Chapter 8
PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE
(01/05/16)

The City's resident surveys and public workshops show that Newark residents value the City's parks and open space highly for enhancing the attractiveness of neighborhoods and its recreation programs as an essential service. Parks, recreation programs, and open space provide a diverse and quantifiable range of benefits that immeasurably improve residents' quality of life and support Newark's vision of a "Healthy, Sustainable, and Inclusive" community.

Healthy Community: Parks, recreation, and open space provide residents and visitors with both active and passive recreational opportunities, which promote a healthy lifestyle, fight obesity, and prevent chronic conditions that lead to coronary disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes. Strong evidence shows that people are more likely to exercise if they are in close proximity to a park. According to GIS analysis from the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC), most Newark residents live within a ten-minute walk of a park. (See Map 8-1, which shows walking time to active recreation sites located in Newark.)

Sustainable Community—Environmental: Newark's parks and open space keep our living surroundings healthy and provide essential green space in a developed community. They serve as groundwater-recharge areas, floodplain protection, natural sound barriers, and stormwater protection from wetlands. Abundant trees and vegetation reduce the "heat-island effect" and carbon emissions. Furthermore, the network of parks in our City, as well as in New Castle County and the region, provides an important wildlife habitat that protects numerous indigenous and migratory wildlife species, fosters enjoyment, and provides educational opportunities for people to observe and coexist with wildlife.

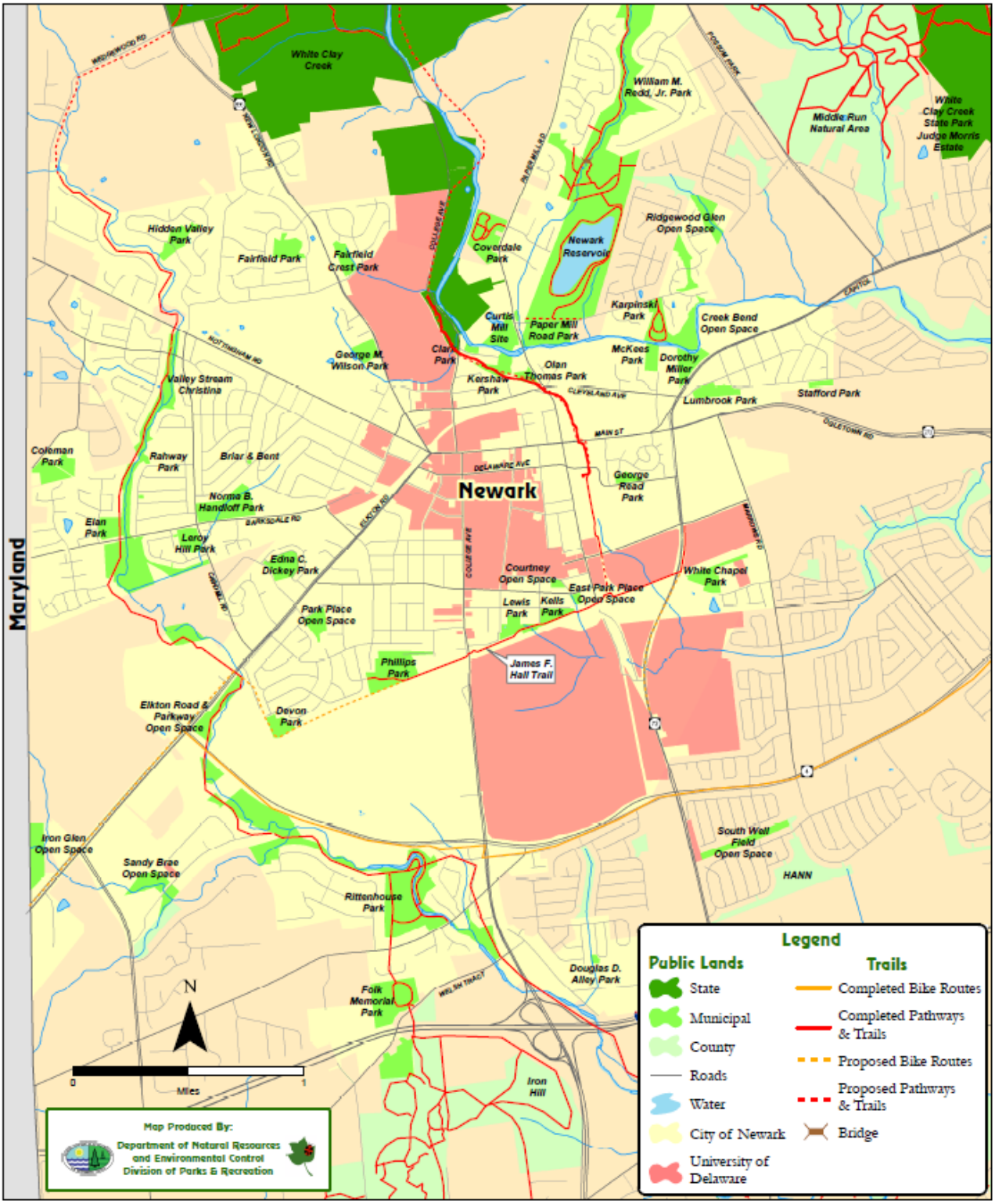
Sustainable Community—Economic: Numerous studies show that residential areas in close proximity to a park have increased property values and a higher tax base. The availability of recreation opportunities and park amenities is an important quality-of-life factor for businesses choosing where to locate and for individuals choosing where to live. Furthermore, the City's parks and trails, specifically the James Hall and Pomeroy Trails, and the City's close proximity to numerous mountain-biking trails provide tremendous opportunity for "recreational tourism," which benefits our shops, hotels, and restaurants.

