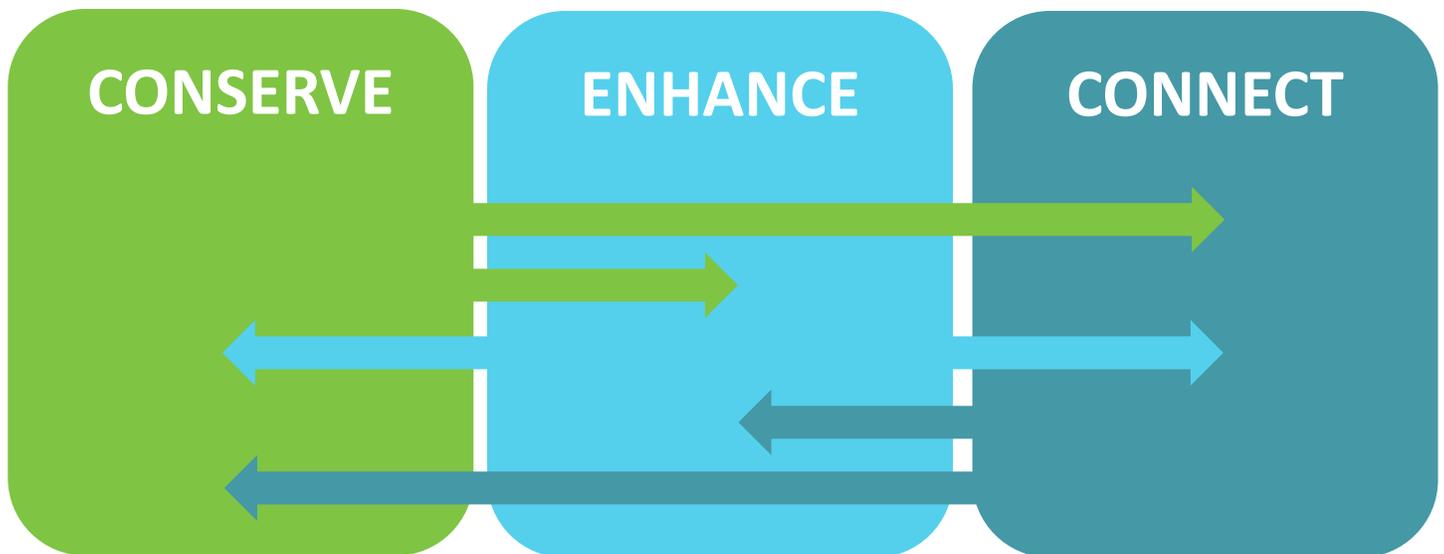


DELAWARE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

OPEN SPACE, RECREATION, AND GREENWAY PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

APRIL 2015



OVERVIEW

The Open Space, Recreation, and Greenway Plan is a component of the County's comprehensive plan, *Delaware County 2035*, which establishes an overall vision for the future of the County through the year 2035. It also sets policies for development, redevelopment, conservation, and economic initiatives. The Plan provides the County's 49 municipalities with a framework for the strategic use of public resources to improve the quality of life for all its residents.

Delaware County 2035 consists of a central Land Use Policy Framework Plan and a number of related and interconnected, but more detailed, component plans. Some of these component plans – addressing additional planning-related elements within the County – have already been developed, such as the County Bicycle Plan; more are under development. Each component plan will use the same framework and build off of the land use policies laid out in the Framework Plan. Individual municipal plans serve as a basis for these plans.

The Open Space Component Plan serves as a guide and resource for countywide, multi-municipal, and municipal open space planning efforts. It examines the policies and trends identified in the Delaware County 2035 Land Use Framework Plan with particular regard to open space, recreation, and greenway needs and opportunities specific to the County.

To integrate all of the information, analysis, and goals of this plan into a manageable format, the Open Space, Recreation, and Greenway Plan was organized into four separate volumes:

Volume I: Open Space and Recreation Plan

Volume I provides a complete review of municipal, county, state, and federal open space within Delaware County. It includes an inventory of existing open spaces and natural resources, analysis of open space and recreational needs and opportunities, and an overview of implementation methods for municipalities and the County to consider.

Volume II: Countywide Greenway Plan

Volume II is Delaware County's first ever countywide greenway plan. It identifies a Primary Trail Network which connects recreational and cultural hubs via trails, as well as conservation greenways along stream corridors.

Volume III: County Parks and Recreation

Volume III specifically examines the Delaware County Parks and Recreation system, and includes long range site development drawings and accompanying narratives for several of the major County parks.

Volume IV: Public Participation

Volume IV is the accumulation of public participation materials from the planning process used for the development of the plan. This includes public presentation documents, public comments, meeting agendas and minutes/comments, stakeholder interview lists, and online survey results.

