

PRESERVING AND ENHANCING GREEN SPACES

Introduction

The Township’s natural resources, parks, and open space create the green spaces that help to embody the character of Thornbury Township and create the “sense of place” for its residents. Natural resources are separated into three categories, water resources, land resources, and biotic resources. The resource categories are related to each other and their protection, or conversely their disturbance, has an effect on the balance of the ecosystem.

Natural resources and protected open space provide the foundation for the Township’s parks and recreation areas. Parks and trails provide recreational opportunities for the Township’s residents and an escape from daily responsibilities.

This chapter focuses on addressing the primary challenges and opportunities to meet the Township’s goals for natural resource protection and maintaining and expanding parks, recreation facilities, and protected open space.

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Challenges & Opportunities

The following challenges and opportunities were identified as part of the inventory and analysis of Township resources and recreational facilities presented in Chapter 7: Existing Township Conditions.

- The Township’s natural resource protection standards are limited as shown in Figure 7-18. The Township’s zoning and subdivision and land development ordinance (SLDO) will need to be revised if the Township intends to preserve the rural character of the community and meet their goal for resource protection.
- While there are several miles of trail available for recreation, a network of connected pedestrian and bicycle linkages would provide residents the opportunity to access these current and future recreation facilities safely and efficiently without the need for a motor vehicle.



A view of the Squire Cheyney Farm Park trail from the intersection of Cheyney Road and Route 926

Goals and Objectives

Natural Resources Goal

Preserve, protect, and maintain the Township’s existing natural resources to sustain ecosystems, public health, and quality of life.

Natural Resources Objectives

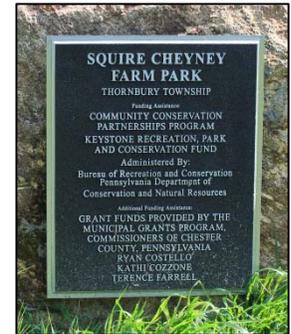
1. Identify and map all significant natural resources and constraints in the Township.
2. Provide subdivision and land development design techniques and incentives that encourage the protection and enhancement of natural resources.
3. Maintain and enhance current floodplain conditions and abate excess stormwater runoff when possible, and continue to work with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PaDEP) Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to address stormwater and floodplain requirements.
4. Ensure that regulations continue to preserve and protect natural resources throughout the development process.
5. Protect and maintain natural resources by supporting related public education and other non-regulatory efforts.

Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Goal

Maintain and expand parks, recreational facilities, and community programming at parks while protecting and preserving existing Township open spaces.

Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Objectives

1. Maintain and enhance Township parks including Goose Creek Park, Squire Cheyney Park, and the Thornbury Soccer Park.
2. Periodically survey residents to identify needs for Township parks and consider expanding Township parks and recreational services.
3. Pursue the development of a coordinated trail network that provides pedestrian access throughout the Township with the primary goal of connecting the easternmost portion of the Township to the westernmost portion.
4. Maintain a close working relationship with Penn Oaks Golf Club and other privately owned recreational facilities within the Township.



One of many points of interest along the trail loop in Squire Cheyney Farm Park

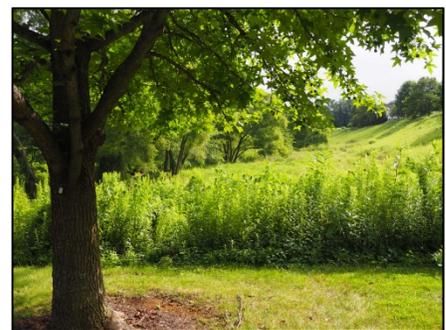
Recommendations

Recommendations 5-A through 5-I below detail how Thornbury can further protect and preserve natural resources and how to best manage, maintain, and enhance parks, recreation facilities, and open space. Implementation of these recommendations will help Thornbury achieve its natural resources and parks, recreation, and open space goals.