Inclusive Community: Parks encourage social interaction in a community or neighborhood. It's a place to meet, socialize, relax, and play for children, teenagers, college students, and young and older adults. Park amenities include playgrounds, bicycle and walking trails, skateboard parks, baseball fields, and basketball and tennis courts. Newark's recreational programs provide a diverse range of enjoyable, structured activities for people of all ages and abilities, including sports, dance, crafts, social activities, and community events.

Land-Use Planning for Parks and Open Space

The City's *Zoning Code* and *Subdivision Development Regulations* provisions of land dedication of areas for active and passive recreation have helped the City of Newark Parks and Recreation

Map 8-2: City of Newark - Public Lands and Trails



Department meet the objective of providing recreational lands for new residential developments. Based on these regulations, each development is evaluated by the Parks and Recreation Department for adequate provision of space for active and passive recreation. Depending on the size and scope of the project, the Department may recommend that the City's "cash in lieu of land" *Subdivision and Development Regulations* provision be utilized. This alternative open-space requirement means that in some cases, a developer pays an impact fee when its sites do not contain lands appropriate for active recreational facilities.

The City's long-term policy of requesting that 100-year-floodplain stream-valley land dedications (where applicable) accompany development projects also has added significantly to the City's stock of acreage for passive recreation along the White Clay and Christina Creeks. Most significantly, in 1990, Newark residents approved a request from the Mayor and City Council to issue bonds for the purchase of lands for active and passive open space. As a result, the City eventually purchased 77.56 acres of open space (a considerable portion of which was under threat of development) at a total cost of $3,193,012. These land acquisitions added to the City's inventory of open-space acreage for active and passive recreation (see Table 8-1 and Map 8-2, which shows the City's current open-space inventory). Regarding certain privately held portions of the Christina Creek and White Clay Creek stream valleys, the City has pursued land dedication of these areas to add to Newark's open-space landholdings.

The City's decision to demolish the old and severely deteriorated Curtis Paper Mill, a relatively large and now-cleared open-space area adjoining the White Clay Creek, has made this area available for open space and recreational uses. A City Council public workshop, while generating some differing points of view, arrived at a consensus for open space and passive recreation uses at the location. The City hired a consultant to coordinate a public outreach that was intended to provide as much community information as possible concerning uses for the Curtis Paper Mill site. That effort resulted in the completion of a master plan for the Curtis Mill Park site and Old Paper Mill Road Park property. City Council approved the master plan in 2011, and, currently, the Curtis Mill Park site is being developed as a passive recreation area. The Old Paper Mill Road Park property is included in the City's Capital Improvements Program for development as an active-recreation park to serve the residents of District Six in the coming years, presuming funding availability and continued Council approval.

In addition, regarding stream-valley preservation and protection, the City will continue to rely on DNREC and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service's 1993 *Upper Christina River: Floodplain Management Study* and the National Parks Service's 2000 *White Clay Creek and its Tributaries: Watershed Management Plan* for guidance and technical assistance, if and when development projects are proposed near these creeks. These documents are, therefore, incorporated by reference into this *Comprehensive Development Plan V*.

Regarding recreational services, because of the continued decline in the availability of local school district and University facilities for City indoor recreation programs, the City may be faced with important decisions regarding the availability of a large indoor space (gymnasium) for recreational activities.