PUBLIC INPUT

This Open Space Plan is the result of widespread public participation, which included surveys, stakeholder interviews, focus groups, input from a task force, and several public meetings. The public participation efforts, conducted in conjunction with the framework established in Delaware County 2035, informed the goals and objectives established throughout this plan.



Public Meetings



Public Survey



Focus Groups



Interviews

GOALS

As part of the planning process, three overarching goals were identified to guide the open space planning efforts in the County. They are the result of public participation, consultation with the Open Space Task Force, and an analysis of existing open space needs and opportunities. They also take into account the objectives from *Delaware County 2035*, along with their respective policies and actions. The goals of the Open Space Plan are:

Goal 1: Conserve

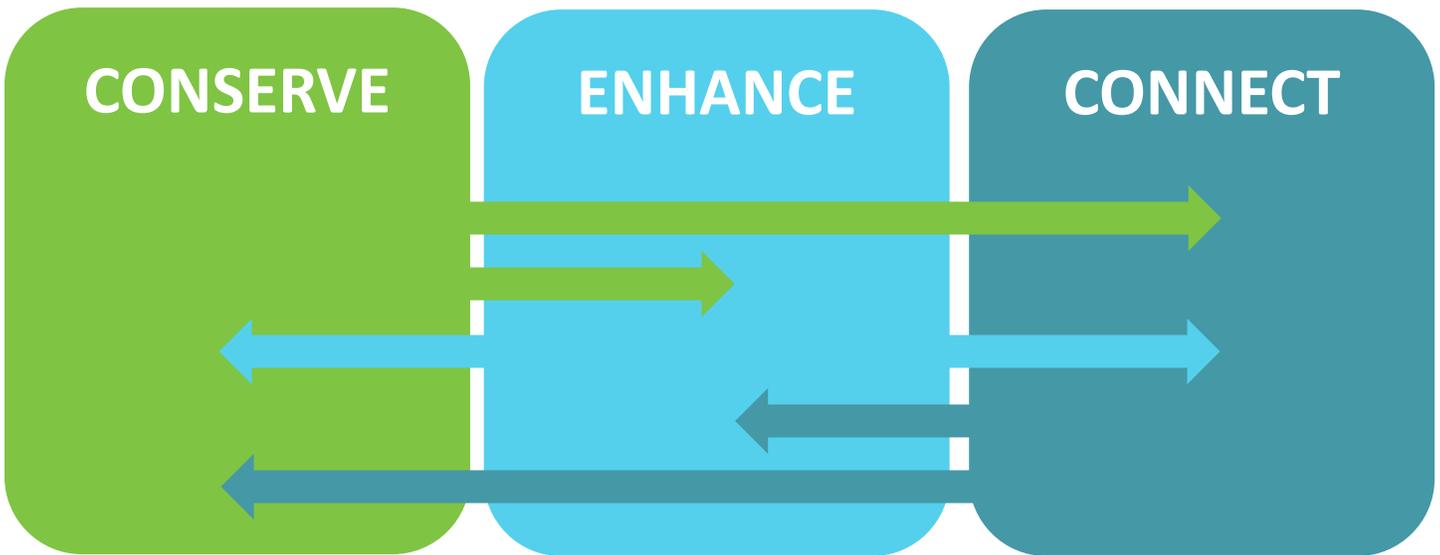
Conserve the natural and cultural resources of the County

Goal 2: Enhance

Increase and enhance the environmental and/or recreational value of developed and undeveloped lands

Goal 3: Connect

Develop a greenway network that connects natural features and people to community and regional destinations



These interrelated goals represent a three-pronged approach to addressing the County's open space needs and opportunities and long term sustainable quality of life in the 21st century. The goals are indicative of widespread opportunities to continue to conserve, enhance, and connect various features of Delaware County's open space system. As such, they serve as the basis for both discussion and recommendations made in this plan.



Adkinson Park, Bethel Township

OBJECTIVES

1 OPEN SPACE

Recognize the importance of Delaware County's natural features as resources to be conserved and enhanced.

2 OPEN SPACE

Identify, enhance, and expand Delaware County's open space network in order to serve the needs of the public.

3 OPEN SPACE

Create a Countywide trail network that enhances quality of life by connecting people and places.

4 OPEN SPACE

Enhance and expand access to recreational programs for all ages and abilities.

5 OPEN SPACE

Implement the actions of the Open Space, Recreation, and Greenway Plan to conserve, enhance, and connect the County's open space network.

1 GREENWAY

Create a countywide greenway network that connects Delaware County's environmental, recreational, and cultural resources.