Natural Resources

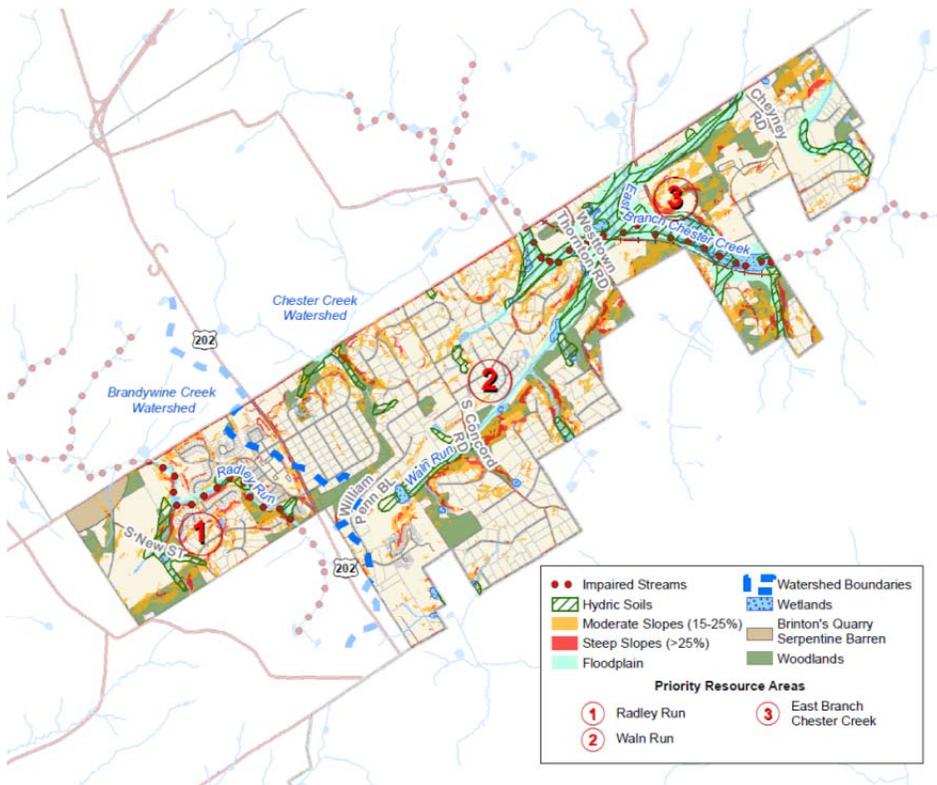
- 5-A.** Review and amend plan requirements in the Township SLDO to include Township identified Priority Resource Areas.

The Township has identified three Priority Resource Areas that have overlapping water, land, and biotic resources. These include 1) Radley Run, 2) Waln Run, and 3) East Branch Chester Creek as shown on Figure 5-1. These areas are highly susceptible to disturbance and will reduce the density or intensity of development that can occur where they are located or nearby. As such, these areas should be included on all preliminary and final plan applications and their protection should be prioritized.



A great example of a well-planned and maintained forested riparian buffer is located in the Brandywine at Thornbury

Figure 5-1: Natural Resources Plan



Source: CCPC, 2017

5-B. Review and amend natural resource protection standards to conserve natural resources, address Ms4 requirements, and protect the Township’s rural character.

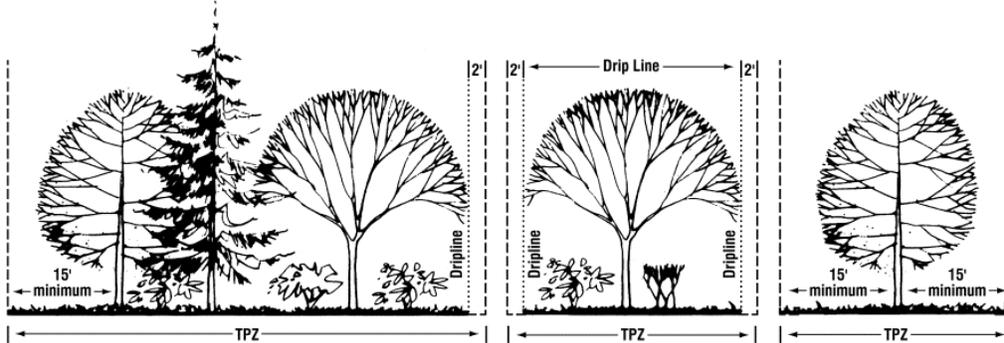
As part of the development of the Comprehensive Plan the resource protection standards were assessed for their effectiveness in protecting the community’s natural resources and reducing the impacts of development and/or other disturbance. The protection of steep slopes, woodlands, riparian buffers, and wetlands was determined to be limited (See Figure 7-18). Limited is defined as: While standards are in place for the protection of the resource(s), the ordinance standards should be re-organized and/or additional standards should be adopted to meet the natural resources goal and objectives. Please see Appendix C for a list of suggested revisions to resource protection standards.

5-C. Review and amend ordinance standards to include requirements for a Tree Protection Zone to be implemented during construction.

A tree protection zone (as shown in Figure 5-2) is an area that is radial to the trunk of a tree (where there is a group of trees, an aggregate of the individual protection zones) where no construction activity is permitted to occur. The purpose of the tree protection zone is to protect the roots of trees that are identified for preservation to ensure their survival after construction is

completed. The tree protection zone is implemented through the municipal zoning ordinance and/or the subdivision and land development ordinance.

Figure 5-2: Tree Protection Zone



Parks and Recreation

- 5-D Amend Township ordinances to include and consistently define common terms as they relate to park, recreation, and open space planning.

Consistency in the use of park, recreation, and open space terminology can clarify expectations among the public and Township officials. The definitions sections of the Township zoning and subdivision and land development ordinance should be updated with consistent terms as identified within this Plan Chapter that include park, recreation facility, passive and active recreation, trail, path, and open space.