Table 8-1: Publicly Owned and Managed Parks and Open Spaces

	Property	Classification	Acreage	Estimated Forested Acre(s)
1	Alley, Douglas D.	Park (Active)	0.9	0.4
2	Apple Road & Barksdale Road	Open Space	0.6	0.0
3	Barksdale Estates	Open Space	5.3	5.0
4	Briar & Bent	Open Space	0.4	0.4
5	Christina Creek Properties	Christina Valley Stream	137.54	137.14
6	Clark, Orville	White Clay Valley Stream	0.8	0.8
7	Coleman (includes Briar Creek)	Park (Passive)	8.57	8.27
8	Country Hills Pond	Open Space	2.3	0.0
9	Courtney Street	Open Space	1.6	0.0
10	Coverdale, William M.	Park (Passive)	16.8	14.8
11	Creek Bend	Open Space	6.1	5.5
12	Curtis Paper Mill	Park(Passive)	7.0	4.6
13	Devon	Park (Active)	4.6	3.0
14	Dicky, Edna C.	Park (Active)	8.2	0.0
15	Elkton Road & Parkway	Open Space	9.6	6.0
16	Elan	Park (Active)	6.7	5.9
17	Fairfield	Park (Active)	7.0	0.0
18	Fairfield Crest	Park (Active)	3.7	0.7
19	Folk Memorial	Park (Active/Passive)	34.6	28.5
20	Handloff, Norma B.	Park (Active)	15.8	0.25
21	Hidden Valley	Park (Active/Passive)	6.5	2.0
22	Hill, LeRoy C., Jr.	Park (Active)	6.3	1.3
23	Iron Glen	Park (Passive)	12.4	7.0
24	James F. Hall Trail	Greenway	7.62	3.0
25	Karpinski	Park (Passive)	8.0	2.25
26	Kells	Park (Active)	5.2	0.0
27	Kershaw	Park (Active)	3.8	2.0
28	Laura's Glen	Open Space	1.59	1.0
29	Lewis	Park (Active)	4.2	1.5
30	Lumbrook	Park (Active)	5.9	2.25
31	Miller, Dorothy	Open Space	7.2	6.7
32	Newark Reservoir	Reservoir Site	113.0	4.0
33	Old Paper Mill Road	Park (Passive)	12.3	0.7
34	Paper Mill Falls	White Clay Valley Stream	3.2	3.2
35	Paper Mill Rd. & Old Paper Mill Rd.	Open Space	0.5	0.5

Property		Classification	Acreage	Estimated Forested Acre(s)
36	Park Place (next to apartments)	Open Space	1.4	0.5
37	Park Place East	Open Space	1.2	0.07
38	Phillips	Park (Active/Passive)	13.7	5.5
39	Rahway	Park (Active)	0.9	0.3
40	Rahway (945)	Open Space	0.2	0.1
41	Rahway (968)	Open Space	0.2	0.2
42	Read, George	Park (Active)	2.8	0.0
43	Redd, Williams M., Jr.	Park (Passive)	68.5	64.5
44	Ridgewood Glen	Open Space	12.4	10.75
45	Rittenhouse	Park (Active/Passive)	45.9	43.0
46	South Well Field	Open Space	4.3	4.3
47	Stafford	Park (Active)	1.8	0.0
48	Sue Lane	Open Space	0.1	0.0
49	Thomas, Olan R.	Park (Passive)	4.3	0.4
50	White Chapel (Incl. 1/2 NSC Site)	Park (Active)	13.0	7.0
51	Wilson, George M.	Park/Center (Active)	4.8	0.0
52	Wyncliff	Open Space	1.9	1.9
		Total (Acres)	**653.22**	**397.18**

As reflected in Table 8-1, approximately 60% of City-owned and -managed parks and open space is forested.

Urban Forest Management

In 2000, the City was designated a "Tree City USA" by the National Arbor Day Foundation, sponsored in cooperation with the National Association of State Foresters and the USDA Forest Service. In addition, in 2002, the Parks and Recreation Department partnered with the City of Wilmington to have a citywide tree inventory completed to provide Newark with an up-to-date picture of the City of Newark's tree population. Based on this information, the Parks Department is working to diversify Newark's urban tree canopy in two ways: first, with its own forestry projects, and second, the Parks and Recreation and Planning and Development Departments work with developers of new subdivisions to ensure compliance with the City's detailed existing-tree preservation, tree-planting, and landscaping requirements.

In 2008, the Delaware Forest Service completed a study of the Urban Tree Canopy (UTC) for each of the 57 municipalities in Delaware. From that study, Newark was one of four communities selected for a pilot project to enhance its UTC. The study determined that Newark's UTC covered approximately 25% of the city. According to the U.S. and Delaware Forest Services, a healthy

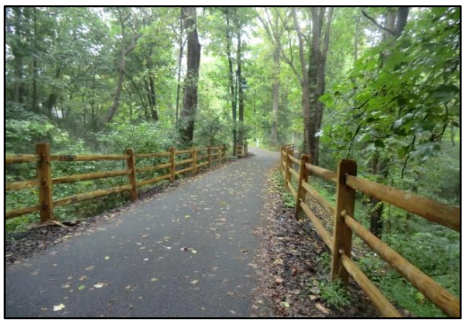
percentage of tree cover within an urban area should be a minimum of 30%. In 2010, Newark agreed to take part in the pilot program and set a goal of attaining 30% tree cover by the year 2021. In the first two years of the program (2011 and 2012), Newark increased its UTC to 27.5% and is well on its way to achieving, and likely surpassing, this goal.