1 COUNTY PARKS

Maintain a County park system that contains county-scale parks, and offers facilities, services, and programs that attract countywide interest and participation.

The objectives identified in this plan are intended to guide open space planning efforts and policies throughout the County. They represent overarching strategies to address the needs and opportunities recognized within the Plan. Each objective is supported by more specific actions that can be found within the respective section of the Plan. The actions vary significantly – some are short term implementation projects, while others are ongoing policies.

The objectives and actions for each chapter often relate to more than one, if not all, of the three goals. Therefore, objectives and actions are organized by chapter rather than by goal, and reflect the specific needs and opportunities discussed in that chapter.



OPEN SPACE

Open space provides significant economic and cultural benefits to the community. According to a report released by GreenSpace Alliance and Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission in 2011, the protected open space system in southeastern Pennsylvania adds an estimated \$16.3 billion to the value of its housing stock. It also helps to promote healthy communities by providing residents a place to recreate and exercise within the community. For these reasons, the Open Space, Recreation, and Greenway Plan identifies needs and opportunities for open space within the County.

In order to meet those needs, this Plan proposes a three-pronged approach: **Conserve** remaining significant natural features, such as woodlands and stream valleys; **Enhance** existing open spaces through sound stewardship and maintenance and providing high quality park facilities; and **Connect** open spaces together and to other cultural destinations.

