major challenge.

By offering naming rights or some other form of visible recognition in the parks, businesses can be enticed to assist with the funding of those facilities. Similarly, business sponsorships of programs and special events can help expand those types of offerings without incurring additional cost to the township.

Additional resources are available from NRPA, DCNR, and the Pennsylvania Recreation and Parks Society (PRPS). NRPA offers an extensive list of publications specifically geared to the Parks and Recreation field, including books based on topics such as management, planning, leisure for all ages, and citizen members (<http://ipv.nrpa.org/Core/Orders/Default.aspx>). NRPA also offers a number of recreation program models that can be used in any community (<http://www.nrpa.org/content/default.aspx?documentId=28>).

DCNR provides a substantial list of publications that include several titles that might be of interest to rapidly growing communities: Multi-Municipal Cooperation for Recreation and Parks, Community Recreation and Parks Handbook, Financing Municipal Recreation and Parks (<http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/brc/publications/index.aspx>).

The Recreation and Parks Technical Assistance Program (RecTAP) is offered by PRPS. This program matches Recreation and Park professionals with municipalities to provide advice and assistance on specific issues that can be addressed within a limited amount of time (<http://www.prps.org/pdf/RecTAPBrochure.pdf>).

*Summary of Recommendations: Rapidly Growing (Edge) Community Prototype*

Priority	Goal/Policy	Implementation Strategy
1	Complete a “Comprehensive Land Use Plan and Comprehensive Recreation, Park, and Open Space Plan	Apply for a DCNR Matching Technical Assistance Grant to hire a consultant to assess and address: a. future parkland needs; b. recreation facility and programming needs; c. agency staffing levels and organization; and, d. funding sources for the recommendations.
2	Enact a mandatory dedication (recreation impact) amendment to the subdivision and land development ordinance	Develop, legislate, and implement a Mandatory Dedication Ordinance to help secure land, or fees in-lieu-of, from developers to help meet the community needs of parkland and facilities identified in the Comprehensive Plan.
3	Enact an official map to preserve land from development	Municipalities need to prioritize the acquisition of land identified on the official map and work with land owners to determine the best mechanism for acquiring the property. Revenue sources for fee-simple acquisition of land may include recreation fees collected as per Step 2, grants, land or monetary donations, bonds, and other sources. Conservation easements can be used to preserve high-value, environmentally significant lands.
4	Phased Park and Trail Construction	Model ordinances and other tools are available in the <i>Allegheny Places</i> eLibrary. State agencies, land trusts and other organizations also provide tools to help municipalities find regulatory techniques to meet their specific needs. The eLibrary and links to some helpful websites may be found at <a href="http://www.alleghenyplaces.org">www.alleghenyplaces.org</a> .
5	Develop funding strategy and development timeline	Based on the Comprehensive Plan recommendations to develop a funding strategy and timeline to address: a. parkland acquisition; b. agency organizational and programming needs; and, c. a phased park development plan.
6	Initiate acquisition and phased construction of parks	Following the Funding Strategy and Development Timeline, acquire appropriate land for parks and plan for their development.