In 2013, the City was recognized as a "Sterling Community" by the National Arbor Day Foundation for achieving the "Tree City USA Growth Award" ten years in a row.

Aesthetics

The City has a variety of regulatory tools and programs to improve Newark's overall physical attractiveness. These include a detailed landscape ordinance that provides for the preservation of large trees within proposed subdivisions, street trees along new residential subdivision roadways, substantial screening that separates residential from commercial properties, landscaping between businesses and along business frontages, landscaping on the perimeters of parking areas and landscaped islands with trees within the parking area, and maintenance of landscaping once installed. In addition, the City's award-winning beautification program and the Parks and Recreation Department's ongoing road-median and traffic-island beautification program have dramatically improved Newark's main arteries for the better. Its once barren and unsightly state highways and intersections are now attractive gateways to Newark. These oases of green and bursts of in-season flowers help make visiting and living in Newark a visual treat for newcomers and, because the program is so successful and has become such a normal part of our Newark "landscape," it has at times been taken for granted.

City of Newark Parks and Regional Trails

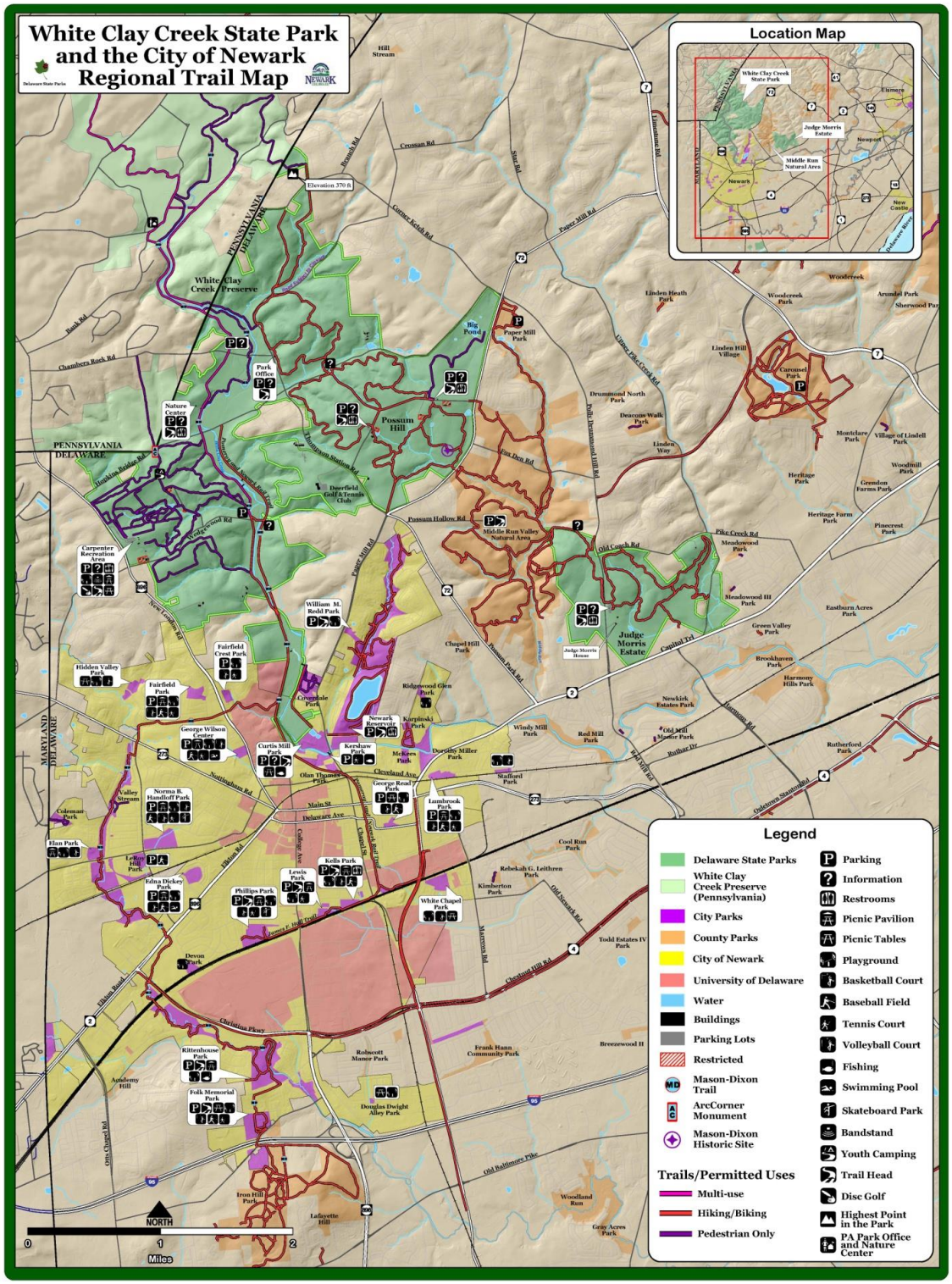


There are 16.8 miles of trails within the City of Newark. Moreover, there are more than 85 miles of trails in the Newark region, including those in nearby county and state parks. The network consists of trails designed with single-track natural surfaces, crushed stone, and asphalt surfaces. The trails serve as active-recreation facilities as well as transportation links that connect residential neighborhoods, city, county, and state parks, University of Delaware facilities, and student housing, and Downtown Newark and area shopping and business centers. Combined with its expansive sidewalk system and bike lanes (on many roadways), the region's trails provide an extensive non-motorized transportation network in and around Newark. The James F. Hall Trail and Pomeroy and Newark Rail Trail have been designated as National Preservation Trails by the U.S. Department of the Interior.