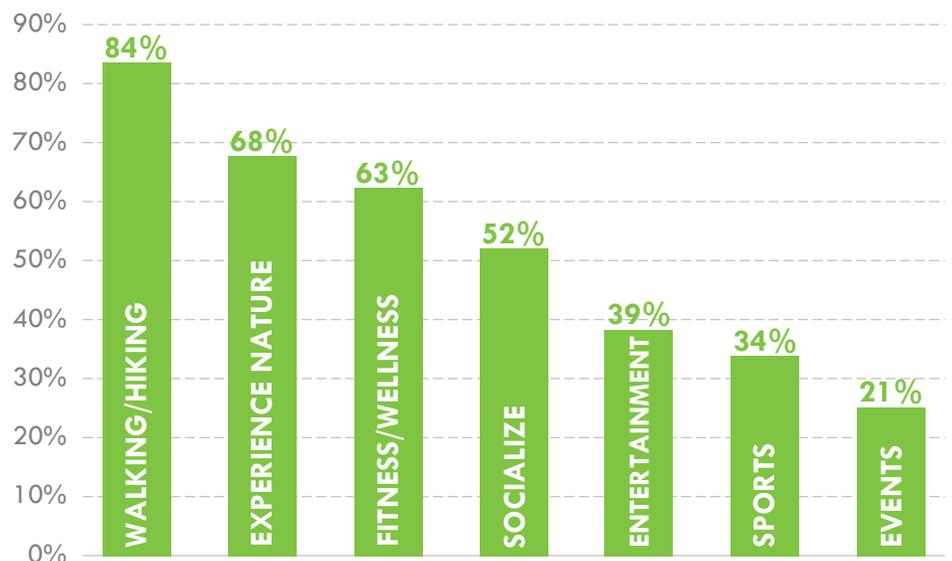


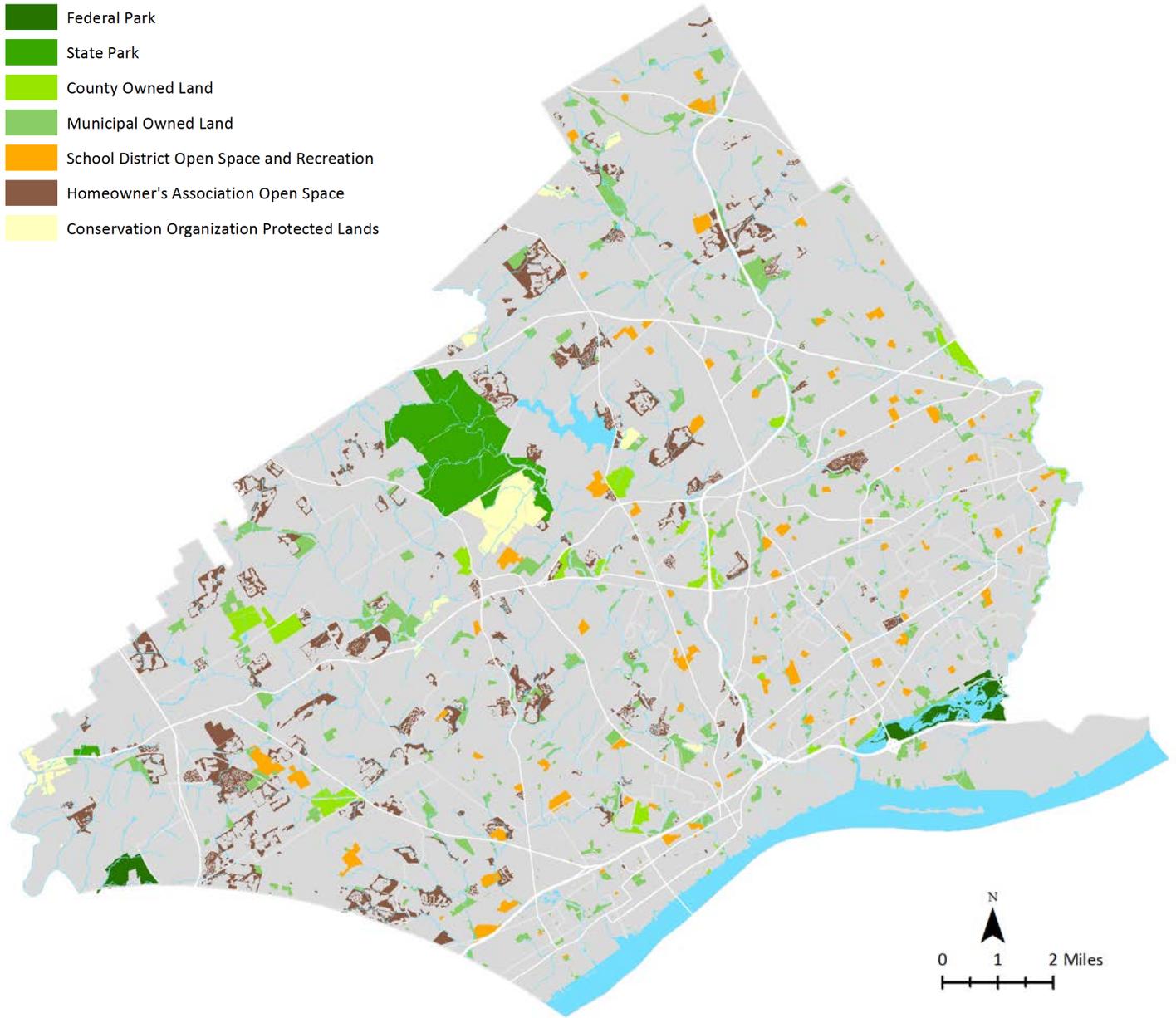
Kent County Park, Upper Darby Township

RECREATION TRENDS

The results of public input show that recreation trends in Delaware County tend to mimic current national recreation trends toward walking and nature watching. There is increasing participation in sports, such as soccer and lacrosse, and greater desire for recreation that emphasizes fitness and wellness. More self-directed programs, such as bicycling, tennis, and socializing, are also strongly preferred in the County.

EXPERIENCES DESIRED IN PARKS AND RECREATION AREAS





OPEN SPACE NETWORK

The open space network in Delaware County consists of resources protected at the federal, state, county, and municipal level. It also includes privately protected lands, such as conservation organizations and homeowners associations. It is important to consider all of these lands as part of the countywide open space network because they contribute to the character of the community while also providing environmental benefits. Together, these open spaces create a wide ranging network that provides diverse recreational opportunities for Delaware County communities, while conserving significant natural features.



GREENWAYS

This Plan recognizes two overarching, yet interrelated purposes of greenways. The first purpose is to conserve contiguous areas of natural features such as stream valley and woodlands in order to prevent further fragmentation of remaining natural corridors. The second purpose is to develop a countywide trail network for recreation and alternative transportation that connects destination hubs and enhances the quality of life for County residents. The two purposes were the basis for identification of two associated greenway networks: Conservation Greenways and Recreation Greenways. The intent of the Delaware County Greenway Network is two-fold: combine Conservation and Recreation Greenways to conserve and enhance natural features of environmental significance, and to connect them to other open spaces and destinations. As such, the planned Greenway Network includes intersecting ribbons of open space along natural and man-made recreational and greenspace corridors across the County.

CONSERVATION GREENWAY

Conservation Greenways emphasize the protection and connection of environmental features. They may follow specific linear natural features, such as a stream, or may connect other open spaces, such as woodlands; they can also serve as wildlife corridors. Stream corridors were the primary resource used to designate the Countywide Conservation Greenway Network.



