

Chapter One: Introduction

This project was financed in part by a grant from the Community Conservation Partnerships Program, Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund, under the administration of the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), Bureau of Recreation and Conservation.

In the autumn of 2006, Lower Paxton Township solicited proposals from consultants for the development of a township-wide Greenway Plan. From the proposals received, the Township interviewed and selected Simone Collins Landscape Architecture to complete the plan.

Study Purpose, Goals, Objectives, and Findings

Lower Paxton Township is facing intense land development pressures. To illustrate this pressure, a study developed by Penn State University known as the '2005 Land Use and Growth Management Report' includes exhibits that show the approximate impervious surface coverage - and a dramatic increase - between years 1985 and 2000 (Please refer to the report appendix for these exhibits). Township residents have responded by participating in the creation of the Township's Comprehensive Plan and calling for bicycling and pedestrian networks to be part of future planning efforts and ultimately this Greenway Plan.

Greenway Plan Purpose

The purpose of the Lower Paxton Township Greenway Plan is to:

1. Conduct a study of the community and effectively identify and delineate existing natural areas, "green corridors" and other greenway enhancement opportunities within the community;
2. Develop a set of planning policies for how natural areas, roadways, and easements may be utilized and appropriately integrate these policies within the comprehensive plan and recreational planning program;
3. Articulate acquisition policies for obtaining greenway areas for a variety of public benefits; and,
4. Examine municipal ordinance provisions to ensure compatibility with Dauphin County planning and ensure that greenway areas are appropriately protected as important natural features for the benefit of the public.

The Township has identified several benefits that will result from this project, including:

- Economic Benefits (i.e. eco-tourism, enhanced property values);
- Social Benefits (i.e. improved quality of life and public health,

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- environmental education opportunities); and,
- Recreation & Transportation Benefits (i.e. additional recreation facilities and non-motorized linkages to Township destinations).

Greenway Plan Goals include:

- Inventory man-made or “Gray Infrastructure”;
- Inventory natural resources or “Green Infrastructure”;
- Identify township destinations, existing trails, and potential connections to regional facilities located in adjacent municipalities;
- Identify potential greenway / trail types;
- Identify preferred trail route(s) and trail support facilities such as Township destinations, developments with existing sidewalks, new developments, and other trail facilities; and,
- Identify project partners for greenway implementation.

Greenway Plan Objectives include:

- Correlate information gathered from this and other studies into a single comprehensive study;
- Identify key issues, opportunities and constraints for greenway development;
- Map alternative trail alignments;
- Specify construction requirements (per facility type) and prepare an estimate of probable development costs;
- Provide measures for the preservation of natural areas found along stream corridors;
- Prepare an implementation and funding strategy, including the identification of potential funding resources; and,
- The selection a demonstration project that will jump start future plans to create a township-wide greenway system.

Greenway Study Findings:

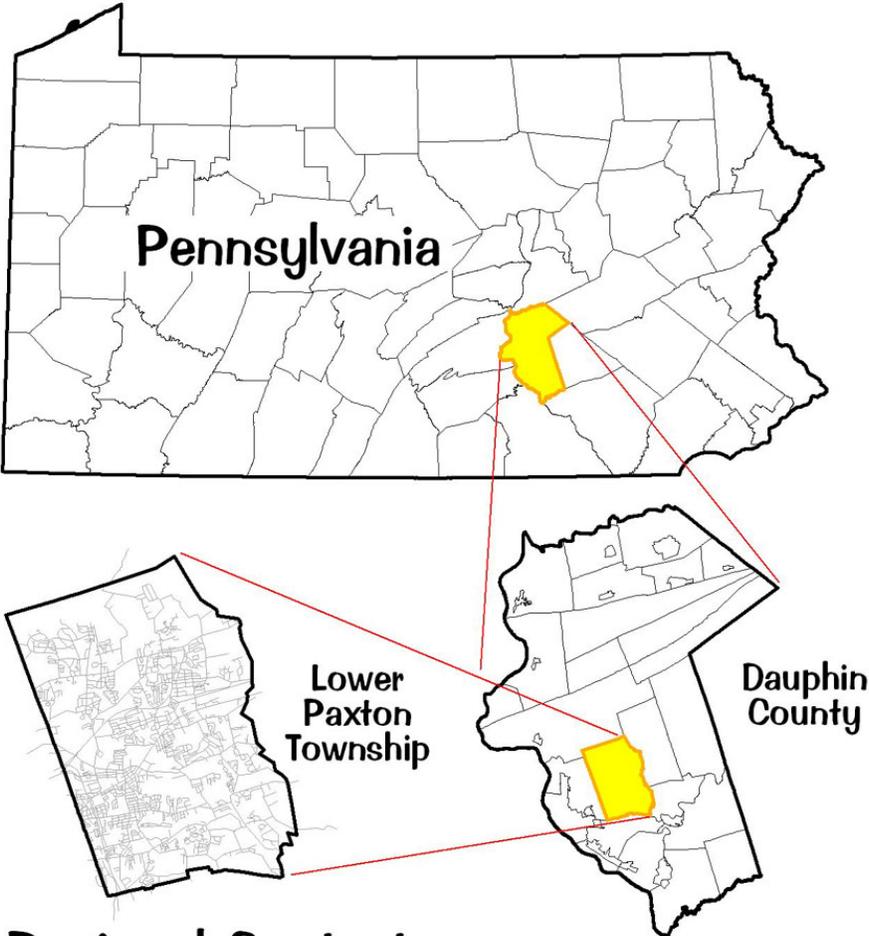
Study Committee input and community input from the public participation process led to the identification of a “Phase 1” network of pedestrian and bicycle facilities that will serve the largest percentage of Township residents and contribute to the long term potential for regional connections to adjacent municipalities and/or facilities. The primary focus of these Phase 1 planning efforts concentrates on connecting the following elements:

- Neighborhoods with existing sidewalks;
- New or proposed residential land developments;
- Public destinations (schools, parks, and other institutions);
- Stream corridors; and,
- Planned facilities in adjacent municipalities.

Township Background

Lower Paxton Township is located in the greater Harrisburg area situated about 5 miles northeast of downtown Harrisburg in Dauphin County, Pennsylvania. The Township consists of a total land area of 28.1 square miles and is bordered by municipalities of Susquehanna Township, Middle Paxton Township, West Hanover Township, South Hanover Township, and Swatara Township. Incorporated in 1767 from Paxton Township, Lower Paxton Township is classified as a second class Township governed by a five member board of supervisors.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the total population of Lower Paxton Township was 44,424 residents, making it the 19th most populous municipality in Pennsylvania. The character of the Township is that of a densely populated residential suburb containing few rural areas with a population density of 1,580 people per square mile. The median age of the population was 39 years with 22.5% of the population under the age of 18. Average household size was recorded at 2.35 persons per household with a median income of \$49,566.



Regional Context

not to scale

Regional Context

The exhibit to the left shows the relationship between Lower Paxton Township, Dauphin County and the State of Pennsylvania.

Benefits of Trails & Greenways Planning

Having an established trails & greenways system provides many economic, social - and most importantly - health benefits for township residents. Economic benefits include increased real estate and property values for those located near trails & greenways. Social benefits of trails include providing

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additional locations for community interaction and improving the quality of life.

The most important benefit of a trails & greenway system is the opportunity these facilities can provide towards bettering the community's general health and well being through regular physical activity. Depression, obesity and diabetes are chronic diseases directly related to the physical inactivity and unhealthy eating habits associated with a sedentary lifestyle. The US Department of Health and Human Services, Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that in the past 30 years, the prevalence of obesity amongst adults aged 20-74 has increased from 15.0% to 32.9%, and the estimated cost of obesity in the United States in 2000 was about \$117 billion. For more information on the facts presented as well as many other programs promoting healthy lifestyles by the CDC, please refer to their website: <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyLiving/>

Therefore, the opportunity for physical activity that trails & greenway related facilities provide not only fights obesity and related diseases, but also results in reduced health care costs, increased work productivity, and improved longevity for the community as a whole.