Table 8-2: Trails in Newark Parks

	Distance (Miles)
Alley Park	0.1
Christina Valley Stream (Persimmon Creek Swim Club to Nottingham Rd.)	4.08
Coleman Park	0.25
Coverdale Park	0.7
Folk Park	0.41
James F. Hall Trail	1.76
Iron Glen Park	0.43
Karpinski Park	0.43
Kershaw Park	0.13
Phillips Park	0.35
Pomeroy and Newark	1.6
Redd Park	2.47
Reservoir Site	2.08
Rittenhouse Park (West Chestnut Hill Rd. to Persimmon Creek Swim Club)	1.95
Total (Miles)	**16.74**

Map 8-3: City of Newark Regional Parks and Trails



Please refer to the link below for an interactive map, information on park locations, and facilities contained within each park: http://cityofnewarkde.us/index.aspx?NID=165

Newark Outdoor Recreation Demand and Priorities

In 2011, the Delaware Division of Parks and Recreation did a statewide telephone survey as part of the development of the *2013 Statewide Outdoor Recreation Plan*. Key findings from Newark residents who participated in the survey include the following:

- 91% of respondents indicated that outdoor recreation is very important or somewhat important to them personally.
- 64% of respondents stated that the most important reason they participated in outdoor recreation activities was for their physical fitness. Other popular reasons included being with family and friends (23%), relaxation (19%), being close to nature (19%), mental well-being (14%), enjoying the scenery (14%), and fun and entertainment (11%).
- 54% of respondents wanted more outdoor facilities/opportunities close to home.
- 38% of respondents desired more opportunities to participate in organized activities.
- The most participated in activities for Newark residents are walking or jogging (84%), gardening (67%), bicycling (65%), swimming at a beach (64%), swimming at a pool (62%), hiking (56%), and visiting historic sites (56%).

Newark respondents were also asked if they would like to see facilities added to their community park. When the respondent's answer was yes, he or she was given the opportunity to identify specific facilities that he or she would like to have available. Results from questions identifying household participation, personal participation, and added facilities were combined to demonstrate demand for specific outdoor recreation opportunities/facilities and identified as high, medium, and low priorities for outdoor recreation facilities (see Table 8-3).

Table 8-3: Newark Outdoor Recreation Facility Needs

Newark Outdoor Recreation Facility Needs

High Priorities	Moderate Priorities	Low Priorities
Walking or Jogging Paths	Nature Programs	Skate Parks
Bike Paths	Basketball Courts	Powerboat Access
Hiking Trails	Baseball/Softball Fields	Equestrian Trails
Playgrounds	Camping Areas	Disc Golf Courses
Swimming Pools	Golf Courses	Lacrosse Fields
Open Space/Passive Recreation	Tennis Courts	Hunting Areas
Access to Historic Sites	Soccer Fields	ATV Trails
Beach Access	Canoe/Kayak Access	Roller Hockey Areas
Picnic Areas	Football Fields	Dog Parks
Fishing Access	Volleyball Courts	
	Mountain Bike Trials	
	Rollerblading/Rollerskating Areas	

The complete *2013 Statewide Outdoor Recreation Plan* is available online:
www.dnrec.delaware.gov/parks/Information/Documents/2009-2011_SCORP.pdf

Community Events

The Newark Parks and Recreation Department fosters community engagement by a variety of community events throughout the year.

Winter/Spring

- Winterfest
- Egg Hunt
- Memorial Day Parade
- Nefosky Police Memorial Walk/Run
- Spring Clean-Up
- Spring Concert Series
- Newark Day/Newark Nite

Summer/Fall

- Fourth of July Fireworks
- Community Day
- Fall Community Clean-Up
- Fall Flea Markets
- Halloween Parade and Trick-or-Treat on Main Street
- Thanksgiving Day Breakfast
- Turkey Trot

George Wilson Center

The George Wilson Center and Park, located at 303 New London Road (across from Clayton Hall), is one of Newark's historical buildings. It originally served as the community's only segregated school for kindergarten to eighth grade from 1922–1958. (After eighth grade during those years, the City's African-American residents had to travel to Howard High School in Wilmington.) The building became a community center named after George "Inky" Wilson, the first elected African-American councilman, and is preserved by the City's Parks and Recreation Department to serve the community as a gathering place. The facility and park offer a wide variety of recreational activities as well as a multipurpose meeting space. Amenities include a lighted basketball and tennis court, a youth baseball (T-ball) field, a swimming pool, a picnic pavilion, playground equipment, picnic tables, and a horseshoe pit. The center is open seven days a week and is available to be rented for family or group outings such as wedding receptions, graduation parties, meetings, and training sessions.