Darby Creek, Haverford Township

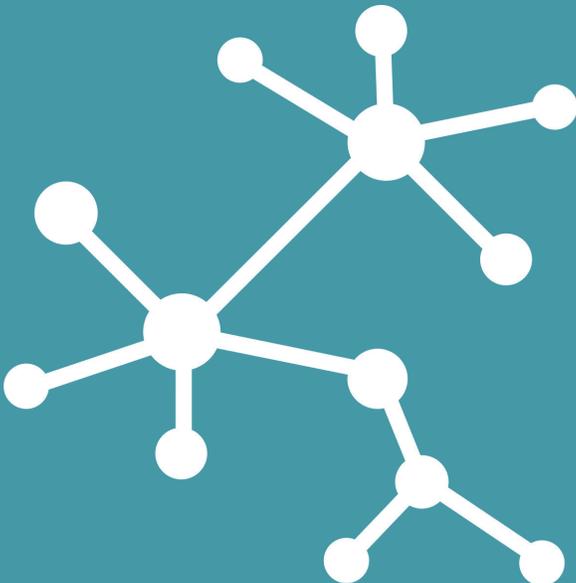
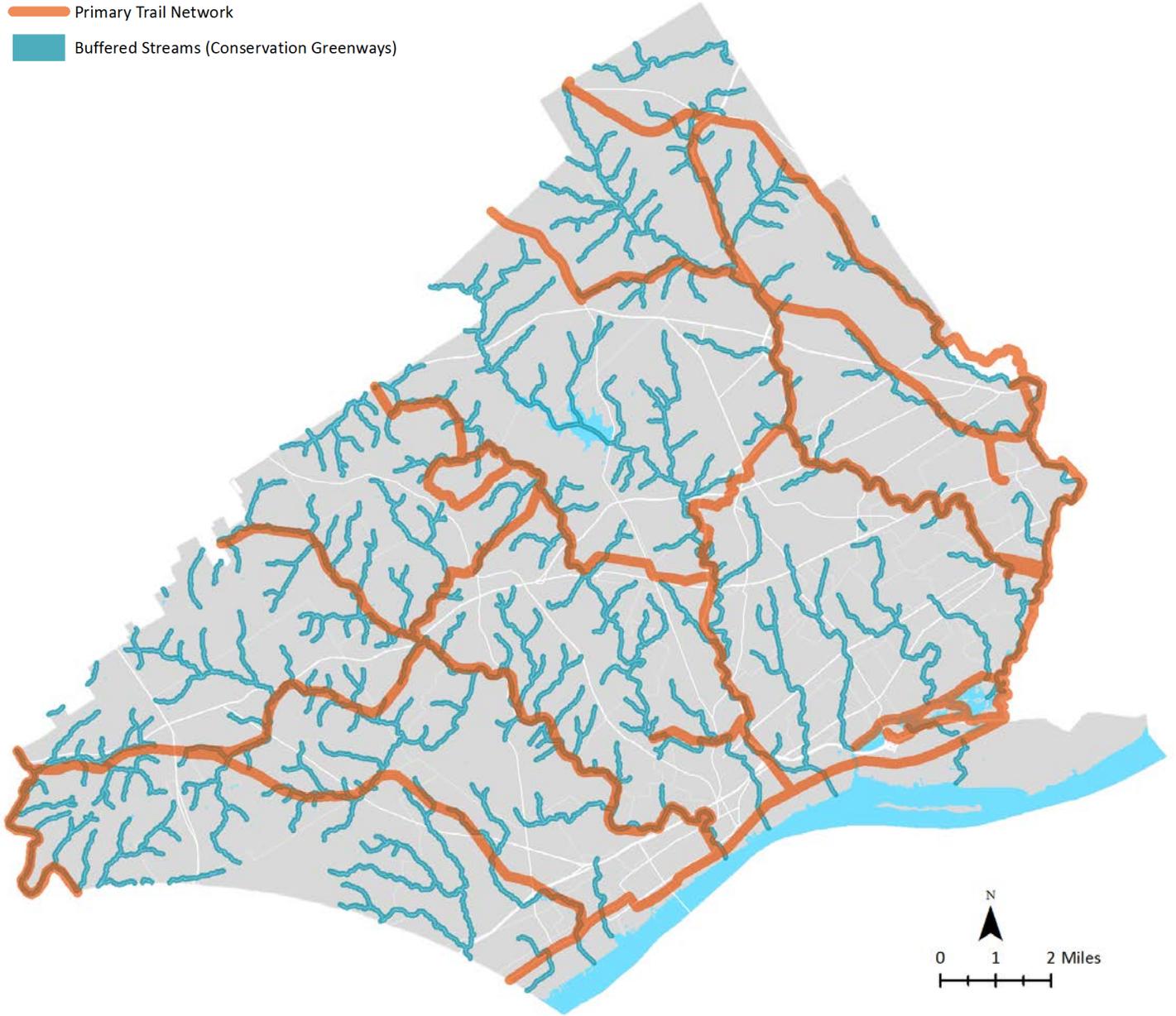
RECREATION GREENWAY

Recreation Greenways provide access to, on, and between natural features and other destinations. These Greenways are generally classified as trails and may overlap with Conservation Greenways or follow a separate route. They serve as the spines of a network that connects other recreation greenways, parks, open spaces, Central Places, and points of interest throughout the County.