The Parks and Recreation Commission

- 5-E. Evaluate and expand, as necessary, the responsibilities of the Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC).

As demand for recreational opportunities increase and funding becomes available, it will be necessary to identify priorities for expansion and maintenance of parks and recreation facilities. The PRC should take a leadership role in determining where available funds should be focused and when. The PRC should continue to coordinate efforts with Township staff and the Board Supervisors.

- 5-F. Maintain existing park facilities and explore additions to those facilities to ensure that both active and passive recreational opportunities meet the needs of current and future residents.

A mix of active and passive and recreation facilities provides recreational opportunities across a broad range of demographics, helping to meet the needs of all residents. It should be clear to the public which areas are passive and which are active, with specific activities identified as permitted or prohibited. Active recreation facilities that can serve multiple uses can adjust with changing desires. This includes fields that can accommodate multiple sports activities, or facilities that can serve community needs.

Recreation Programming

- 5-G. Review existing community programs offered at Township parks and explore additional programming at the parks such as yoga classes, painting classes, student programs, and other similar activities as identified/desired by Township residents.

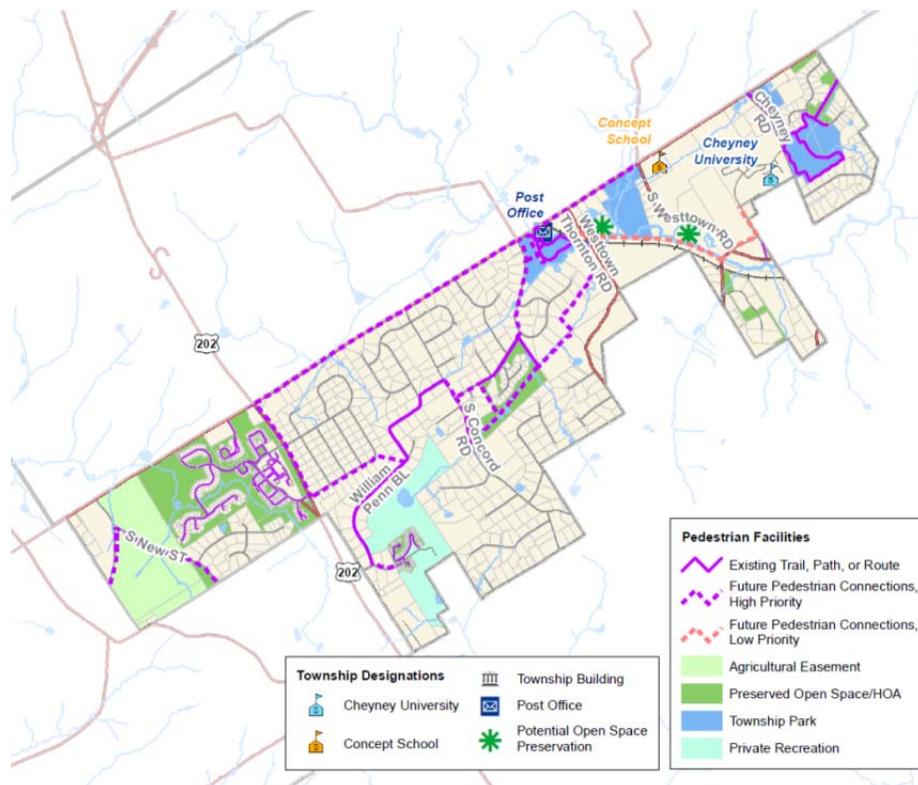
The development and distribution of a Township-wide parks and recreation survey could yield the information needed for the Township to plan for the expansion of current facilities, future parks and recreation areas, and identify a need for active or passive recreation opportunities.

Trails

- 5-H. Explore funding opportunities for connection of existing trails and pedestrian facilities to create a network of trails that link to parks and other community facilities. See Figure 5-3 below.

The “pedestrian connections” shown on Figure 5-3 are not specified as sidewalks or trails, simply as some type of connection. Also, the dashed purple lines on the map are not specific “alignments” but rather an indication of where connections are needed.

Figure 5-3: Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan (See also Map 5-B in Appendix A)



Source: CCPC, 2017

The Township’s approach to pedestrian circulation should focus on creating additional links, wherever possible, to connect residential neighborhoods to commercial, institutional, and recreational uses in the community in a safe and efficient manner.

Four examples of pedestrian facilities currently found in the Township are pictured below, clockwise from top left, sidewalk, on-road path, informal mown path, and paved off-road trail.



Brandywine at Thornbury



William Penn Boulevard



Goose Creek Park



Riparian Buffer/Open Space

Open Space

- 5-1. Explore funding opportunities to preserve additional open space resources to protect the Township’s rural character and accommodate additional opportunities for recreation and pedestrian and Bicycle connection. See Figure 5-3 above.

Implementation

Priorities for implementation of the recommendations are established in Chapter 2: Implementation Strategies.

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