Recreation Programs

The City of Newark Parks and Recreation Department offers a wide range of recreation programs at a reasonable cost to participants. Fee assistance is available for participants from low- to moderate-income households, funded through the City's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program and the James F. Hall Scholarship fund. Programs areas include the following:

Arts—Performance and Visual: Includes youth dance classes, drawing, painting, pottery classes for all ages, and theatre/acting classes.

Fitness and Adult Leagues: Includes leagues or classes for volleyball, basketball, softball, yoga, and Zumba.

Before- and After-School Care: Available for students at Downes and West Park Elementary Schools.

Sports and Aquatics: Includes classes in archery, swimming, soccer, skateboarding, and tennis.

Community Garden: The first Newark Community Garden took root in 2015 at Fairfield Park to offer a variety of gardening opportunities for individuals and families. Services provided includes the initial grading of the garden area, water sources, composting facilities, tool shed, and an ADA-accessible 10' × 4' garden plot.

More information on these programs can be obtained on the City's website or in the City newsletter.

Plan Goals and Action Items: Parks, Recreation, and Open Space

Ensure abundant safe, attractive, and well-maintained city parks, trails, and indoor recreation facilities for active and passive recreation opportunities and protect natural areas, all of which enhance the community's quality of life and sense of place.

Strategic Issues:

- Parks and recreation programs catering to diverse ages, interests, and abilities.
- Recreational tourism.
- Connectivity, safety, and accessibility of City parks and trails.
- City beautification and preservation of the natural environment.

Community Vision: **Healthy/Active and Sustainable**

Goal 1	**Develop opportunities to establish Newark as a destination place for recreational tourism.**

Create, maintain, and promote recreational tourism in Newark, provide opportunities for Newark residents to live a healthy lifestyle, and enhance economic sustainability by increasing the customer base for Newark businesses.

Action Item 1

Apply to the International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) to designate Newark and the surrounding areas a "Ride Center" for mountain bicycling tourism. The City of Newark is well positioned to be classified as a "Ride Center" by the IMBA. In addition to a network of off-road trails within the city, the surrounding areas of White Clay Creek State Park, Iron Hill Park, and the Middle Run Valley Natural Area provide ample mountain bicycling trails that are well known regionally. Just as attractive is Newark's vibrant downtown and Main Street with numerous restaurants and shops, which has significant appeal to the mountain bicycling community. In the United States, recreational tourism creates approximately $140 billion in economic output annually. (1)

Participating agencies:
City of Newark Department of Parks and Recreation
City of Newark Department of Planning and Development
Downtown Newark Partnership
State of Delaware Division of State Parks and Recreation
Delaware Trail Spinners
New Castle County Department of Community Services
Delaware Economic Development Office

Community Vision: **Healthy/Active and Inclusive**

Goal 2	**Expand the accessibility and appeal of Newark's parks and recreational programs.**

Newark's parks advance the City's vision as an "Inclusive Community" by offering amenities that appeal to visitors of various ages, diverse interests, and varying abilities. For example, when the City installed skateboarding facilities at selected parks, it enhanced the appeal of its parks to a new group of potential users. Other park amenities (tennis courts, picnic areas, walking trails, playgrounds, etc.) have appeal to other groups of potential users.

Action Item 2

Improve connectivity of City parks to other City parks and to the surrounding county and state parks. Enhanced connectivity improves access to the City's parks and expands their potential user base. For example, the James F. Hall Trail and Pomeroy Trail connect several small parks, which creates more exposure to the variety of park facilities. Similar benefits could be achieved by improved wayfinding signage and mapping.

Participating agencies:
City of Newark Department of Parks and Recreation
City of Newark Department of Planning and Development
State of Delaware Division of State Parks and Recreation
New Castle County Department of Community Services

Action Item 3

Increase the number of outdoor recreation facilities that are compliant with ADA regulations.