Radnor Trail, Radnor Township

- Primary Trail Network
- Buffered Streams (Conservation Greenways)



HUBS AND SPOKES

The driving concept behind the Greenway Network was to identify corridors, or spokes, that have the potential to create a connected web of destinations, or hubs.

Hubs are public or private places of interest (i.e., parks, historic sites, downtowns, Central Places, etc.). They can be large open space tracts, such as community and regional parks or nature preserves, but can also include smaller destinations like schools and neighborhood parks.

The spokes in the network are the linear corridors that connect the hubs. They can include public trails or consist completely of natural features and open spaces.

TRAIL NETWORK

The Countywide Primary Trail Network is comprised of the Recreation Greenways. They were identified at a large scale; as such, they show potential segments, but not specific alignments. The Primary Trails can be considered “planning corridors” for more detailed trail studies in the future. While several Primary Trails have already been constructed, many are just conceptual. As more detailed studies are completed on these trails, alternate routes may need to be considered.

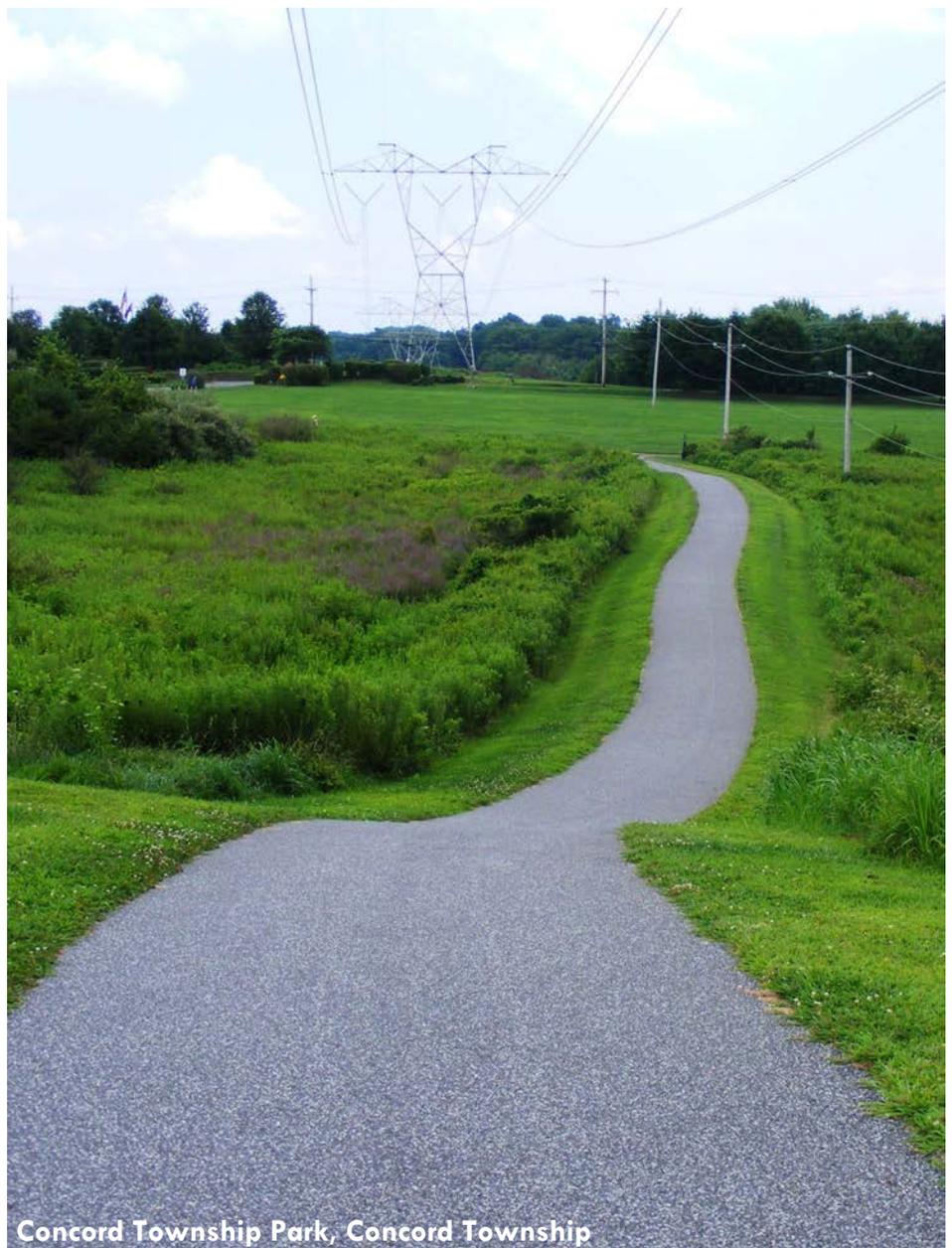
The Primary Trails serve as the main spokes in the countywide network of trails. The purpose behind creating the Primary Trail Network is to direct the energies of the County, municipalities, and trail proponents into developing a trail system in such a manner that they either construct segments of the Primary Trail Network or design their internal trail network to connect to Primary Trails. When combined, the 25 Primary Trails identified form a network of interconnected travel and recreation corridors near and between all corners of the County.

78%

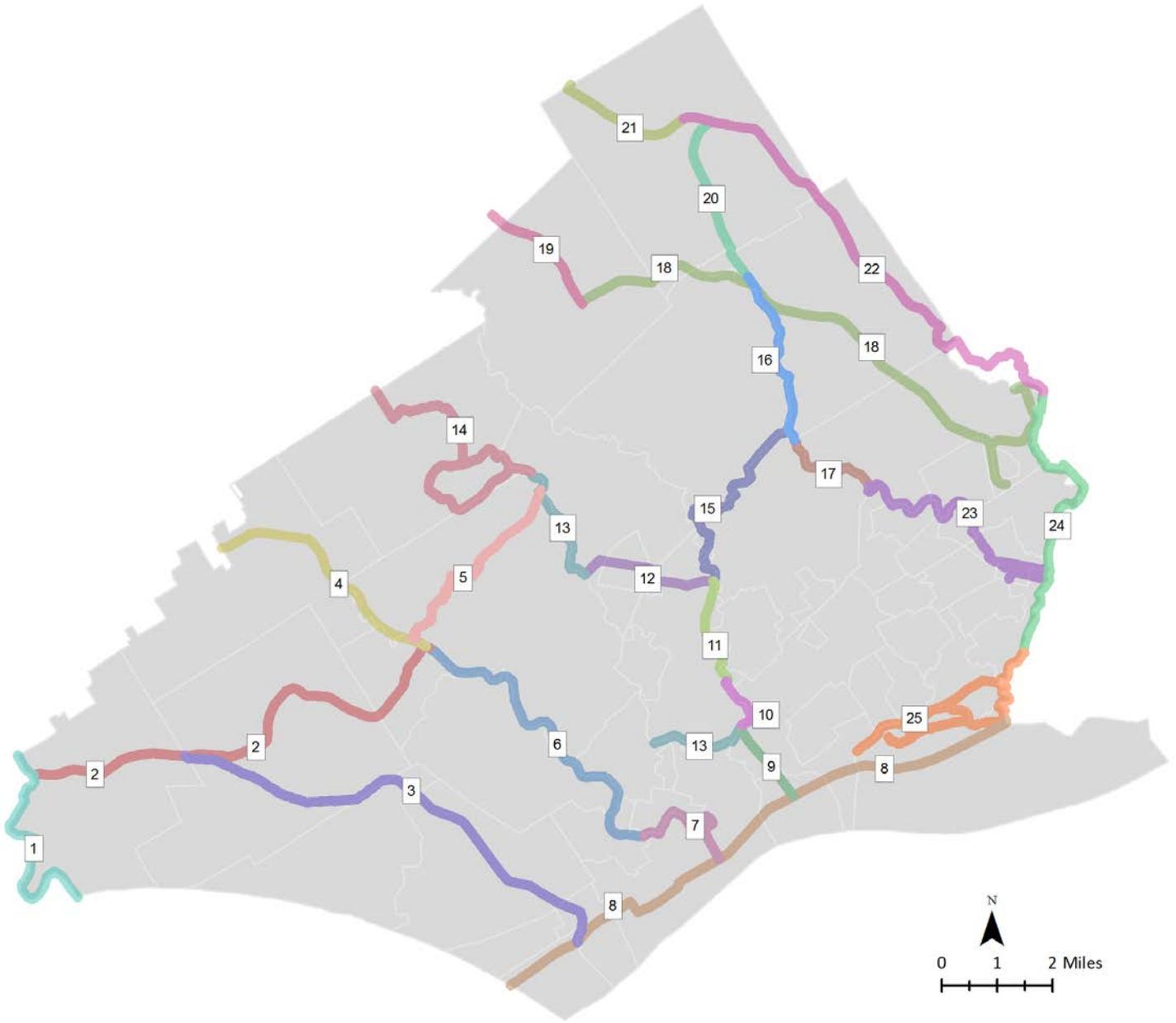
of public survey participants identified managing trails within County parks as one of the highest priorities.