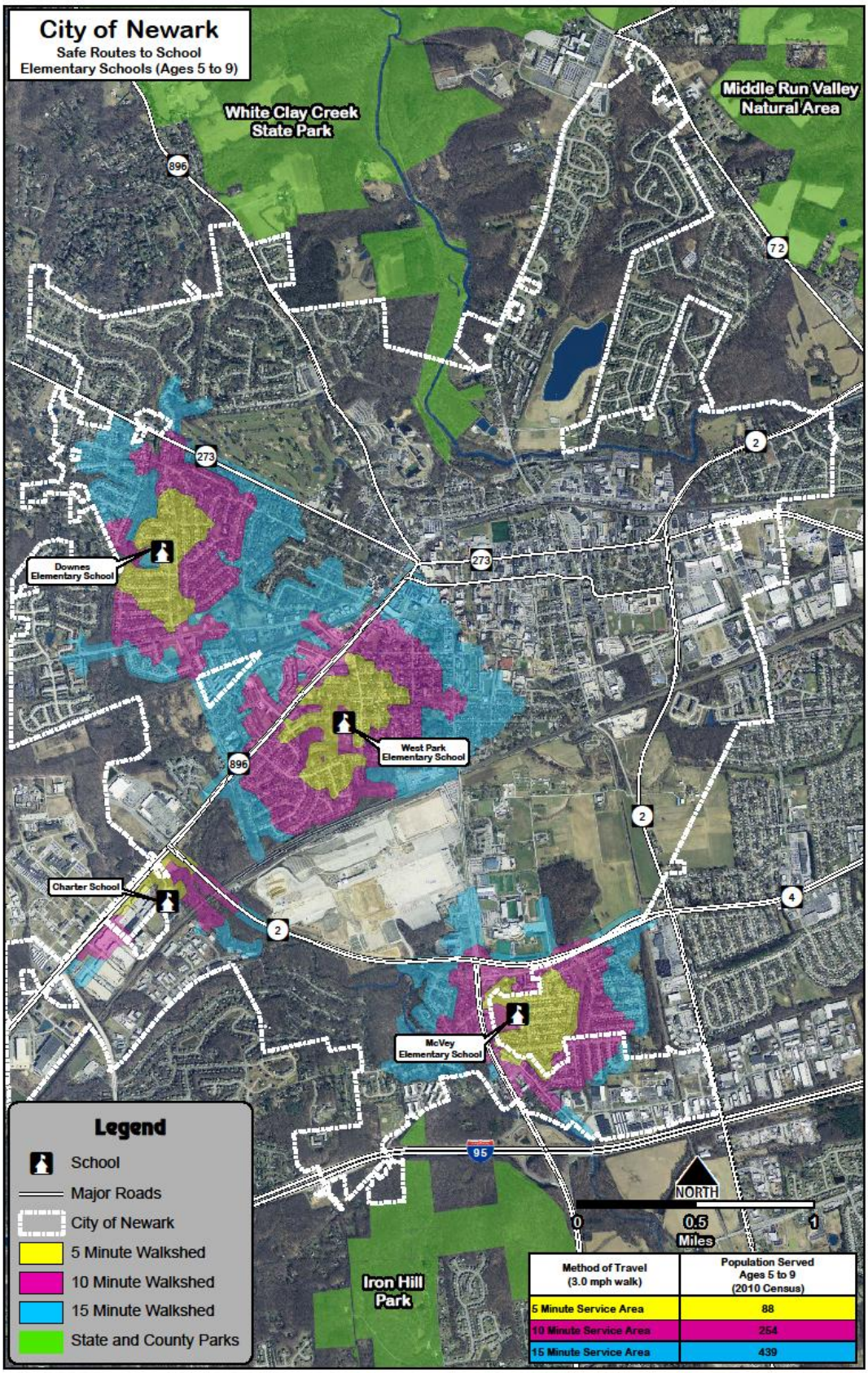
Participating agencies:
City of Newark Department of Parks and Recreation

Action Item 4

Work with school districts and state partners to enhance the "Safe Routes to School" program. The Delaware Department of Transportation's Safe Routes to School (SRTS) works with elementary and middle schools to makes it safe, convenient and fun for children to walk or bicycle to school. SRTS identifies the safest routes from children's homes to their schools and identifies safety concerns along the routes for local agencies to investigate and determine potential improvement measures. Map 8-3 shows approximately 439 Newark students between the ages of 5 to 9 live within a 15-minute walk to school.

Participating agencies:
City of Newark Department of Parks and Recreation
City of Newark Department of Planning and Development
Newark Bicycle Committee
Christina School District