70%

of public survey participants identified trails as a facility to emphasize in planning over the next 10 years.



Concord Township Park, Concord Township



PRIMARY TRAIL NETWORK

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1: Brandywine Creek Greenway | 14: Ridley Creek State Park Trails |
| 2: Octoraro Rail Trail | 15: Blue Route Bikeway—Smedley to Darby Creek |
| 3: PECO Right-of-Way Trail | 16: Darby Creek Trail—Haverford Township |
| 4: Chester Creek Trail—North Extension | 17: Darby Creek Trail—Drexel Hill Connector |
| 5: Rocky Run Trail | 18: Newtown Square Branch Rail Trail |
| 6: Chester Creek Trail | 19: Route 252 Bicycle Route |
| 7: Chester Creek Trail—ECG Connector | 20: Blue Route Bikeway—Ithan-Darby Creek Valley |
| 8: East Coast Greenway (ECG) | 21: Radnor Trail |
| 9: Blue Route Bikeway—ECG Connector | 22: Forge to Refuge Trail |
| 10: Blue Route Bikeway—Leiper to Kinder Connector | 23: Darby Creek Stream Valley Park Trail |
| 11: Blue Route Bikeway—Leiper-Smedley Trail | 24: Cobbs Creek Trail |
| 12: Media-Smedley Connector Trail | 25: Heinz Refuge Trail |
| 13: Ridley Creek Greenway (North and South Sections) | |

COUNTY PARKS

The Open Space, Recreation, and Greenway Plan also examined the Delaware County Parks and Recreation system. Volume III: County Parks and Recreation Plan, provides guidance regarding how to maximize and enhance the use and function of County-owned parks, open space, and recreational programs. It also identifies unexplored opportunities and makes recommendations for modifications and improvements that will result in a parks system that best serves the needs of County residents long into the future.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES

The Plan identifies several key opportunities for the County parks and recreation system, including:

- Continue to partner with citizen groups, organizations, and municipalities to provide recreational opportunities.
- Implement the site development drawings for the County Parks.
- Act as a convener and facilitator of partners in parks and recreation endeavors including trail planning, multi-municipal planning, and other opportunities that will emerge in the future.

As part of the Open Space, Recreation, and Greenway Plan, the County completed long-range site development drawings for the following six major County parks:

- Clayton County Park
- Glen Providence County Park
- Kent County Park
- Rose Tree County Park
- Smedley County Park
- Upland County Park

At the same time, the County led a multi-municipal effort to develop a master plan for Mineral Hill Area, including Mineral Hill County Park. These plans will help guide development of the County's parks.



NEXT STEPS

It will take the combined efforts of many government agencies, organizations, officials, stakeholders, and motivated citizens to implement all of the ideas and actions presented in this Plan.

As an implementing element of the County's comprehensive plan, *Delaware County 2035*, this Open Space, Recreation, and Greenway Plan can be used to direct the County's open space and greenway projects and priorities, as well as provide direction for the County parks system. The objectives and actions listed throughout the Plan provide the path for the County to meet the overarching goals of **Conserve**, **Enhance**, and **Connect**.

The Open Space, Recreation, and Greenway Plan is intended to serve as a resource for local governments. Municipalities should reference this plan when developing their own comprehensive and open space plans, and incorporate the countywide vision as appropriate.

COUNTY

- Technical assistance
- Special purpose studies
- Coordinate open space, recreation, and greenways development
- Natural resource protection guidance
- Open space protection tools
- Education and community engagement

MUNICIPALITIES

- Land use planning and regulations
- Special purpose studies
- Open space, recreation, and greenways development and management
- Land preservation and stewardship
- Education and community engagement

PARTNERS

Organizations and Institutions

- Work with the County and municipalities to provide and maintain open space
- Community outreach

The Public

- Provide input on open space planning and implementation efforts
- Volunteer with recreation clubs, friends of groups, and other organizations

PARTNER



Form partnerships with state and local agencies, local institutions, and non-profits to address community open space needs.

IMPLEMENT



Work together to implement the objectives and actions identified in the Open Space, Recreation, and Greenway Plan.

EVALUATE



Periodically evaluate progress, needs, and opportunities in order to best meet the goals of the community.



Upland County Park, Upland Borough



Court House and Government Center
201 West Front Street
Media, Pennsylvania 19063

Delaware County Council

Mario Civera, Jr., Chairman
Colleen P. Morrone, Vice Chairman
John P. McBlain
David J. White
Michael F. Culp

County Executive

Marianne Grace

Planning Director

Linda F. Hill

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