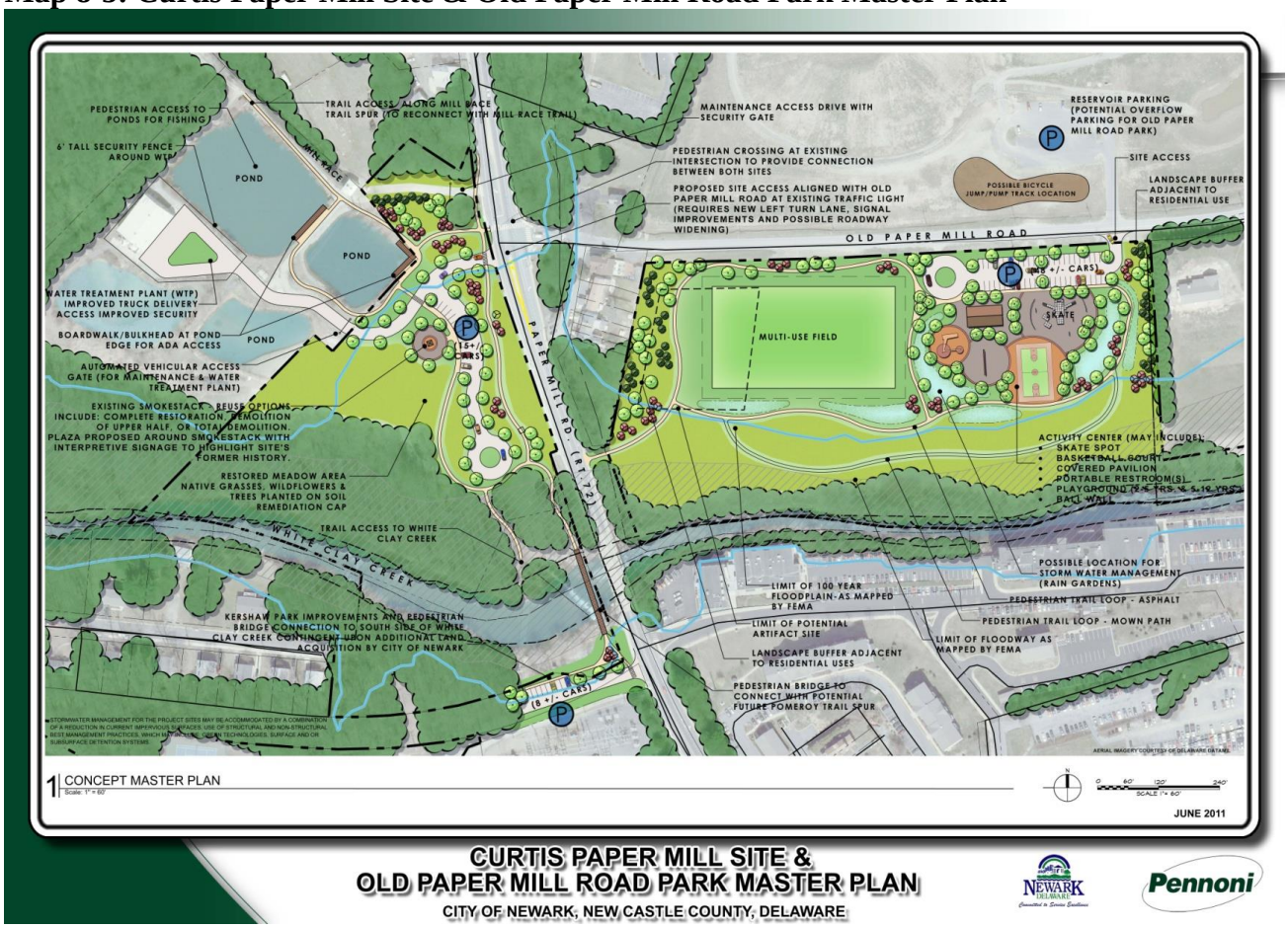
Map 8-4: City of Newark "Walksheds" to Elementary Schools



Action Item 5

Continue progress on the master plan for the Curtis Mill Park site and Old Paper Mill Road Park property. The City of Newark made the Curtis Paper Mill available as open space. The City hired a consultant hold a series of public workshops public intended to collect as much community input as possible concerning uses for the Curtis Paper Mill site. City Council approved the master plan in 2011. The Old Paper Mill Road Park property is included in the City's Capital Improvements Program for development as an active-recreation park to serve the residents of District Six in the coming years, presuming funding availability and continued Council approval.

Map 8-5: Curtis Paper Mill Site & Old Paper Mill Road Park Master Plan



Participating agencies:
City of Newark Department of Parks and Recreation
Penonni & Associates (project consultant)

Community Vision: **Sustainable**

Goal 3	**Enhance the City's natural environment by using the City parks and open space to preserve natural areas and wildlife habitat.**

The City's parks and open space represent a key opportunity to advance the City's vision as an environmentally "Sustainable Community" by preserving our natural environment and wildlife habitats. Policy recommendations include:

- Explore policies and regulations that preserve open spaces for larger undeveloped parcels.
- Incorporate the use of native plants.

Action Item 6

Meet or exceed the U.S. and Delaware Forest Services' calculation of 30% as minimum healthy tree canopy coverage within an urban area. The 2008 Delaware Forest Service study of the UTC determined that Newark's coverage was approximately 25% of the city. According to the U.S. and Delaware Forest Services, a healthy percentage of tree cover within an urban area should be a minimum of 30%. Newark agreed to take part in the pilot program and set a goal of attaining 30% tree cover by the year 2021.

Participating agencies:
City of Newark Department of Parks and Recreation
Delaware State Forest Service

Notes:

1. *SelectUSA*, 2011.